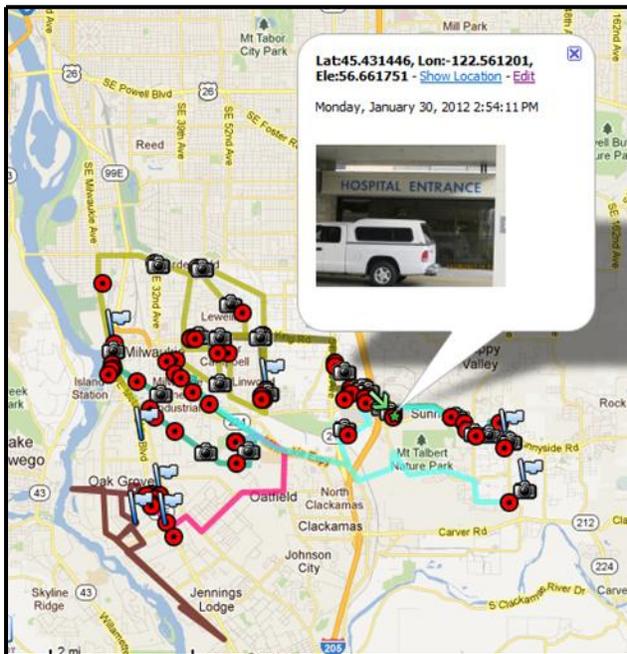


North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District (NCPRD) *engAGE in Community* MAPPS Report

The North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District (NCPRD) was formed in 1990, when residents voted to create a County Service District (District).¹ As a County Service District, NCPRD has its own taxing authority and is legally separated from other Clackamas County departments. The Board of County Commissioners serves as the District's Board of Directors. NCPRD serves the cities of Milwaukie and Happy Valley and the neighborhood sub areas, including Oak Lodge, Oatfield, Southgate/Town Center, and Sunnyside. The service area is approximately 32 square miles and is defined by the Clackamas River to the south, Willamette River on the west, Multnomah County line on the north, and the 1979 Urban Growth Boundary on the east.² NCPRD contains the North Clackamas Aquatic Park, the Milwaukie Center, and over 30 parks, which provide access to numerous recreational opportunities. The Milwaukie Center offers services such as: a nutrition program, transportation program, health services, social services, on-site services, adult and youth classes, and group activities, along with hosting numerous events throughout the year. Current projects within the NCPRD district include: the Trolley Trail, Luther Road Habitat Restoration project, Hood View park, the Scouters' Mountain trail system, and a park plan for the Anderegg property.¹



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.³ 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 NCPRD

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 about 35 percent of adults living in Clackamas County communities will be over the age of 50.⁴ As reported in the NCPRD Master Plan,

¹ Details of these and other projects are available at <http://ncprd.com/planning/current-projects>

in 2001 over 14% of residents in the NCPRD were over the age of 65, compared to 11% in greater Clackamas County, and almost one in five were older than 60, which is considered the least likely group to participate in active transportation and recreation.⁵ NCPRD is envisioned as a well-functioning and well-maintained park system that enhances the quality of life by offering a diversity of recreational opportunities for people of all ages and needs. One of the Plan's strategic goals addresses the needs of an age diverse population: *Meet the recreational needs of all ages, physical conditions and lifestyles by providing appropriate facilities and programs to serve the needs of all geographic areas of the District.*ⁱⁱ NCPRD regularly revisits and updates the Master Plan in response to changing conditions within the District. Planning for an older population in the future requires local input with an understanding of the current community supports and barriers to active 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 actively in their community of choice.

Methods and Preliminary Themes

An *engAGE MAPPs* team (n=9) comprised of local NCPRD residents with an interest in creating a more 'age-friendly' District were trained and volunteered to individually photograph and map the NCPRD environmental features that they perceived as either opportunities for or obstacles to aging-in-place with enhanced quality of life. Over 100 photographs were taken and mapped on 7 routes that encompasses over 40% of the land area included in the District. The *engAGE MAPPs* team convened to discuss the photographs and maps during a focus group meeting. The most relevant 50 photographs, based on group consensus, were mapped and included in the presentation for a larger community conversation. Over 25 residents and stakeholders from across the District attended and participated in a community conversation held at the Milwaukie Center on an evening in March 2012. The event was facilitated by Dr. Deborah John, OSU Extension faculty in Clackamas County's Family and Community Health program; key partners (Clackamas County Social Services; AARP Oregon) and District stakeholders (NCPRD Director) were in attendance. During the dinner and conversation, photographs were displayed; participants discussed the community feature in terms of its 'age-friendliness' that is as supporting (making easier) or hindering (making harder) one's capacity to live and thrive in the District and District communities regardless of age or ability.

Physical Environment—171 references

The physical environment is rich with natural and built amenities providing supports for and limitations to perceptions of age-friendliness. Physical environment features – specifically transportation attributes – were photographed more frequently (54 of transportation photographs of 100 total photographs) and discussed as providing more obstacles to the “age-friendliness” of the District than either the social or service environments. The conversation narrative revealed that while the NCPRD has a plethora of well-resourced outdoor spaces and includes aspects of an efficient mass transit system, all residents did not have the same access to the transit system or outdoor recreation assets, and many did not feel safe using many of the public transportation services and outdoor spaces. These conditions – differences among residents in terms of access and perceived safety risk - negatively affect NCPRD's “age-friendliness,” especially for those whose only mode of transportation is public transit. Many older residents reported

ⁱⁱ Quoted from Master Plan (p1.1) available at http://ncprd.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/North_Clackamas_County_Parks_Plan1.pdf

that the public transportation system is “confusing” or “not available in my area,” and expressed concerns about their personal safety because of conditions at transit stops and associated with the current and proposed light rail lines. Participants expressed concerns that there are very few affordable housing options in NCPRD that meet a variety of lifestyles and independent living interests; many residents are unable to stay in their own homes because the costs are too high.

Transportation (67 total references/36 barriers)

- Transportation supports include: public transportation provided by Tri-met, Max, and Amtrak services; handicap accessibility on most public transportation services; travel trainers such as Elders in Action and Ride Connection; active transportation improvements, such as bike lanes.
- Transportation barriers include: public transportation safety concerns; parking safety concerns; confusion surrounding public transportation; distances to closest Tri-met stop; absence of adequate roadway signage and traffic calming devices; lack of transit stop covers or shelter; little support for mass transit; lack of sidewalks and crosswalks; and a lack of from county planners for increased sidewalks and improved mass transit/public transportation facilities. When faced with the inability to drive one self, participants expressed confusion regarding how mass transportation system operates and how to use it.
- Participants they are fearful to use public transportation services, such as the MAX or Tri-met because of gang related activity. They are also discouraged to park in parking structures or parking lots due to safety concerns, poor visibility, and a lack of crosswalks.

Housing (24 total references/10 barriers)

- Housing features that were identified as supports include: some affordable and accessible housing options such as condominiums and single level homes; a desire for 55 or older housing options; some housing assistance for older adults such as HUD 202 buildings.
- Housing features that were identified as barriers include: a lack of accessible affordable housing options for older adults including a 7 year wait list to live in Section 8 housing due to a lack of subsidized housing options and funding; lack of public support to help older adults relocate; and the rent and utility expenses in mobile home communities are such that many residence cannot afford to stay in their homes any longer but because of a lack of affordable housing they stay in their mobile home and pay the high fees.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings (79 total references/46 barriers)

- Supports and/or built environment improvements that support age-friendly livability include: accessibility to parks and open spaces; increased and improved bike lanes; sidewalks in newer residential communities; extensive trail system; community features and resources such as the Milwaukie Center, Clackamas Town Center, and library; and farmers market in the Spring and Summer.
- Outdoor spaces and building features that were identified as barriers to community livability for all ages include: lack of sidewalks; accessibility issues as it relates to transit stops; lack of covers and protection at transit stops; lack of cross walks; little support for pedestrian paths and improved sidewalks; lack of accessible buildings and infrastructures; limited parking and poor lighting at the Clackamas Town Center; and geographical barriers which limit accessibility.

- Participants expressed their dislike for the appearance and aesthetics of the tri-met station and public transportation stations; and graffiti, which discourage residents from accessing particular resources and services. Participants also discussed the desire for quiet spaces and the need for more “older adult-friendly” spaces.
- Safety concerns regarding outdoor spaces, specifically as it relates to public transportation, parking structures, and the Clackamas Town Center. Participants expressed fear and concern due to gang related activity around the Town Center and MAX transportation which limit their ability to participate in social activities and take public transportation.

Solutions (28 total references)

- Transportation solutions include: travel trainers such as Elders in Action or Ride Connection; adventures on public transportation; free buses for seniors; educating citizens about how resources such as public transportation will allow more people to age-in-place; and encouraging residents to learn how to use public transportation. Other solutions include addressing the speed limit in the area with speed bumps or other traffic calming devices.
- There were multiple comments about informing the local representatives, County Commissioners, and the Transportation Regional Planning (TRP) committee to inform them of proposed solutions or concerns.
- Housing solutions include: condominium communities; 202 buildings and 55 or older housing options close to a transit line. Participants discussed presenting this information presented to Real Estate developers and builders and having a voluntary certification program so that homeowners can list their home as accessible.
- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings solutions include: ensuring sidewalks in neighborhoods; an outdoor space or plaza at the Clackamas Town Center; and contacting businesses to see if they would be willing to share space for clubs or organizations; and having a farmers market.

Social Environment—122 references

The social environment emerged as being supported through outdoor recreational opportunities, farmers market, community library which gives free passes to local gardens and museums, the Milwaukie Center, and the Clackamas Town Center. Many participants expressed their fear and hesitation in and around the Clackamas Town Center area and when using public transportation, “they were afraid to do the max or the bus at night because they are already vulnerable, then how do they get to social activities at night?” Other topics that were addressed include: public transportation services are handicap accessible, the homeless rate in the Clackamas district, volunteer opportunities, and the need for a list of guilds or hobby organizations in the area.

Respect and Inclusion (18 total references/ 11 barriers)

- Community residents reported most of the public transportation services are handicap accessible. Social activities for older adults are inclusive even for people with limited mobility. Participants expressed the need for parents to take responsibility for their children, specifically in regards to gang related activity and providing role models for children.
- Other comments include the high homeless rates in Oregon and Clackamas County.

- Some public transportation services are not handicap accessible and therefore unavailable for people with disabilities. Participants expressed concern that the society does not place priority on providing services and resources for older adults.

Social Participation (47 total references/ 24 barriers)

- Factors that encourage social participation include: public transportation group activities and travel trainers; neighborhood social events such as National Night Out; Clackamas Town Center which provides a social culture for older adults; farmers market; community library which offers adult programming and free passes to the Children’s museum, Japanese Gardens, and Chinese Gardens; Community Colleges, REI, and the parks and rec district offer education classes; the Milwaukie Center hosts classes; and hobby organizations.
- Barriers to social participation include: safety concerns which prevent residents from participating in social activities due to local gang activity, specifically when using public transportation and at the Clackamas Town Center; few quiet spaces; the district has not list of guilds or societies for people of common interests and hobbies.
- Participants discussed the need for older adults to be unified and create their own space, rather than relying on outside sources to fix any issues or problems.

Civic Engagement and Employment (20 references/ 5 barriers)

- Elders in Action and Ride Connection were referenced as good resources for travel trainers. Residents discussed the need to communicate ideas and information to the planning committee. There are multiple volunteer opportunities available at the Milwaukie Providence Hospital and the Milwaukie Center.
- Residents voiced concern that planning committees and transportation services do not consider the needs of older adults and sense citizens are against mass transit and improving active transportation services such as sidewalks.

Solutions (31 references)

- Respect and Inclusion solutions that participants discussed regarded the need to help the homeless population in Oregon. Other participants discussed the need for parents to take responsibility of their own children and to not rely on society or the police to be responsible.
- Social participation solutions include: ensuring older adults feel safe when using public transportation and when at the Clackamas Town Center; some participants suggested patrolling outside of the theatre so that “seniors don’t feel intimidated or uncomfortable”; participating in events activities such as National Night Out, education programs from the community college or Milwaukie Center, and the Milwaukie Library; establishing a list of guilds or hobby organizations; and establishing a service or social collaborative such as Lake Oswego Value Exchange.
- Civic Participation and Employment solutions include encouraging residents to work with their local planning committee and Tri-met representative, and to participate in voting for civic leaders. Multiple volunteers opportunities were also mentioned.

- Another solution that was discussed was to encourage older residents to create their own space, to be unified, and gather together as a community rather than expecting the county to solve their problems.

Service Environment—91 references

The NCPRD seems to be well resourced in the area of healthy lifestyle services. However, barriers were identified in support services for relocating older adults and communications that influenced the ability of residents to age-in-place.

Health Care and Medical Services (1 reference)

- The Milwaukie Providence Hospital was briefly mentioned, aside from this, no other comments were made regarding health care and medical services in the district.

Communication and Information Networks (19 total references/ 6 barriers)

- Public transportation services offer information regarding handicap accessibility; absence of formal and informal bi-directional communications between residents and key public/private decision-makers/stakeholders; limited/targeted community input on important issues/decisions “There needs to be a focus on both, and a way to present this to people who are in some level of authority to get this through, and in terms of more localized action people can work with petitions.”
- Participants discussed using technology for gathering information and communication and how this will affect communication networks
- Informal communication is supported through local newsletters and newspapers.
- Communication and information barriers include: a lack of information or lists of social activities, such as guilds or hobby organizations, need for a clearinghouse besides the computer for those who are not computer literate.

Solutions (9 references)

- Community Support solutions include: service collaborative such as Lake Oswego Value Exchange and providing information via local newspapers or newsletters with information about organizations and guilds. Participants believed a good method to gather community data or information from residents would be through questionnaires sent via mail or an electronic format.
- Rose Villa hosted a bus tour for older adults to the End of The Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, from which participants took a trolley and toured Oregon City and then headed back to the bus to Rose Villa. Participants suggested events to promote public transit ridership.

Community-Specific Results

Milwaukie

- There were some comments regarding the Milwaukie lightrail as being controversial and was voted to be discontinued by Oak Grove.
- There is a lot of gang activity in Milwaukie and unincorporated area.

- Milwaukie Providence Hospital has a lot of volunteers and a lot of volunteer opportunities.
- The Milwaukie Library host numerous events and activities including music in the park and guest artists.

Happy Valley

- One participants commented, "...the Milwaukie Center does not serve into Happy Valley."

Endnotes

¹ <http://ncprd.com/explore-our-roots>

² http://ncprd.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/North_Clackamas_County_Parks_Plan1.pdf (p.2.1)

³ <http://clackamas.us/socialservices/engage.jsp>

⁴ <http://www.oea.das.state.or.us/DAS/OEA/demographic.shtml>

⁵ http://ncprd.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/North_Clackamas_County_Parks_Plan1.pdf (p2.6)