Smart Growth and an Age-Friendly Region

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Overview

• Who is DVRPC?
• Our Region’s Elderly
• Long-Range Plan
• What is Smart Growth?
• EPA’s Principles for Building Healthy Communities Through Active Aging—Current Plans and Policies
• Ideas for Future Work/Collaboration
Who is DVRPC?

• Federally designated MPO for 9-county Greater Philadelphia region
• Advise on regional policy and capital funding issues concerning: Transportation, Economic Development, Open Space, Air Quality, Land Use
• Policy, Planning, Programming
  – Establish regional transportation policies
  – Determine allocation of transportation funds
  – Prioritize transportation projects for the region
Our Region’s Elderly


• Age 65+ fastest growing cohort in region
  – Baby Boomers will begin to turn 65 in 2011
  – Elderly grew by 46% btwn 1970-2000 (overall popn +5%)
    • 90% growth in suburban counties (overall popn +22%)

• Age 85+ will increase dramatically, impacting health care and social service delivery.

• Have lower incomes, more likely to live in poverty than younger households.
  – More likely to live alone, impacting available income and QOL
  – Women generally outlive men, leaving many elderly women to live alone on a single income
Our Region’s Elderly


- Senior renters & owners pay more of their income towards housing
  - Struggle to keep up with property taxes & energy costs
  - Upkeep difficult—physically, monetarily, and trust-wise

- Most of the region’s elderly are and will continue to be homeowners, living in suburban single-family homes.
  - More likely to have at least one disability
  - Need for extra services to carry on with daily activities
  - Dispersion across suburbs will make accessing services difficult
  - Limited number of suburban housing choices, mostly large-lot, single-family, not designed for older couples and empty-nesters.

  • Suburbs pedestrian-hostile--inadequate lighting, poorly-defined crosswalks, poorly-timed traffic signals; lack of benches
Aging of the Baby Boomers: Housing Seniors in the Delaware Valley (2007)

• Enhance and expand affordable housing for elderly and near-elderly near public transit and services
  – Lack of supply leads to premature institutionalization
  – Inclusionary Zoning—density bonuses for affordable units
  – Encourage TOD and New Urbanist Communities
    • Mixed use, proximate to commercial areas
    • NU has front porches, sidewalks, narrow streets
    • Smaller units on smaller lots with shared open spaces
    • Range of housing types integrated within town

• Co-housing—15-40 units, clustered to save land and keep affordable; residents buy in before construction—many can’t afford time or $; good social connections
Aging in Place Policies

• Flexible zoning codes that permit shared housing and accessory dwelling units (ADUs)

• Shared housing—redefine ‘family’ to allow for unrelated older adults to share SF residence

• ADU typically less than 1,000 square feet, own bathroom, cooking facilities and private entrance
  – **Granny flat**—typically apt within existing unit
  – **Elder cottage**—small separate unit on same lot
  – **Provide extra income for property owner**
  – **Limited public investment**
  – **Flexible, independent living space**
Zone for Active Adult Communities

- “Age-restricted”—one occupant age 55+
- Marketed towards younger seniors (55+), who require fewer services, and often still in workforce
  - Bring in tax revenues w/out burdening school
- Instant social network
- Concentrating seniors makes service delivery easier, however…
  - Long-term impact yet to be determined—given locations of these in suburbs, may lead to steep rise in service costs
  - Need for intergenerational care & living arrangements; few allow grandchildren
- Locate near public transit (often not) and integrated into nearby communities/neighborhoods
Long-Range Plan

• From 1930-2005, land consumption grew 5x faster than population
• By 2035, region will gain 630,000 residents + 370,000 jobs
• Fastest growing: Elderly in Suburbs
  – Bucks, Chester, Burlington Counties
  – Not well-served by public transit
  – Limited mobility as lose ability to drive
• Plan calls for aging in place policies, by reinvesting in 100 centers, with affordable and senior housing
What is Smart Growth?

- Recognizes the impact transportation investments have on land use and community form, and vice versa
- Do studies that inform how land use supports transportation investments
- Revitalizes existing urban centers & older towns
- Preserves farmland and open space
- Counteracts single-use zoning and separation of residential and commercial centers and auto-dependent lifestyle
- Focuses on human-scale street-level urbanism, interconnected streets, and walking, biking, transit
What is Smart Growth?

• Fiscally-responsible—lower costs for individual units, public utilities, transportation
• Environmentally-sound—encourages brownfield redevelopment; concentrates development to preserve open space; and reduces emissions by promoting biking, walking, transit
• Socially-conscious—encourages diversity of housing types and inclusionary zoning
• DVRPC’s work supports all 4 of the EPA Principles for Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging
1. Social Connectedness: Staying Active, Connected, and Engaged: Where are how we choose to live can affect our health and well-being.
2. Access to Transportation: Transportation and Mobility. We can build choice back into our transportation system and make it easier for people of all ages to get around.
Flexible Housing Options: Development and Housing. Healthy neighborhoods offer diverse housing choices, gathering places, and ways to connect.
Finding healthy food, keeping active and getting help when you need it can be easier in an age-friendly community.
Ideas for Future Work/Collaboration

• Integrate Aging into more of our Studies
  – More explicit in Corridor Studies, Zoning, LRP 2040, EJ
  – Regional Citizens Committee
  – Outreach/Public Participation: Lifelong Communities Charrette

• Enable Collaboration on Aging between City & Suburbs

• NIH Grant – Test of the EPA Aging Model
  – Policy paper on impact of transportation facilities and services on health outcomes for older Philadelphians

• Classic Towns tie-in? Public Health/HIA tie-in?

• Study Demand for Senior Housing
  – Retrofitting current housing stock
  – Challenges of visitability and affordability
  – Growth of AARCs
  – Municipal Ordinances that support ADUs, AARCs, NORCs
Thank You!

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