

## **REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

### **HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**MEETING DATE:** **October 21, 2009**

**SUBJECT:** **Council on Aging, Healthy Aging Plan**

**ATTACHMENTS:** **Yes**  
1. Aging Report  
2. Aging Plan

#### **SUMMARY OF REQUEST:**

In February, 2008, the Board of Commissioners designated the Council on Aging as the lead planning agency for older adults in Henderson County. The Council's first goal was to develop an Aging Plan that would address the challenges our County will face as its' population continues to age. Joe Johnson, with the Council on Aging, will present a report and that Healthy Aging Plan to the Board of Commissioners.

#### **BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

The Board is requested to endorse the Council on Aging's Healthy Aging Plan.

#### **Suggested Motion:**

*I move the Board endorse the Council on Aging's Healthy Aging Plan.*

# Aging in Henderson County: A Report to the Board of Commissioners

Presented by the Council on Aging and the Healthy Aging  
Coalition of Henderson County

*"Communities across North Carolina are faced with increasingly difficult choices and decisions about how to grow, plan for change, and improve the quality of life for all citizens, including children, young and older adults, and people with disabilities. Today, nearly every community in the state is seeing or will soon see greater numbers of seniors . . . Now is clearly the time we should devote to planning and preparedness."*

*(North Carolina Aging Services Plan 2007 – 2011)*



2009



Dear Community Members,

In February 2008, the Henderson County Board of Commissioners designated the Council on Aging to serve as the lead agency to assist in planning for the aging population in our county. Our first goal was to develop an Aging Plan to address the challenges our county will face as its' population continues to age. Currently one in four of our citizens are over the age of 65 and that will soon increase to one in three. Our community will be among the first in the nation to learn how to meet the challenges presented by a large and growing aging population.

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The Council on Aging enlisted the help of the Healthy Aging Coalition of Henderson County to work on developing the Aging Plan. The Coalition gathered information from surveys, community listening sessions and conversations with service providers to determine what challenges are faced by older adults striving to remain independent as they age. Several critical needs have been identified which are addressed through the Aging Plan for Henderson County.

- An easier to navigate, more comprehensive Information and Resource network;
- More involvement at the county level with marketing, information systems, advocacy and more;
- Expanded collaboration among the public and private sectors while;
- Balancing medical and social support services and;
- A continuum of case management and advocacy for older adults and their families across the system.

The Aging Plan addresses issues Henderson County now faces but also looks into the future. It is important that the steps we take move us forward in a way that will have the greatest impact on our community. Reaching that goal will be assured if we have many people and many different voices at the table working together. We want to allow for flexibility. This document is not static but gives us a framework on which to build.

Henderson County is a beautiful place to live. We are fortunate to have such a strong network of agencies, businesses and individuals working to keep older adults healthy and independent. The Council on Aging is honored to be a part of this community. The work of the Council on Aging and the Healthy Aging Coalition is ongoing. The older adults of our community are an important piece of the fabric that makes Henderson County unique. We hope you will see this first step as a guide to help meet the challenges of an aging population with thoughtfulness, excitement and promise.

Karen B. Smith  
Executive Director

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# Introduction

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Following the February 2008 meeting of the Henderson County Board of Commissioners, the Healthy Aging Coalition was tasked with creating an Aging Plan for the county with the Council on Aging acting as the lead planning agency. Through surveys, in focus groups, and during conversations at community clubs and churches, older adults in Henderson County expressed the biggest challenges they face, including:

- **difficulty getting from place to place without a car,**
- **affordable housing choices,**
- **the need for supportive services in the home,**
- **support for caregivers working to maintain a loved one at home,**
- **isolation of the elderly,**
- **affordable healthcare,**
- **and easy access to information about assistance.**

Service providers in the county continue to find that an overwhelming majority of older adults have a desire to stay at home, with access to services as they age. Accessibility, availability, and affordability of services (both medical and non-medical) are crucial for seniors to age successfully at home. A balance between the social model and the medical model of assistance would mean more emphasis on preventive, low-cost, non-medical options for maintaining health. Such options would include minimal housekeeping, companionship, grocery shopping, other errands, etc. In addition, an accurate information network is needed to inform older adults and their caregivers of available services.

The Healthy Aging Coalition was formed initially as the community advisory board for the Livable and Senior Friendly Communities Initiative in Henderson County, funded through the Council on Aging by a grant from UNC-Chapel Hill. The Healthy Aging Coalition builds partnerships and broad community support among community members, the business community, education leaders, the medical community, emergency services, transportation services, aging service providers, the faith community, homebuilders, and others.

***The mission of the Healthy Aging Coalition is to create and sustain strong community partnership to provide leadership for planning and implementation of strategies which support the well-being, dignity, and self-determination of all older adults in Henderson County, thereby creating livable and senior friendly communities.***

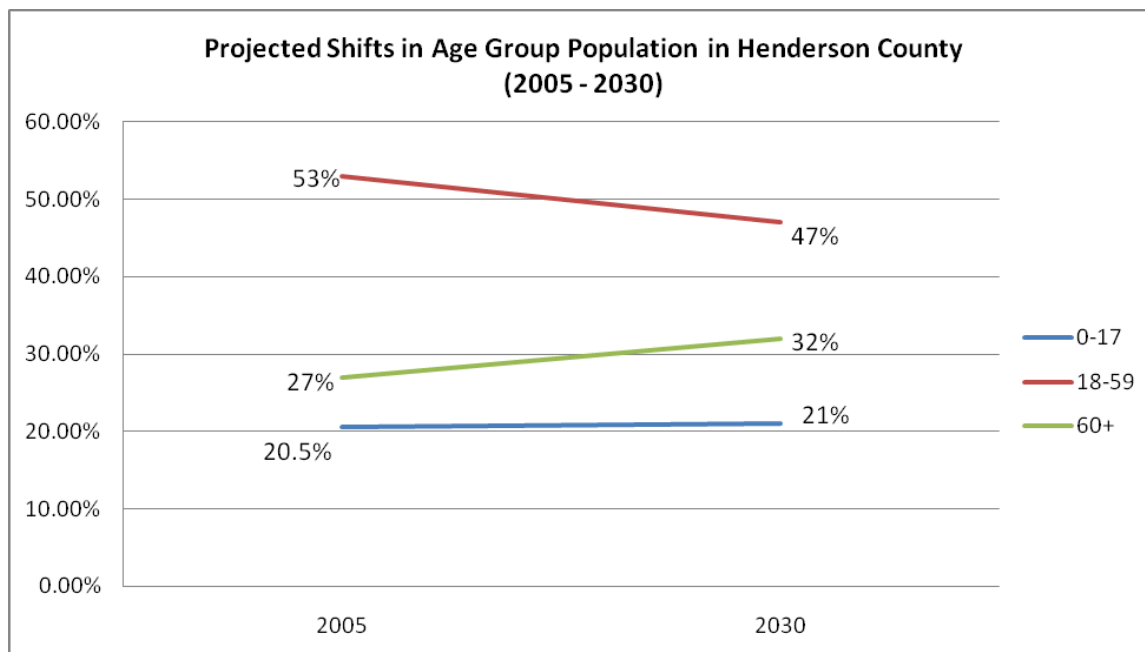
*January 2007*

## Demographics

According to the NC State Data Center, **the number of adults age 60 years or older living in North Carolina will double between 2005 and 2030.** During that same period, the population of **older adults in Henderson County will grow by 73%**, making them the fastest growing segment in the county as well as the state.

In 2005, Henderson County was in the top three of 28 counties in North Carolina that had more persons age 60 and older than persons 17 and younger. The projected number of adults 65 years or older in 2030 will reach nearly 37,000, roughly 30% of the county's total population. (North Carolina State Data Center, <http://www.demog.state.nc.us>)

Because of this growth, Henderson County is one of six counties in North Carolina named in the NC Senate Bill 448 (enacted in July, 2007) which includes information gathered in the 2006 *Report on Healthy Aging in Henderson County*. The purpose of this legislation is to assess how communities can best prepare for changing age demographics in the state. Henderson County has become the proverbial canary in the coal mine.



(North Carolina State Data Center, <http://www.demog.state.nc.us>)

## Planning Process

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The Aging Plan for Henderson County is the culmination of more than four years of work by the Healthy Aging Coalition with the Council on Aging for Henderson County acting as the lead agency, and is part of a larger context of state and federal planning efforts which are also underway. The planning process was informed by previous work by the coalition as well as events during 2008 and 2009, including;

- the 2005 Healthy Aging Survey of more than 500 older adults,
- six community forums in 2005 and 2006 which focused on the perceptions of healthy aging among older adults, baby boomers, and service providers,
- an Assessment of Funding for Older Adults completed in 2007,
- a planning forum for service providers and community leaders in June 2008 to address health and wellness,
- a survey to area churches about programs to support older adults in the community,
- the Council on Aging Annual Seminar in October 2008 entitled “The Future is You: Community Driven Planning”
- and 166 responses from the Healthy Aging online survey during spring 2009.

The plan was developed beginning in early 2008 through the concerted efforts of many individuals and key organizations in the community. Based on the surveys, the focus groups and community conversations the following five key areas were identified:

- Access to Information and Resources,
- Social Support Services,
- Transportation,
- Housing, and
- Health and Wellness.

## **Summary of Findings**

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It is imperative that we **continue building partnerships between county government and the organizations and businesses that represent older adults in the community.** The Council on Aging and members of the Healthy Aging Coalition will continue to participate in existing committees and look forward to regularly presenting Commissioners with reports on emerging issues. Working together will optimize effective planning that serves the needs of the growing population of older adults through the following areas of focus.

### **Access to Information and Resources**

There continues to be **a significant lack of awareness among both community members and service providers about available Henderson County aging resources.** This lack of awareness increases the difficulties faced by older adults and their families as they attempt to navigate challenges brought about by aging or illness.

Marketing has been identified as one of the key challenges to information reaching the public. Henderson County government is already involved with information systems through a cable channel which broadcasts county business. **Cable Channel 11 could be used to provide valuable information** to the public regarding available services and resources in the community for older adults.

The 2-1-1 system is an effective information and referral tool for many populations within the region. However, older adults in Henderson County who answered surveys in 2009 were either unaware of its existence or dissatisfied with their experience. **Strengthening the 2-1-1 system for Henderson County** through consistent information monitoring, combined with more effective marketing, can make this existing program more effective.

The Council on Aging will continue to provide leadership for the developing North Carolina Community Resource Connections for Aging and Disability (CRC) project in conjunction with Land-of-Sky Regional Council.

### **Social Support Services**

In Henderson County, only 2% of State funds are used for home-based services while 50% are used for nursing homes and adult care homes. While changes in Medicare and Medicaid funding directed toward home-based services are needed at the state and federal level, in order to actively support aging at home and ease the number of elderly entering institutions, the county can encourage a **balance between medical and social support services by**



**ensuring that unrestricted funds are directed to social support services that cannot be reimbursed through Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurers.**

Effective case management and advocacy is critical to help people navigate the system and provide a continuum of care to those who need it. Older adults and their families often express how overwhelmed they feel when trying to find services. Once services are located, it is **important that consumers have advocates who will continue to follow their progress through the system**, making changes as needed. We are challenged with providing that advocacy regardless of income, employing a “consumer-directed” approach which allows older adults and their families more control of their own care.

It is crucial to **expand collaboration and communication between medical and social support services**, including public and private cooperation. The Partnership for Independent Living currently engages the Council on Aging, the Department of Social Services, and Park Ridge Hospital to find solutions for at-risk older adults.

### **Transportation**

Many older adults in Henderson County live in rural areas. Apple Country Transit, Henderson County, and NCDOT are working together to improve transportation infrastructure and increase public transit routes in the community, but **creative effort by community members is required to help older adults remain mobile** through a combination of transportation solutions involving both the public and private sectors. Options such as a volunteer driver corps and taxi vouchers could help meet mobility needs of older adults who do not drive. A resource list of transportation options will be developed to assist older adults.

Broaden the definition of transportation in the county to **include infrastructure which supports a variety of transportation modes, such as pedestrians and bicycles**. As the city, county, and state make road and corridor improvements, sidewalks and bikeways should be included and maintained. The Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan for the City of Hendersonville encourages the use of resources towards a more walkable community. Walkable neighborhoods provide access to nearby grocery stores and pharmacies, and streets which support various modes of transportation promote a healthy, active lifestyle. Members of the Healthy Aging Coalition will continue to represent the aging population at transportation meetings.

## **Housing**

The Affordable Housing Coalition has been a voice for housing options in Henderson County assisted by the efforts of agencies such as the Housing Assistance Corporation and Habitat for Humanity. However, extensive waiting lists of up to 18 – 24 months currently exist for affordable units with the Housing Authority, Housing Assistance, and Section 8.

Affordable multi-family housing for older adults is the most cost effective solution to a shortage of affordable housing, but is only feasible where adequate infrastructure (i.e. water and sewer) exists. **Stimulate private, for-profit builders to help meet the need by implementing incentives** to build new, affordable single-family units or rehabilitate existing affordable housing for resale to older adults.

Concerned individuals will advocate for more diversified funding sources to repair existing homes for older adults. As with transportation, Coalition members will continue to advocate for older adults at Affordable Housing Coalition meetings.

## **Health and Wellness**

Health and wellness are defined as more than just medical or physical needs. A healthy lifestyle also involves social interaction, spirituality, emotional, environmental (personal surroundings as well as the environment at large), good nutrition, intellectual stimulation, and continuing contribution to the community of talents or skills.

These elements contribute to both length and quality of life for older adults and are generally accessed through public and private sources. However, barriers like cost of services or programs, eligibility requirements, and access to adequate information get in the way of older adults accessing beneficial services. The recommendations for Social Support Services mentioned previously also support health and wellness

## Other Concerns

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It is important to mention other areas of concern identified by the Coalition which warrant community attention in the years ahead.

**Community investment and recognition** for aging issues is not proportionate to the significant number of older adults living in Henderson County. As an example, of United Way funding in the community during FY 08/09, roughly 10% of funds were allocated for direct services to the elderly while almost 40% were spent on direct services for children. Taking steps to create solutions now will save money in the future, therefore a community approach is needed to address funding disparities.

**The gap in services for physically or mentally disabled adults under the age of 60** impacts the aging community. Needed services are often very similar to those provided through the aging network, but funding streams are different or missing altogether. The disparity of services creates a burden for service providers to the elderly since often they are the last resort for the disabled. Strengthening services to the disabled would have a positive ripple effect throughout the community.

The **technology gap** which exists between different generations and education levels is another challenge to information access. Resources in the community should be available in print and online. It is important to improve access to information and resources through various media avenues.

**Stronger connections between service providers and the faith community** should be cultivated. Area churches have shown a commitment to filling service gaps in the community through food pantries, transportation, and clothing closets. A possible model for resource navigation during and after a crisis would include existing partners such as area hospitals, the Department of Social Services, Partnership for Independent Living, Blue Ridge Community Health Services, and others.

## Conclusion

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**With nearly half of the county's population 50 years old or older, the need to maximize resources is critical.** Henderson County is at a critical position to address the needs of a community that is aging. A successful aging plan must include an on-going process of implementation, evaluation, and continued planning to ensure that community resources are maximized. The Council on Aging and the Healthy Aging Coalition, with their history of working as a unified voice for the elderly in Henderson County, are poised to continue the process.

Through the adoption and implementation of the Aging Plan, individuals will have more tools available to maximize their own independence and well-being. Providers will have more opportunities to collaborate, offering services based on planning and program accountability. Community funding organizations will utilize the Aging Plan outlined here to guide their decision making process. The private sector can plan for products and services that meet the needs of older adults. And those in county and city government will have a solid foundation from which to make policy and funding decisions related to housing, transportation, nutrition, and other issues that affect the ability of older adults to live independently in the community.

Finally, it is important to remember the benefits, both direct and indirect, to the greater community which older adults provide. Adults 60 years and older contribute to a stronger tax base, increased retail spending, and a seasoned volunteer workforce, all of which strengthen Henderson County. Ultimately, planning for older adults creates a community with more to offer residents of all ages.

## Acknowledgements

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List of agencies and organizations on the Healthy Aging Coalition:

### **AARP**

#### **A Heart for Seniors**

Alzheimer's Association

American Red Cross

#### **Apple Country Transportation**

#### **Area Agency on Aging**

Blue Ridge Community Health Services

#### **Blue Ridge Community College**

CarePartners

#### **Carolina Village**

#### **Council on Aging for Henderson County**

#### **Dispute Settlement Center**

Four Seasons Hospice and Palliative Care

Faith Community and Retired Clergy

Henderson County Department of Public Health

#### **Henderson County Department of Social Services**

Henderson County Planning Department

Henderson County Sheriff's Office, Victim Services

#### **Home Helpers**

#### **Housing Assistance Corporation**

Interfaith Assistance Ministry (IAM)

#### **Land of Sky Regional Council**

#### **League of Women Voters**

MAHEC

#### **Mountain Home Care**

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Services

#### **National Silver Haired Congress**

#### **Opportunity House**

#### **Pardee Health Education Center**

Pardee Hospital

#### **Pardee Pavilion Adult Daycare**

#### **Park Ridge Home Health**

Park Ridge Hospital

Partnership for Health

Pisgah Legal Services

Sammy Williams Center for Active Living

#### **Senior Tarheel Legislators**

SHIP

Spring Arbor West

UNC Healthy Aging Research Network

#### **Western Carolina Community Action**

#### **Western Carolina University**

Agencies in **bold** denote direct participation in drafting the Aging Plan for Henderson County.



**COUNCIL ON AGING**  
**f o r H E N D E R S O N C O U N T Y**

**Healthy Aging**  
**COALITION**  
**for Henderson County**

# **An Aging Action Plan for Henderson County**

**Presented by the Council on Aging and the  
Healthy Aging Coalition for Henderson County**

**October 2009**



**2009 - 2011**

## An Aging Action Plan for Henderson County 2009 – 2011

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*Goal 1: To enhance awareness and access among community members and service providers regarding information and resources available to older adults and their families.*

**Strategy 1.1: Strengthen outreach efforts to community members and service providers through marketing efforts, to include taking advantage of all modes of communication available to the general public.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Create and implement a public information/education program for community members and service providers about aging services available in Henderson County. (HAC, FY2010)
- B. Implement an outreach plan that includes working with the Henderson County Government Public Information Office to ensure that all means of public communication available are utilized. (COA, FY2011)
- C. Annual presentation to update the Henderson County Board of Commissioners on the progress of this aging plan. (COA/HAC, FY2010)
- D. Ensure that aging issues receive appropriate and adequate attention in all future revisions and versions of the Henderson County Strategic Plan. (BOC/COA, FY2010)
- E. Update the Aging Plan annually, based on progress and changing needs. (COA/HAC, FY2010)

**Strategy 1.2: Take a leadership role in strengthening the information resource infrastructure in Henderson County by utilizing and updating existing systems.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Enhance the existing 2-1-1 system in Henderson County through information monitoring. (COA/HAC, FY2010)
- B. Implement a plan to ensure that Henderson County receives adequate attention and time from the 2-1-1 regional information network. (COA/HAC, FY2010)
- C. Provide leadership for planning and implementing the North Carolina Community Resource Connections for Aging and Disability (CRC). (COA/LOS, FY2010)
- D. Encourage collaboration between all information systems (2-1-1, CRC, Aging At Home Website, etc) to benefit the older adults of Henderson County. (COA/HAC, FY2010)



***Goal 2: To strengthen and expand social support options available to older adults.***

**Strategy 2.1: Strengthen and sustain social support service options available to older adults.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Create and implement a plan to ensure that unrestricted county funds are directed to social support services that cannot be reimbursed through Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance; thereby, assuring local dollars are used most effectively.  
(BOC/COA/LOS, FY2010)
- B. Using available data, compile a comprehensive list of people waiting for social support services.  
(HAC, FY2011)

**Strategy 2.2: Offer and coordinate effective and efficient case management services to older adults and their families.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Create and implement an action plan to educate community members and service providers regarding the importance of case management services.  
(COA/HAC, FY2010)
- B. Continuously support a “consumer-directed” approach to case management, allowing older adults and their families to make their own decisions about their care.  
(COA/HAC, FY2010)
- C. Conduct bi-annual meetings with Case Managers working with older adults to strengthen the continuum of service.  
(COA, FY2010)

**Strategy 2.3: Strengthen and expand community collaboration.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Coordinate an ongoing dialogue between medical and social support, to include public and private entities.  
(COA/HAC, FY2010)
- B. Create and implement a plan to expand the working relationships of public and private sector health delivery systems to meet the needs of older adults.  
(HAC, FY2011)

***Goal 3: Enhance accessibility to services, both medical and social, to older adults throughout Henderson County by strengthening transportation options provided within the county.***

**Strategy 3.1: Strengthen community dialogue and participation as they relate to transportation issues facing older adults.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Work with the Board of Commissioners to secure an appointed, permanent seat on the Henderson County Transportation Advisory Committee to advocate for transportation improvements on behalf of older adults.  
(BOC, FY2010)
- B. Encourage creative solutions by community members and service providers to create ways to address the transportation needs of rural dwelling older adults.  
(COA/HAC, FY2010)
- C. Create and make available a comprehensive list of transportation options for older adults.  
(HAC, FY2011)
- D. Include within transportation conversations and decision making, infrastructure which supports a variety of transportation modes, such as pedestrian walkways and bikeways.  
(COA/HAC, FY2010)

***Goal 4: Enhance housing options and accessibility to older adults.***

**Strategy 4.1: Strengthen current housing options for older adults and create new housing options where available.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Secure a permanent seat on the Henderson County Affordable Housing Coalition to advocate for expanded housing options on behalf of older adults.  
(COA/HAC, FY2010)
- B. Advocate for more diversified funding sources to repair existing homes for older adults.  
(HAC, FY2010)
- C. Encourage conversations, within existing systems, to address the housing needs of older adults through creative solutions. These solutions could include offering incentives to private, for-profit builders to build new, affordable single family units or to rehabilitate existing affordable housing for resale to older adults. The possibilities are endless.  
(COA/HAC, FY2011)

*Goal 5: To enhance the overall health and wellness of older adults throughout Henderson County.*

**Strategy 5.1: Take a leadership role in assuring that health and wellness services are affordable, available and accessible to all older adults in Henderson County.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Actively support the Community Needs Assessment to assure that the voices of older adults are heard.  
(COA/HAC, FY2010)
- B. The Health and Wellness Subcommittee will research and report, to the full Healthy Aging Coalition, on any potential gaps in medical and wellness opportunities for older adults in Henderson County and present possible solutions to any gaps that may exist.  
(HAC, FY2011)

***Goal 6: To responsibly plan for the increasing needs of the older adult population throughout Henderson County.***

**Strategy 6.1: Strengthen and expand funding partners for aging services in Henderson County.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Develop and implement a 10-year funding plan for older adults services offered in Henderson County. This plan will include population projections, service cost projections and funding partners.  
(BOC/DSSB/COA/HAC, FY2010)
- B. Work with the Board of Commissioners to assure that a Henderson County Commissioner serves on the Board of Directors for the Council on Aging for Henderson County.  
(BOC/COA, FY2010)
- C. Encourage and strengthen public/private partnerships to address the funding needs of older adult services.  
(COA/HAC, FY2010)

**Key:**

**BOC = Henderson County Board of Commissioners**  
**DSSB = Department of Social Services Board**  
**COA = Council on Aging for Henderson County**  
**HAC = Healthy Aging Coalition for Henderson County**  
**LOS = Land of Sky Regional Council**