

## ***engAGE in Community MAPPS***

engAGE in Community is a community-based participatory action initiative with a mission of establishing Clackamas County as an age-friendly place that supports the ability of all people to age actively and successfully in their residence or community of choice. engAGE in Community teams identify and map assets and barriers to place-based aging in local communities. The engAGE team, individuals and organizations within Clackamas County who want to work together toward the goal of empowering Clackamas County communities to create the supports and infrastructure that will allow residents to live in age-friendly places.

Key partners include Clackamas County Social Services, OSU Extension Service, and AARP Oregon. engAGE in Community would not be possible without the efforts of engaged and community partners and volunteers!

### **Why is it important to focus on aging?**

The aging population is driving our nation's demographic transition. The Census Bureau anticipates that by 2050, one American in 20 will be 85 years old or older, compared to one in 100 today.<sup>1</sup> Aging adults in Clackamas County are no exception. The Oregon Department of Human Services states in their 2009 Healthy Aging by County Report that within just one generation the population of adults 60-74 years will increase by about 130 percent in Oregon. The number of adults 75 years and older will increase by approximately 170 percent. Older adults represent an underutilized reservoir of experience, talent, and expertise that can strengthen communities.

### **Approach – Community-engaged Participatory Assessment**

By exploring issue addressed by the World Health Organization (WHO), we can develop new and build upon exiting structures and services that help people stay in their own communities, make lifelong connections, build upon community assets, increase their quality of life and prevent unnecessary public expenditures. Areas identified by WHO include; *Physical environment* - outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing; *Social environment*- respect and social inclusion, social participation, communication and information; and *Service environment* - civic participation and employment opportunities, and community support and health.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert B. Hudson, ed. *Boomer Bust? Economic and Political Issues of the Graying Society* (Vol. 1) and *The Boomer and Their Future* (Praeger, 2008)

**engAGE in Community** includes several components that allow us to explore these areas: Community Forum, One-on-One Interviews, County-wide Telephone Survey, Online survey and Community Asset mapping called **MAPPs (Mapping Attributes: Participatory Photographic Surveys)**.

### **Community Asset MAPPs (Mapping Attributes: Participatory Photographic Surveys)**

**engAGE in Community** is using an exciting OSU Extension community engagement program, MAPPs (Mapping Attributes-Participatory Photographic Surveys), to document and report on residents' experience of place with respect to age-friendly supports and barriers in their Clackamas County communities. Community teams are recruited by local 'champions' with a strong interest in age-related community action. **engAGE** community teams are trained to conduct audits using photographs that are coded and mapped using the Global Positioning System (GPS). Community conversations based on the photographic data provide narratives which helps link people's experiences with their community place.

As a result of the community mapping process, **engAGE in Community** coalitions will emerge and organize, with the support of our key partners, and continue to work to address the barriers and expand the assets that create age-friendly communities across Clackamas County. All communities that have complete the engAGE MAPPs process will have an opportunity to apply for a small grant fund provided by **engAGE in Community** beginning in the later part of 2011. Funds will help the engAGE mapped communities move forward to address barriers and enhance supports they have identified through the mapping process.

#### **MAPPs allows communities to:**

- Assess the social and physical environmental contributions to the age-friendliness of their neighborhoods
- Understand diverse perceptions of their community environments for aging populations
- Identify community supports for and barriers to aging in place
- Identify social and service factors that impact age-friendliness of a community
- Communicate this information to stakeholders and policy makers
- Make an informed call for action!

#### **The MAPPs process and civic engagement**

The MAPPs process involves four steps, three of which include activates involving civic engagement to educate and provide tools to community residents wanting to gain insight and knowledge on how to create

a more age-friendly place to live. Highlighted throughout all activity engagement is the reinforcement that successful community development relies on our communities' most precious resource; its residents that care about their future and their neighbors' future. According to Thomas Endres from the National Council on Aging, "Civic engagement includes: unpaid charitable work (volunteering) on one end and full-time paid work in the public interest on the other end with stipend service somewhere in the middle." This is one reason why senior centers, libraries, and other community centered organizations are proving to be outstanding partners for spearheading the engAGE in Community MAPPS component. These community partners and participants understand the importance of respect and inclusion. Senior center directors and organization leaders know that all citizens can contribute ideas, energy and action for improving community, and that these proposals are more likely to be accepted if citizens have a role in shaping them.

### **engAGE MAPPS process overview**

**Step 1 - Introduction and MAPPS recruitment:** In our first meeting we strive educate community members about the engAGE initiative, facilitate Q&A, and introduce the MAPPS activity all at the same meeting. Attendees are recruited by local champions that have accepted our invitation or have requested the engAGE team to facilitate the MAPPS process in their community. Attendees are given a brief overview on 'how to' map community attributes that are seen by residents as either supports or barriers to place-based aging across the lifespan. Those who are interested in mapping, volunteer to do so at this time, those who are not learn more about the activities that will be happening in and around the community.

**Step 2 – Linking Photos to Narratives.** Participants share their stories of place through two focus group activities. In the first focus group photographers begin to explore their community's supports and barriers for age-friendliness. Then in second focus group open dialogue among community members creates a narrative which is linked to particular images. This is a larger focus group called an *engAGE in Community Conversation*

**Step 3 – Mapping Photos and Narratives.** Photographs and narratives are coded and mapped using geographic information systems, which further links people experiences with the place. This is done by OSU Extension Service using a data program specific to MAPPS.

**Step 4 – Call to Action.** New, shared knowledge emerges and is communicated to local groups and decision-makers, such as health professionals, business owners, community organizations, and policy makers. Grant funds will be available to assist communities that have:

1. Complete the MAPPS process and to present a proposal for use of based on the outcome of their mapping process
2. Identify a public or non-profit entity to contract with the county
3. Participate in a county wide engAGE steering committee. This will be a great way to address needs as well as a catalyst for communities to plan and work together

The Hoodland area was the first community to participate in the *engAGE MAPPS* process. Local residents documented their experience of their community using participatory photo mapping. Community members gathered for the 'engAGE in Community Hoodland Conversation' on December 9th, 2010 to create their community profile through dialogue explaining specific images as supports and/or barriers to place-based aging in their community. The engagement was tremendous! Over 50 people participated in the conversation at the Mt. Hood Lions Club in Welches on one of the worst weather events of the winter season.

**Hoodland** is a good example of a community well on its way to making its community more age-friendly for everyone in the community. Hoodland residents' pioneering efforts are already increasing their resource capacity and resiliency in the community by working together on issues that matter to them. This is true community development! Coalition building efforts are well underway. All mapped communities are encouraged to familiar with the WHO categorical framework (*Physical environment, Social environment, and service environment*) of the **engAGE in Community** initiative, as well as the results of the photo mapping project that we as a community have identified the resources or services that could be improved upon. The engAGED Hoodland Coalition did their homework! Thus far the Hoodland engAGED coalition has tentatively identified "housing [the *physical* environment as] a concern that the group felt was important" that they would like to focus on. The second topic pinpointed by the group to become a priority was that of communication in the *service* environment.

The Hoodland engAGED coalition has also identified a fiscal agent, *Hoodland Senior Center*, to represent their group. The Hoodland group has determined that efforts for successful coalition and resource building are best served by multifunctional representation and collaboration among many different community organizations and individuals. This is true community development! The women's club, Lion's Club, Disability Rights Center, the Villages, Hoodland Senior Center, and faith based organizations, private businesses, and community individuals are all working together in moving forward towards a more age-friendly Hoodland. They are finding, much like other MAPPED communities, knowledge of and allocation of

existing resources in the community will be an important component for age-friendly community advancement. **Wilsonville** is strategically planning and moving forward. For example; Wilsonville has had a follow-up meetings and is in the process of scheduling an *engAGE in Community Results* presentation for civic leaders, policy makers, and community planners in their community.. *The Wilsonville Community Center* is leading the efforts in the Wilsonville community.

**Canby** is scheduled for a follow up meeting in mid October. *The Canby Library* is leading the efforts in the Canby community. The Canby *engAGE in Community Conversation* was held at the Canby Center in

Spring 2011. **Oregon City** is on board and scheduled to be the next *engAGE MAPPs* community! *The Pioneer Center* is leading the efforts in Oregon City and their first activity is scheduled for early September 2011. **Sandy, Damascus, Milwaukie, and Lake Oswego** are communities that have expressed interest in the *engAGE MAPPs* process. Right now the *engAGE MAPPs* team is working with these communities in hopes to finalize commitments, as well as, solidifying activity dates. If you would like to view the preliminary *engAGE in Community MAPPs* reports from Hoodland, Canby, and Wilsonville you can find them on the *engAGE* site "reports" tab: [http://www.clackamas.us/socialservices/engage\\_reports.jsp](http://www.clackamas.us/socialservices/engage_reports.jsp)

***engAGE in Community*** partners are committed to helping communities through the *MAPPs* process. We are providing each completed *MAPPs* (step 1-3) community with a *MAPPs* report, *engAGE in Community MAPPs* tools; *Assets and Needs, Community Improvement Planning, and Community Action* templates\*\*, and staff to help facilitate and guide the community's "call to action-next step" efforts. Shared knowledge will support a shared value for and importance of age-friendly communities, rich with physical, social, and service environmental supports and with few barriers to place-based aging for all County residents. Our findings will allow *engAGE* teams and project partners to communicate with local stakeholders and decision-makers, such as health professionals, business owners, community organizations and policy makers, with the goal of enhancing quality of life for all people in the community across every life stage. Please join us in our efforts and thank you for your support to establish Clackamas county as an age-friendly place that supports the ability of people to age actively and successfully in their home or community of choice.

\*\* *Due to be available early Fall 2011*

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