

Growing Older in Fort Collins: Silver Tsunami As a Golden Opportunity
March 1, 2012
Summary of speaker presentations and audience Q&A

Morie Smile, Senior State Director, AARP Colorado

Aging today is not a clock winding down, with diminishing opportunities. A recent AARP poll shows that a high percentage of Larimer County residents enjoy outdoor amenities, 65% volunteer. Fort Collins is both a college and retirement town, easy access, downtown opportunities, livable community. Fort Collins is looking strategically at the future, and your priorities are closely aligned with what we are doing at AARP: housing, transportation, healthcare, health and wellness, community connectivity, lifelong learning, and volunteering. Strategies that aid aging in place benefit all segments of population. You might want to have a look at what other communities across the nation are doing by reading a recent report on Aging in Place by the National Conference on State Legislatures, 2011 (www.ncsl.org/documents/transportation/Aging-in-Place-2011.pdf).

Darin Atteberry, City Manager, City of Fort Collins

You asked me to come here and report on what the city is doing to address senior issues. Most important: we need to be willing to listen and learn to citizens. We are working on how to engage the community and create policies that reflect the needs of community, not just outspoken individuals. Plan Fort Collins is our 25 year strategic plan, which looks at land use, infrastructure, the environment, finance, and also social issues. Housing: need to consider the location, choice, and type of housing. Recreation: how do we reflect the changing needs of our population. Senior center expansion: funded by tax initiative, but need more fundraising. Transportation: a critical need, including streets, pedestrian needs, and transit. Traffic operations: converting signage for aging population. Signals: larger bulbs, brighter. Crosswalk timing: more time for pedestrians. Connect major activity centers via public transit. Utilities: need to stay reliable and affordable, and recognize fixed incomes. Need to look for volunteer opportunities within local government. Aging of city workforce: 54% are boomers and beyond; this is a significant issue, succession planning and knowledge transfer.

Ray Caraway, President, Community Foundation of Northern Colorado

Opportunities: people are moving to Fort Collins who could live anywhere and choose to live here. They want to volunteer, be engaged, and give back to community. They are serving on nonprofit boards, churches, schools, mentoring programs, hospitals, and natural resources. People become more charitable as they age, in terms of a percentage of their income, philanthropy, legacy giving. Challenges: so many nonprofits that serve seniors; need to be more strategic about how senior population is served, integrate services.

Neil Gluckman, Assistant County Manager, Larimer County

In the county government, we aren't able to be as strategic and visionary as we might like, because 90% of our services are proscribed by the state and federal

government programs we deliver. We are proud of the work done by the Office on Aging, which delivers Older Americans Act services. Our niche is around long-term care; programs include – ARCH – info and referral service; Family caregivers support program – respite, peer support; Ombudsman – for people living in long-term facilities. Challenges – funding: we do a good job, but need more resources to be “world class.”

Jan Rastall, Director of Adult Learner and Veteran Services, CSU

Opportunities for learning: help adult and veteran students get connected and make transition to being a college student. Road Scholar at Pingree Park, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute – learning for enrichment. Guest program – Granting University Enrollment for Specific Term – classes for credit without being formally admitted – 6 credits per semester. There are lots of ways to get engaged at CSU. Challenges – staying engaged with community, how we can serve you, keep you a part of CSU community. What can CSU provide for you?

Gordan Thibedeau, President and CEO, United Way of Larimer County

I’m part of Silver Tsunami myself. United Way strategic change in direction: focus on cutting poverty in half by 2025. Many seniors are living in poverty. Ensure all residents have basic necessities met, including seniors so they can live independently. 11.6% of Larimer County population is over 65; 6.2% of those live in poverty, with no resources. Most people will outlive their ability to drive by 10 years, but remain independent if they have resources available. 69% of adult abuse cases in 2010 were self-neglect – lost ability to manage daily life, basic needs. 15.7% were uninsured in 2011; 11,700 in need of dental care, gap of 7,000 we can’t provide dental services for. United Way funds services direct to seniors and others that indirectly serve them. 2,482 seniors use the Larimer County Food Bank – 8% of their total clients. What happens to seniors who have a food need who don’t have transportation? Need a partnership to combine services. We also have a volunteer center – resources to help you get connected to volunteer opportunities, for one time or a life time. We provide board of director training. We need readers to help tutor students. We are organizing a skilled volunteer effort – retired professionals volunteering. We have a 211 call center – referral service for any services you need.

Kevin Unger, President and CEO, Poudre Valley Health System

Hospital challenges: need to streamline care, unsustainable costs; access of care for senior population. Community case management program: we go to homes for acute care; EMS program: making house calls to check up on seniors. We need clinics in accessible places. Shift to wellness and prevention. Staffing challenges – 50% are baby boomers, need to better manage our workforce. Nursing shortage – 250,000 needed nationwide, short 150,000 physicians nationwide. We are able to recruit healthcare professionals to Fort Collins, but it is hard to replace boomers. We are undergoing our “lean initiative” – drive out waste, drive down cost of care. We have charted patient cost: Large # of steps, but limited value to patient, lots of bureaucracy and paperwork. Electronic health records – streamline, cut down on duplication. Capacity issues: Fort Collins is an anomaly – we need in-patient care

and outpatient care. There will be a 38% increase in orthopedic care in Fort Collins in next 10 years; 19% increase in spinal care; 33% increase in cardio needs; 32 in oncology; 33 neuroscience, etc. We need more integration of long-term care with hospital, physicians, and rehab centers.

Audience Q&A

1 – Transportation, regional, access to healthcare outside city, regular service to main areas and into county, not just CSU.

Darin: We just had a meeting with Loveland, Berthoud, Longmont, and Fort Collins representatives about regional transit, roads, etc. Agreed that we're more effective if speak with one voice. We need to form coalitions to speak as a region. Old model of competing with one another for funds is over, now we need partnerships to attract funding. We have a strong desire to built robust transit system, we want to have high level of service, but it is very, very expensive. For example, there is federal money for acquiring buses, but not for operations. We know it's a big deal for our community. We are a world class city without world class transit, and that is a disappointment.

2 – What is PVHS doing to plan for transportation to healthcare facilities planned regionally?

Kevin: The senior community needs door to hospital transportation. Trying to figure out what that should look like. We are considering SAINT and other programs as partners.

3 – New Larimer LIFT program?

Neil: Didn't know. Danielle described the program.

Ray: SAINT needs volunteers, money, more members. Meals on Wheels is as much about transportation as food; need volunteers and money.

4 – Older people are having trouble finding doctors and specialists in geriatrics and psychiatric services. There is no good list. Do you have plans to produce such an item?

Kevin: We will do that! Psychiatric services are in crisis statewide: underfunded, growing need, and everyone getting out. We want to meet needs of Northern Colorado, but we're faced with meeting the needs of entire state, as we are one of last providing intensive psychiatric services. We can't say no to non-residents. We are working with state legislature to find solutions, and need funding to make it work. We are committed to providing services, but it costs \$5 million annually just to run Mountain Crest. Statewide solution is needed.

5 – The planning documents for your organizations, few, if any, have cited attention to seniors. Take the city’s economic health plan, for example. After today, will you re-evaluate?

Darin: As I said, we need to do a better job engaging citizens. Need to better understand priorities. One benefit of this kind of community conversation: I needed to take the time to research and learn what my organization is doing so I could participate in this discussion. How do we learn from these discussions? I shared my experience about preparing for this program with city mid-level managers. It makes us more aware, if we don’t take this experience back and lead, why are we here? My awareness will have a big impact on my role as a city leader.

Neil: In order to understand your job, you have to have direct experience (in this case, getting old). People who wanted to retire have not. There are a lot of county workers who are over 65, and it has really helped us understand what the needs are, internally and externally. The Office on Aging has a strategic plan. The Workforce Center is targeting baby boomers and seniors seeking employment.

6 – There are people who need to continue working, but not full time. Do your organizations have processes in place that support people doing this?

Neil: Larimer County doesn’t do forced retirement. Check out our upcoming Boomers and Beyond workshop for employment opportunities.

Kevin: We are getting creative about part time employment. We have a specific problem with addressing the physical demands of the job on caretakers, and are working to minimize lifting, make processes more ergonomic, etc.

Darin: We are getting better at non-traditional working relationships. We are concerned about knowledge transfer, what happens to an organization when lifelong employees retire? How to transfer that experience while respecting their commitment to city service?

7 – There is an apparent conflict between housing ordinances that are created due to the student population that restricts options for seniors. Specifically by limiting number of unrelated people living in a dwelling makes it hard for seniors to do cohousing, alley houses, etc. How can we mitigate these circumstances?

Darin: This is the first time I’ve heard this concern. We were trying to solve a long-standing problem in some neighborhoods. We need to be careful not to discriminate against certain classes – we can’t make exceptions and have to treat all categories of renters the same. Neighbors are saying the ordinance has been effective.

Ray: We have recently seen an interest in donating rental property to fund charitable causes. Increasing number of seniors who have owned investment real estate who are now donating those properties to the Community Foundation.