

## DC-CPC Task Force on Collaboration

### Planning for Aging: It's all about Process

Abigail Rivin, Cornell University

The aging Baby Boomer population is an emerging issue for planners. Although AARP surveys have found that a majority of seniors want to age in place, planning for an age-friendly community involves more than just housing retrofits and transportation options. Engaging elders in the planning process and involving local government officials is integral to enacting meaningful change.

At the 2013 American Planning Association National Conference in Chicago, the Divisions Council/Chapters President Council Task Force on Collaboration sponsored a facilitated discussion on planning for age-friendly communities. Panelists leading the discussion included Ramona Mullahey, Executive Director for the Center for Better Communities, Honolulu, HA, Aldea Douglas, Project Manager at AARP, and Mildred Warner, professor of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. Using the World Health Organization's Global Age-Friendly Cities framework to guide the conversation, planners discussed the challenges and opportunities of building age-friendly communities. WHO offers eight domains that influence the health and quality of life of seniors. The WHO Eight Domains are: 1. outdoor spaces and buildings, 2. transportation, 3. housing, 4. social participation, 5. respect and social inclusion, 6. civic participation and employment, 7. Communication, 8. community support and health services.

Audience members discussed how they are addressing these domains in their work. In Prince George's County, Maryland the Parks and Recreation Department developed *Formula 240: Functional Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space*, which calls for the development of regional, multigenerational, multi-use recreational facilities. The plan also incorporates a network of trails that residents can use to travel to these facilities as an alternative transportation network. Providing a range of opportunities for physical activity and opportunities for [multigenerational interaction is crucial for the health](#) and wellbeing of the elderly.

Local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA's) are an important resource for planners. As a result of collaborating with their local AAA, the Atlanta Regional Commission has created the [Lifelong Communities](#) initiative, a comprehensive program to address the needs of an aging population. There is a disconnect between most Metropolitan Planning Organizations and local AAAs, only 10-14 MPOs work with AAAs around the country. For example, Chicago struggles to get the MPO to address the physical design and service requirements necessary for older adults. Collaborating with Local Area Agencies on Aging can help planners address the needs of older residents.

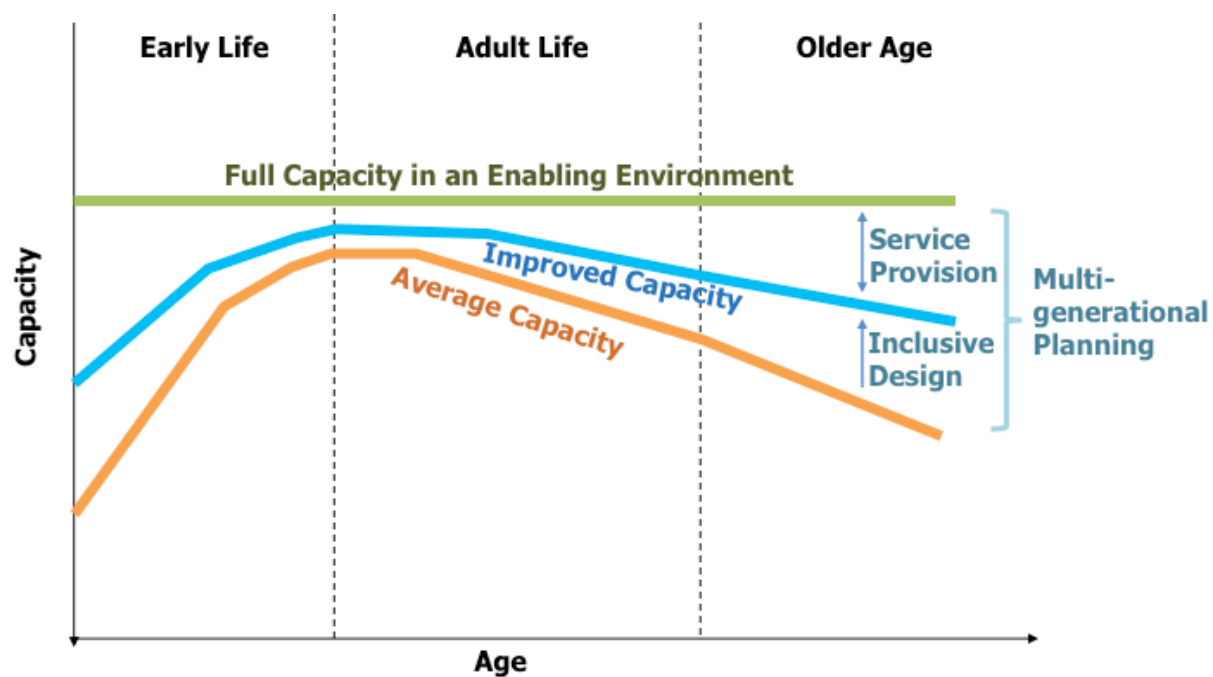
Dr. Ruth Finkelstein, Senior Vice President of Policy and Planning at the New York Academy of Medicine, reminded planners that the core of the WHO model is elder participation in the planning process. As the primary source of information, "*step one, job one is extensive*

*consultation with older adults*” to identify both the assets and improvements needed in the community. These insights from elders should then be communicated directly to the mayor. The mayor can then “*infuse an age-friendly lens*” across all departments from transportation to parks and recreation to health. Building an age-friendly community requires this collaborative, top-down and bottom-up approach.

Ramona Mullahey noted that in order to implement his seven point senior initiative, a newly elected mayor in Honolulu plans to conduct a senior summit bringing together various government agencies and civil service departments to discuss the issue of aging. The mayor recognized that collaboration is necessary in building age-friendly communities. In his State of the City speech, the mayor discussed his senior initiative in order to demonstrate his commitment to this issue. This political positioning is critical to moving an age-friendly agenda.

Mildred Warner pointed out that a [multigenerational planning approach](#) can build wider support for meeting the needs of seniors by also meeting the needs of children and caregivers.

Figure: A Framework for Multigenerational Planning



Source: [Warner, et al 2013](#), based on WHO 2007 functionality curve

The 2010 national [Maturing of America](#) survey found that communities that involve seniors in the planning process offer six more services on average. Planning Matters, but we have a lot of work ahead of us to meet emerging needs of an aging population.