MAYOR’S COMMISSION ON AGING

STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2013

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INTRODUCTION
I am proud to introduce the Mayor’s Commission on Aging’s strategic plan – Philadelphia’s commitment to making this city a more age-friendly place. Together, as a city, we will work to ensure that our residents of all ages can grow and thrive, and that Philadelphia is a place where we recognize and appreciate the valuable contributions of our older residents.

Older Philadelphians play a vital role in our city – residents age 55 and older lead our major industries and manage local businesses, help maintain our neighborhoods, raise and mentor our children, lead our neighborhood watches, ensure children have access to healthy and nutritious meals, and volunteer at our schools, libraries and churches. By supporting our older residents and enabling them to remain active members of our communities, we will strengthen our neighborhoods and ensure that older Philadelphians can maintain their dignity and respect as they age.

This plan outlines on how the City of Philadelphia and its partners can ensure that seniors can access critical resources that will support them as they age and enable them to remain in their homes and in their neighborhoods. This plan also seeks to give them more opportunities to continue to engage with others and contribute to their communities.

In the coming years, the senior population in Philadelphia will start to look quite different, and the needs of those individuals will change with it. Currently in Philadelphia, 14.1% of the population is 65 or older. Like most American cities in the coming years, Philadelphia will see this number grow exponentially, as the post-World War II generation ages. By 2035, the population nationwide of people over 65 will have doubled from where it is today.

In Philadelphia by 2015, there will be a surge in both the number of the region’s frailest elderly, people age 85 and older, and those persons ages 55 to 74. As the baby boomers age and the proportion of seniors between 55 and 75 grows, the profile of a senior will start to change. The traditional notions of aging and the type of life “senior” citizens will experience are being redefined by the advances in health care and the expectations of those reaching that age group. Emphasis on healthy living is extending an individual’s ability to be productive and engaged, well into their 70’s and 80’s, creating challenges and opportunities that were not contemplated by policy makers in the past. Individuals who are entering the retirement phase of their life are reshaping the expectations. In this environment, new thinking about this segment of the population is required.

Yet many of the persistent challenges facing seniors in Philadelphia will remain, primarily due to the number of poor elderly in the city. Currently 19% of the city’s seniors live in poverty, a percentage that is expected to remain steady in the future. Over the next 15 years, this means that an increasing number of seniors in Philadelphia will be low income.

Mayor Michael Nutter understands that City government must take a leadership role in meeting the needs of the growing number of older Philadelphians. As the senior population grows in

\(^1\) Philadelphia in Focus: A Profile from Census 2000. The Brookings Institution, November 1\(^{st}\), 2003.
Philadelphia and the needs of those seniors become more diverse, this plan focuses on what we as a city can do to ensure that older Philadelphians can stay in their homes and communities, become more engaged in our neighborhoods, and continue to live with dignity and respect as they age.

This plan is designed to engaged residents, local and national non-profit organizations, community advocates as well as the state and federal government, to work together to strengthen our communities and ensure an active future for older Philadelphians.

**METHODOLOGY**

This document builds upon the work of the Nutter Administration over the last two years. Recognizing that the older population of Philadelphia was growing and changing, in 2009, Mayor Michael Nutter asked the former Pennsylvania Secretary of Aging, Nora Dowd-Eisenhower, to organize a study to better understand the changing needs of our city’s older residents. Leaders and advocates in the aging community were engaged to determine what were the key opportunities and issues impacting older Philadelphians.

From that process, the administration saw the need to reinvigorate and empower the Mayor’s Commission on Aging. Mayor Nutter appointed Lydia Hernández Vélez to the position of Deputy Managing Director for Aging, and appointed new members to the Commission that reflected the changing demographics and needs of Philadelphia’s older population. In March of 2011, Mayor Nutter kicked off the first meeting of the reorganized commission. Individuals engaged in issues related to housing, health, volunteerism, education advocacy on behalf of older Philadelphians agreed to serve as part of the policy advisory group (for a full list of Mayor’s Commission on Aging commissioners, see Appendix A).

In April 2010, the commission launched its strategic planning process. A subcommittee convened several meetings to explore the issues that the commission thought should drive the work and policies of the administration. At its meeting in June of 2011, the work of the subcommittee was reviewed and discussed by the commission and key priorities were identified. Those conversations became the basis of this strategic plan. A draft of the plan was circulated to the Deputy Mayors and Department Commissioners for feedback and comment. This document charts the key priorities and outcomes of the commission over the next two years.
MISSION

As a voice of Philadelphians 55 and older, the Mayor’s Commission on Aging will promote seamless access to essential support and services through education, outreach and advocacy. The Commission seeks to position Philadelphia as a national leader in creating an environment that supports and engages a vital aging population.

KEY GOALS

Overall Goals for Mayor’s Commission on Aging:

- Serve as a catalyst and convener to create new and better solutions to the challenges facing all older adults, their families and loved ones;
- Advocate for adequate coordination and leveraging of resources on behalf of the city’s older residents with City Departments, City Council, State and Federal Government in the creation of public policy affecting people 55 and older, understanding the unique needs of older adults who are isolated by language or cultural barriers, economic status, or disability;
- Educate all Philadelphians to the assets, needs and issues of older adults in the city;
- Promote opportunities for older adults to contribute their skills and experience to the Philadelphia community;
- Encourage adequate support to enable Philadelphia residents 55 and older to stay in their homes and communities as they age.

PRIORITIES BY GOAL

GOAL: Serve as a catalyst and convener to create new and better solutions to the challenges facing all older adults, their families and loved ones.

Philadelphia enjoys a tremendous amount of expertise, resources and committed leadership focused on supporting the needs of older residents, but these efforts often occur in silos, hampered by a lack of coordination. In the current environment of limited resources, the need to work together to maximize results is greater than ever. The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will serve as a convening body to bring together older adults, service providers and other key stakeholders to address critical issues facing seniors.

Priority #1

- Build an infrastructure to create a more connected aging community

There are several ways that the Mayor’s Commission on Aging intends to strengthen the infrastructure to create a more connected aging community. In addition to the quarterly convening of the area leaders on aging through our Commission meetings, we will work with organizations and City departments to build a collection of key informational resources for City government, community advocates and seniors from area organizations, including service
directories and key policy research. In addition, we will seek to strengthen the relationship between the City government and the Philadelphia Corporation on Aging (PCA) through regular meetings and updates. Strengthening these relationships and improved information-sharing will ensure we can advance our long-term strategic goals as well as establish lines of communication that will be critical for a rapid response if an unexpected crisis facing older Philadelphians arises.

Priority #2
- **Identify key aging issues and convene stakeholder meetings to find collaborative solutions**
The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will seek to support key efforts for improving the quality of life for our older residents. Over the next year, the Commission will be focused on supporting efforts to address the issues that impact our residents. Specifically, the Commission will look at promoting aging in place efforts such as Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), ensuring the effectiveness of PhillyRising – the City’s comprehensive, neighborhood-focused approach to community revitalization and crime reduction – for seniors, and looking at ways to address issues of food insecurity among older adults. In addition, it will work with key partners to create opportunities for older Philadelphians, advocates and service providers to discuss on many different issues facing senior, such as Aging in a New Age summit, sponsored by Councilman Curtis Jones and the Mayor’s Commission on Aging. The Mayor’s Commission on Aging can serve as a catalyst for action on critical issues as they arise by bringing together older adults and aging experts, and providing a perspective that can enhance the identification and implementation of solutions.

GOAL: **Advocate for adequate coordination and leveraging of resources on behalf of the city’s older residents with City Departments, City Council, State and Federal Government in the creation of public policy affecting people 55 and older, understanding the unique needs of older adults who are isolated by language or cultural barriers, economic status, or disability**

Significant portions of the services delivered by many city agencies are to persons over the age of 55. The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will serve as a resource to City departments on issues of aging. The goal would be to work proactively to ensure that City departments are considering the impact of decisions on older Philadelphians in their policies and planning as well as to serve as a collaborative partner to align the resources of stakeholders in order to identify solutions and overcoming potential obstacles to provide better support for seniors.

Just as critically, the Mayor’s Commission on Aging will seek to build relationships with Philadelphia City Council, the State and Federal governments to ensure that critical programs that support older residents are protected, such as Medicare and social security insurance.

Priority #3
- **Serve as a resource to City departments on issues of aging to provide support in identifying solutions and overcoming obstacles**
The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will work with departments as requested on issues that impact older Philadelphians to provide expertise on the needs of aging residents, work with departments to leverage the existing resources to address challenges, and bring together key
stakeholders. This will include a survey of City-operated senior centers to look at the strengths and challenges of these sites.

Priority #4

- **Increase departmental capacity to understand and address issues of aging and integrate them into program and planning efforts**

Over the next six months, the Mayor’s Commission on Aging will work with key City departments to designate and train an “aging expert”, a high ranking departmental staff person who will help improve departmental understanding of the impact of decisions on older residents and integrate the needs of older adults into their planning. We would also work with these staff members to ensure there are culturally appropriate responses to the needs of older adults.

Priority #5

- **Work with neighborhood associations, town watch, block captains and other community-based organizations on how to meet the needs of older residents in their neighborhood**

Many neighborhoods are looking to do more to help support their older residents but lack the knowledge or skills to do this. The members of the Mayor’s Commission on Aging will work with neighborhood leaders to educate them on how to access critical services available to seniors and what neighborhoods can do to enable older residents to remain in their community as well as working in collaboration with them to identify ways to overcome obstacles. This would include organizing trainings for neighborhoods leaders, engaging in thoughtful discussions with community members and senior advocates, and speaking at neighborhood meetings. Over the next two years, the Mayor’s Commission on Aging will launch partnerships in PhillyRising neighborhoods as a model that could be expanded elsewhere.

Priority #6

- **Advocate to SEPTA and Streets Department about improvements to Customized Community Transportation (CCT), bus shelters, snow clearing, and crossing times**

One of the biggest issues for Philadelphia residents as they age is access to transportation. Ensuring that one can reliably and safely go to the doctor’s office, the grocery store or visit a friend is critical to enable older adults to maintain their independence and remain in their community as they age. That is why addressing issues of walkability and reliable public transportation for seniors must be a key focus of the Mayor’s Commission on Aging, the City’s Streets department and for SEPTA. The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will work with PCA and AARP on their Aging in Place initiatives that seek to promote improved transportation for senior residents. In addition, the Mayor’s Commission on Aging will meet with representatives from SEPTA to work to improve Customized Community Transportation and snow clearings in front of elevators and escalators to ensure easy access for older adults.

**GOAL: Educate all Philadelphians to the assets, needs and issues of older adults in the city**

There are many services and programs that positively impact the lives of seniors, including federal entitlements such as SNAP, Medicare and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as well as key local services such as Philabundance’s Senior Food Assistance Program. Many residents do not know about these programs or how to access them. An important role for the Mayor’s Commission on Aging will be to connect seniors, their family, and loved ones with the services that will enable them to live a safe and productive life.
Priority #7

- Increase access to benefits for seniors, such as SNAP, PACE, LIHEAP, Medicare and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will promote an outreach effort with the Mayor, 311 information line and the City’s website to engage older residents to enroll more City residents in these entitlement programs. We will also look at new ways of sharing this information – social media such as Facebook and Twitter will reshape how residents get information and interact with these services, and will be a critical tool for this effort. We would also seek to work with the state to find ways to streamline the process of accessing these benefits.

GOAL: Promote opportunities for older adults to contribute their skills and experience to the Philadelphia community

Engagement of all residents of Philadelphia ensures a strong and effective civic life. The opportunity to engage residents 55 and older can help to support key community efforts to promote education, safety, arts and culture. Programs such as Philadelphia SERVE, Coming of Age, and RSVP are efforts that enable residents who have a particular interest and passion to take action that will contribute to a vibrant city.

There is also a segment of the over 55 population that chooses to continue to be a part of the workforce. Many face a gap between their prior experience and the skills necessary for a successful job search in the present job market. Their interest to learn the necessary skills is evidenced by the interests in participating in programs such as the Senior Community Service Employment Program or the development at local senior centers of programs such as computer training that many times experience significant waiting lists. There is an opportunity to connect employers and older job seekers so that businesses can thrive and enhance the city’s viability.

Priority #8

- Promote opportunities for intergenerational collaboration and senior job development

The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will collaborate with other local agencies to connect seniors with programs that promote volunteer and work opportunities for seniors, such as Philadelphia SERVE, Coming of Age, RSVP and AARP’s Create the Good program.

GOAL: Encourage adequate support to enable Philadelphia residents 55 and older to stay in their homes and communities as they age.

The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will support models of community-integrated living for older adults, including Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs). Working to ensure that older adults have the resources they need to stay in their communities will ensure better outcomes for those individuals, reduces the cost of care for individuals as they age, and help to keep neighborhoods stabilized.

Priority #9

- Seek the World Health Organization designation as an “Age-Friendly City”

Given the fact that one in three Philadelphians will be over 50 by 2015, Philadelphia must become an age friendly city where aging in place is promoted and supported. The World Health Organization engaged in a process of defining the elements that make a city age-friendly. The
elements include housing, social participation, civic participation and community support, among others. Philadelphia will seek the designation and will commence the assessment in 2011. Once the assessment is completed, the City will determine the strengths and gaps in order to develop a plan that will result in attaining the designation. This will not only serve to ensure we are taking a comprehensive look at how we are meeting the needs of older Philadelphians, but help build Philadelphia’s reputation as a great place for older adults to live and thrive.

**Priority #10**
- **Promote services that enable seniors’ aging in place**
  There are many services available to seniors to enable them to stay in their homes, including help with home repairs, upgrades for improved mobility and utilizing home visits from nursing programs. The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will work with programs such as CARIE, AARP and PCA to ensure that persons who are seeking information have access to appropriate resources from both City departments and other organizations, including the creation of a website detailing key services as well as ensuring this information is available through 311.

**Priority #11**
- **Promote healthy lifestyles for older adults**
  Promoting active and healthy lifestyles for Philadelphia’s older residents is critical to ensure that they can continue to take care of themselves as they age and decrease the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. Over the next year, the Mayor’s Commission on Aging will work with the City’s Health Department to ensure their “Get Healthy Philly!” initiative helps to promote exercise and improved diet among seniors in Philadelphia.

**Priority #12**
- **Educate older Philadelphians regarding available housing options in the city**
  There are array of different housing options available to older residents in Philadelphia that can be flexible to meet their care needs and health. The Mayor’s Commission on Aging will seek to connect seniors and their families with resources about available housing options as they age by developing a database that will identify the variety of options available in their community and throughout Philadelphia.
APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE MAYOR’S COMMISSION ON AGING

The Mayor’s Commission on Aging (MCOA) was established in 1978 with the mission of improving the quality of life for older adults in Philadelphia. In addition to operating an advisory commission on aging issues, the office manages two programs for seniors: the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which helps find employment for low-income seniors, and APPRISE, which provides health insurance counseling regarding Medicare.

**Members of the Mayor’s Commission on Aging:**
- **Bill Johnston-Walsh**, Senior Manager of State Operations of AARP
- **Rose Gray**, VP of Community and Economic Development for the Asociación Puertorriqueños en March (APM)
- **Bill Salas**, CEO of the Hispanic Association of Contractors and Entrepreneurs
- **Nancy Henkin**, Executive Director of the Temple Center for Intergenerational Studies
- **Lynn Fields Harris**, Executive Director of Center in the Park
- **Mark Segal**, Publisher of Philadelphia Gay News
- **Ginger Zielinske**, Executive Director of Benefits Trust
- **Angela M. Brown**, Director of Marketing and Public Affairs for NewCourtland
- **Tania Rorke**, Executive Director of Penn’s Village
- **Thoai Nguyen**, Executive Director of Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition
- **Simon P. Bouie**, Pastor for Zion A.M.E. Church
- **Karen Buck**, Executive Director of SeniorLaw Center
- **Rodney Williams**, President of the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging
- **Diane Menio**, Executive Director of the Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly
- **Bill Ryan**, Senior Director of Government Relations and Public Affairs for Albert Einstein Healthcare Network
- **Raechel Hammer**, Vice President Strategic Development and Compliance
- **Rev. Dr. Millicent Hunter**, Presiding Bishop, The Baptist Worship Center
- **Jill Michal**, President of the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania