

Damascus *engAGE in Community* MAPPS Report

Damascus was originally developed on the Foster-Barlow Road (an extension of the Oregon Trail) and was founded in 1852. It became an incorporated city in 2004 and is currently working to complete its comprehensive plan. There are numerous historic resources in Damascus including; homes, schools, cemetery, and post office. There is no public transportation service, public library, or Chamber of Commerce. The comprehensive plan will serve to define the community's goals, policies, and vision for the future along with guiding the development of particular aspects of the city's economic and social character.¹

In 2010, the population in Damascus was 10,539; 49% female and 51% male. Forty-three percent of Damascus residents are over the age of 45; 13% are over the age of 65. Approximately 91% of residents identify themselves as white, with Hispanic and Asian being the largest reported minority groups (4.4% and 3.4% respectively). Between 2005 and 2009, the median household income was \$76,979, and the community's home ownership rate was 96.5% (compared to only 64.3% for the entire state of Oregon). During these same years, 2.3% of the Damascus population was identified as living in poverty, compared to 13.6% of all Oregon residents.²

engAGE in Community

Clackamas County Social Services and Extension Family and Community Health have partnered with communities across the County to assess resources and residents' perceptions of current and future resources required to improve the livability or 'age-friendliness' of communities within Clackamas County. Information gathered from and by local residents will be used to develop an *engAGE in Community* strategic plan. Within local communities, the project objectives are to (1) provide data to inform 'age-friendly' multi-sector planning efforts, (2) assess and increase community capacity, resources, and relevance for evidence-based 'age-friendly' practices, (3) provide basis for current and future actions, and (4) share results with community audiences. This report is a brief summary of Damascus' *engAGE in Community MAPPS* (Mapping Attributes: Participatory Photographic Surveys) activities.

Relevance for Damascus Community

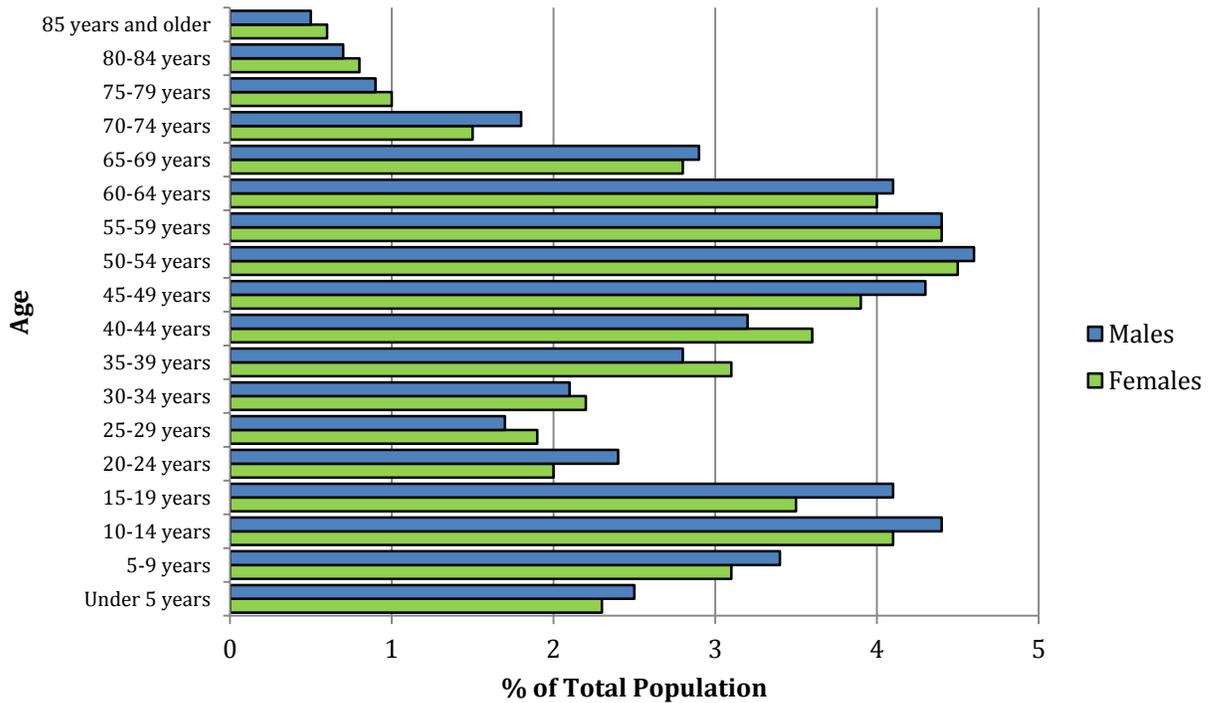
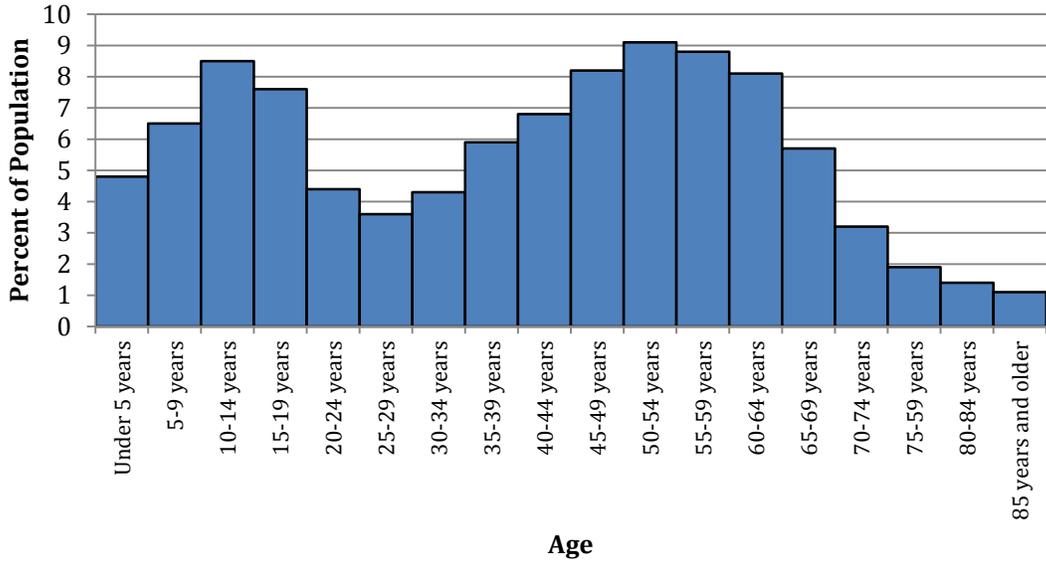
Clackamas County and County communities are aging, which may burden the current individual, family, and community resources and affect the ability of County residents to age actively and successfully in their residence and/or community of choice. Estimates are that by 2015 more than 40 percent of adults living in Clackamas County communities will be over the age of 50. Because Damascus has recently become an incorporated city and is in the process of completing its comprehensive plan, it is important the older population is considered and the concept of aging-in-place is included to support livability for all ages. Planning for an older population in the future

¹ <http://www.ci.damascus.or.us/Default.aspx>

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2010 American Community Survey

requires local input with an understanding of the current community supports and barriers to place-based aging as well as commitment to change—increasing supports and removing barriers so that all community residents have the choice to live well and age in their residence and community of choice.

Population Distribution by Age and Age and Gender for Damascus



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2010 American Community Survey

Methods and Preliminary Themes

An *engAGE MAPPs* team (n=7) comprised of local residents with an interest in creating a more 'age-friendly' Damascus community volunteered to individually photograph and map the features of the area that they perceived as either opportunities for or obstacles to place-based aging for Damascus residents. Over 80 photographs were taken.

Together, the *engAGE MAPPs* team discussed the photographs during a focus group meeting and the most relevant 50 photographs were mapped and included in the presentation for the larger community conversation. Over 20 local residents attended and participated in a community conversation held at the Damascus City Hall on an evening in November 2011. The conversation was facilitated by Dr. Deborah John, OSU Extension faculty in Clackamas County. During the 2.5 hour dinner and conversation, each of the photographs were displayed; participants discussed the community feature in terms of its 'age-friendliness' that is as supporting or hindering one's capacity to live and thrive in the community regardless of age or ability.

Physical Environment--118 References

The physical environment is rich with natural and built amenities providing supports for and challenges to age-friendliness. The physical environment was referenced more frequently with more identifiable barriers to aging-in-place than either the social or service environments, indicating that while residents like the rural and open spaces in Damascus, the community desires a building for a community center and improved walkability, as one participant stated "We always have to use a motorcar, which is not always what older people prefer doing, it is not their big pleasure in life to drive around, we do it because we know how."

Transportation (50 total references/34 barriers)

- Transportation supports include: The Ride Connection; new streets; improvements to crosswalks, traffic devices, and intersections.
- Transportation barriers include: a lack of places to walk, including sidewalks, trails, walking paths and bike paths; pedestrian safety issues at crosswalk and intersections, specifically the amount of time pedestrians are allotted to cross the street; no transportation service; reliability on cars for transportation; traffic congestion and difficulty accessing businesses and navigating through parking lots; and a need for more parking spaces at parks and local farms.
- Participants emphasized the need for sidewalks and walking areas in Damascus. Many residents walk on the roads because there is nowhere else to walk in the community.

Housing (8 total references/2 barriers)

- Housing features that were identified as supports include new developments and residential communities that contain parks and sidewalks.
- Homes in Damascus are primarily single-family homes and owner occupied, one multi-family complex.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings (56 total references/26 barriers)

- Supports and/or built environment improvements that support age-friendly livability include: rural and open space; a community garden; land that is used and shared by others in the community; a cemetery; accessibility to the fire department, police services, and city hall; a school which hosts community events and is a certified emergency shelter; and a park.
- Outdoor spaces and building features that were identified as barriers to community livability for all ages include: very few sidewalks and bike lanes; parking lots that are difficult to navigate; building accessibility; empty space due to unsuccessful businesses; and a desire for more parking spaces at parks and local farms.
- The need for a community center and the lack of sidewalks were the most frequently reported barriers across all outdoor spaces and buildings.
- Other topics that were discussed include roads, schools, and the future changes to the physical environment proposed in the comprehensive plan.

Social Environment—83 references

The social environment emerged as being supported through various community events hosted by churches, at the Boring Grange, and in the park. ***Participants emphasized a desire for a community center rather than a senior center to combine the area to be age-friendly as oppose to segregating age classes.*** A community center would enrich the social environment for Damascus, as one participant stated, “I strongly believe that if we have a community center that is accessible, that will bring a community together.”

Respect and Inclusion (8 total references/3 barriers)

- Residents desire a community center, as oppose to a senior center, in order to include all age groups.
- Additional topics include land that is shared by community members; members perceive community as a family; and the large increase in elder residence in Clackamas County should encourage discussion as to how to plan for that population.
- Participants reported that having numerous school districts in Damascus creates separation across people and discourages integration in the community.

Social Participation (43 total references/18 barriers)

- Participants would like to see a community center that would provide a place for members to play games, eat meals together, and attend classes.
- Factors that encourage social participation include a community garden; community events hosted by local churches; the Boring Grange; the fiber arts school; and the park.
- Barriers to social participation include accessibility and a lack of a community center and public library.

Civic Engagement and Employment (11 total references/ 3 barriers)

- Volunteers play an important role in services such as the Ride Connection; Kiwanis; and operating the fiber arts school. Volunteerism was mentioned in the context of a food access grant and difficulty getting Kiwanis services into schools.
- Participants feel their voices are not being heard in the community regarding city planning and finding a building for a community center.

Service Environment—61 references

The service environment was referenced the least, indicating that residents perceive the service environment to be well resourced across service areas. However, barriers were identified in areas of healthy lifestyle services such as not having a public library or transportation service. Supports to the service environment include Meals-on-Wheels, shopping facilities, food delivery through Safeway, the Ride Connection, Kiwanis, and a network of churches that support the community and encourage social participation.

Health Care and Medical Services (3 total references/ 0 barriers)

- There is one family practice physician's office in Damascus. Miramont, which is not located in Damascus, was mentioned as a nice senior living facility. Participants mentioned they would like to see a community center house certain medical services and be a location for people to get flu shots.

Communication and Information Networks (4 total references/1 barrier)

- Information is distributed throughout the community via Good Morning Damascus meetings. Residents are not aware of the Meal-On-Wheels service offered in Damascus.

References

1. <http://www.ci.damascus.or.us/Default.aspx>
2. U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2010 American Community Survey