Identified Gaps and Recommendations for

North St. Paul

Conducted by

Students in SW 8251: Social Work Practice in Health, Disabilities, and Aging

On behalf of

The City of North St. Paul

With support from

The Resilient Communities Project

Resilient Communities Project

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This project was supported by the Resilient Communities Project (RCP), a program at the University of Minnesota that convenes the wide-ranging expertise of U of M faculty and students to address strategic local projects that advance community resilience and sustainability. RCP is a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) and the Institute on the Environment.

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SW 8251: Identified Gaps and Recommendations for North St Paul

This feedback is based upon information gathered in the process of developing the resource reference list, as well as through some in person interviews at the City Open House in October, and In-home interviews conducted by students in SW 8252.

These recommendations are based upon concepts that inform "successful" aging, including health promotion, financial stability, pursuits for wellbeing, social engagement, and meaningful activity.

Observations about North St Paul:

- There exists working class as well as more affluent neighborhoods within the city.
- The population is 81.2 % white, 7% African-American, 6% Asian, and the rest Other (Native American, Hispanic, etc.)
- The median household income is about $52,000., less than Mpls, higher than St Paul
- Many services offered by the city seem to assume some financial resources that enable choices; there seem to be fewer programs targeting those on fixed incomes. If existing programs do accommodate those on fixed incomes, that information is not readily apparent.
- Many elders in North St. Paul may be retirees focused on that phase of life. However, there are also likely others engaged in work, caring for relatives (including children) and engaging in physical activity and culturally meaningful activities that span generations.
- Many activities and resources depend upon driving or having a car for access.
- Many resources depend upon having a computer/ computer knowledge and access to find out about them and access them.

Recommendations:

Housing:

- Many of the resources identified are in neighboring communities. Residents may be forced to move out of town if their needs or preferences change, as can be expected as people age. The city may want to consider how older residents become aware of the other options and how they are transported to check out these other housing options.

- Consider development of a housing resource center that provides residents information about housing options. This might also be a place where resources are provided to help elders learn about how they can also stay in their own homes.
- Given that many housing options exist outside of North St. Paul, the city may want to think about transportation options that will allow seniors who have moved to facilities outside of N. St. Paul to be able to maintain legacy relationships that may be important for ongoing well-being.
- Invest in more senior cottage housing opportunities. Include more senior cottage housing opportunities for both low income and seniors that have means to pay, e.g: range of housing options that are not income dependent
- More federal housing programs for low income seniors enabling them to stay in town
- Create housing outreach programs and create awareness about the continuum of senior housing options
- Elders have voiced a desire to live close to Downtown so they can participate in City activities, walk to shops, etc. They described a need for more and varied housing options within walking distance of Downtown.

Social Activities:

- Many activities identified require transportation, internet access, or fees for access or participation. These may become barriers for many residents as they grow older, manage on fixed incomes, etc. .
- Develop on-site advertised activities for elders to meet others, to date: a "meeting place" or commons. One resident stated his desire for a place where he could go and "know I could have a conversation with someone."
- Develop community-based interest groups and social networks or events/ activities for elders including elderly sexuality
- Better advertisement about free activities: they exist, but the word isn't out, people don't seem to know where to go for information.
- Culturally specific programming (options) for large foreign-born population: need more information about what is there and what would these groups like to see in their community that is not there already, because none of this is advertised anywhere that we could find. Opportunity for cultural enrichment for the community as a whole.

- Note the presence of/ opportunity for grandparent caregivers to young children: options for childcare so elderly persons can be engaged/involved
- More advertisement about programming offered at the Workforce Center: so much there for individuals to take advantage of! Consider simplification of web navigation? One has to do a lot of digging on the website.
- Organized volunteering resource specific to older populations: where can elders volunteer in the community? Who is looking for volunteers?
- Plan for transportation options to/from activities for individuals without a car or someone to drive them, or if not on a bus line? Create affordable options??
- Costs for activities: issues include costs not advertised-- a lot of "call us to find out--" some may not be affordable on a fixed-income: are scholarships/ waivers available?
- Many activities were geared toward less active seniors. (such as card games) Develop a continuum of options to encourage physical activity, eg: biking groups, walking groups, gardening groups, etc.
- Consider strategies for intergenerational activities, or support for inter-generational interactions: see activities above; child care; mentorship/ tutoring, etc.?
- Social "Mixers" or other opportunities to help seniors meet new people and explore new skills that might encourage new friendships, e.g.: language learning, cross cultural sharing or education, welcome events for new residents, etc.
- Cultural Activities/Events/Opportunities are limited. Create opportunities for diverse community members to share heritage, cultures, etc. As people learn about other cultures it can promote diversity.
- More visible information and support for elders finding new relationships, engaging in healthy sexuality, and getting needs for intimacy met as personal circumstances change.

Health Care:

- Hospital / acute care resources exist in neighboring communities. Residents need transportation for medical appointments, which does seem to be available through medical transportation systems in place.
- Advocates to assist navigating the health care system as accessing health care can be rather complex and confusing, especially when technology is playing a greater and greater role in accessing services. Consider classes on becoming a good consumer of health care; volunteer or low-cost advocates to assist older adults with navigating/accessing health care. Volunteers could help with things such as

accompanying the individual to doctor's appointments and take notes, help find appropriate providers and schedule appointments, visit hospitalized or home bound residents, etc.

- Implement a block nurse program. (An individual from the Resilient Communities open house mentioned she would like to see this program in her community.) This community-based system of nursing support is more efficient and promotes greater well-being. Health care issues often determine housing options. Pro-active health management will enable more residents to remain in their homes longer, and enjoy better quality of life.
- Provide information re: range of health care management options, including medical homes, geriatric specialists, care coordination, home modifications, and home based care options, etc. (This information can be added on to the home modification initiative already established in north St. Paul, perhaps.)
- Seek out and provide information re: accessing culturally or spiritually appropriate in home care providers (e.g.: Nurses, PCA's) including those with language fluency other than English, etc.
- Provide information/ education about how to interview potential health care providers (PCA's, etc.) for "good fit," checking credentials, etc. : tips on what to look for when hiring a health care provider, etc.

Transportation:

- There are only 2 bus lines that serve this community. Enhancing transportation options would give seniors more options for life management, civic engagement, and pursuit of activities.
- There are not many services that take people anywhere but medical appointments.
- Consider development of a city transportation service (like a circulator bus/van) that takes people to places aside from medical appointments. Stops could be parks/shopping centers, Downtown, etc. Service could run 2 or 3 days a week. This would take people together to the same place and so also offer opportunities for community building.
- Develop a ride-share program that connects volunteer drivers in the community with people who need rides. This provides companionship, relationship, and rides. There could be a small fee for this service to cover costs, or it could be free, depending on needs and resources.

- Access to transportation for social activities, shopping, and other non-medical needs is a challenge for those who do not drive. Plan for how those whose driving capabilities might change will access needed services and supplies.

Basic Needs and Activities of Daily Living:

- There are several free financial counseling resources for to help adults plan for retirement, get out of debt, or purchase a house. These assume a certain level of financial resources. Develop a financial counseling service available that specializes in helping seniors who are already retired plan to live on a fixed income, confront changing financial circumstances, manage unexpected hardships, etc. Elders would benefit from advice on how to navigate the systems that provide those fixed incomes, such as Social Security and pensions.
- There is a need for a strong support system for grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren. Start a Circle of Parents support group that meets weekly to allow them opportunities to share their challenges raising grandchildren would be helpful.
- Provide more information re: child care options, especially after hours and weekends.
- See resource list for services providing food, meals, chore services and in home health care.
- There is one food shelf in North St Paul. Consider developing food extending projects, e.g.: community gardens, or Fare Share type models that provide food in exchange for volunteer hours, etc.
- Consider models for sharing resources/ skills exchanges community wide in ways that allow seniors to contribute meaningfully to community life, as well as benefit. Examples might include trading child care or cooking for snow shoveling or lawn mowing, etc.

Pet care

- The majority of pet care services are only located in metro cities and not in the city of North Saint Paul. This makes it difficult for seniors with pets to commute to these locations to receive care for their pets. Some seniors are not able to drive and may be using transportation services such as Metro Mobility to commute to places. Metro Mobility, however, is only limited to humans and animals are not allowed.
- Provide information on mobile veterinary services which come to the pet owner's home.

Safety/ Legal:

- Identify and /or develop legal services for low income residents: legal aid, etc.
- Identify or develop legal expertise in elder/ family law
- Add street lights for safety and improved visibility. Residents noted there is not adequate lighting along roads and pathways. More lighting would contribute to feelings of safety and security, and encourage street level activity.

Additional Suggestions:

Information Center: There are limited locations, places, or buildings in North Saint Paul that provide resources to everyone in North Saint Paul. Most places only provide information on services they are connected with or events that their program is providing. An information center would be beneficial for individuals such as seniors to find resources of every programs, events, or activities in North Saint Paul as well as places that are close to North Saint Paul. At the information center people can find newsletters, newspapers, brochures, calendars, and other information from different organizations in North Saint Paul.

Workforce Center: This community resource has many programs and resources available. However, most information is available only online, and this could prove a barrier to those without computer access, or to those not comfortable with computer skills.

Questions for consideration:

Is there a community wide mailing or newsletter that goes out? (We did hear of the "utility bill insert")

What is the impact of the high majority of white people in the community? Is this an isolating factor for other groups? How does that impact recruitment and retention of a diverse populace? Does the Community Center use reflect population diversity? Are these desired objectives for the City?

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