

SENIOR COLLABORATIVE PROJECT: 2021



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

WHAT:

The Senior Collaborative is a joint effort by NW Pilot Project, Hollywood Senior Center and AGE+ to examine the natural helping networks, existing formal services and unfulfilled needs that exist for people 55 years old and older living on \$2,700/month or less in Multnomah County. The goal of the project is to improve the wellbeing of elders in our communities through strategic recommendations for policy and program improvements. The project will prioritize input from older people who may not be receiving services from traditional senior focused agencies while also centering BIPOC older adults, who are disproportionately impacted by poverty and homelessness. We will be conducting a strategic outreach effort to interview key older adult populations through May 2021. A final report will be released in September 2021.

OUR VALUES:

The Senior Collaborative values and affirms the inherent worth of all people. We recognize that throughout history, people have unjustly been denied access to resources for survival and wellbeing on the basis of age, race, income, physical and mental abilities, national origin, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. We renounce the bias and exclusion that has and continues to show up in public and private sectors that results in socioeconomic vulnerability and marginalization for so many older people, especially Black, Indigenous and other communities of color in our society. We value the strengths and contributions older people of diverse identities bring to all our lives. We believe that prioritizing the wellbeing of older adults is necessary to build a socially just, equitable, and thriving community for all.

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WHY UNDERTAKE THIS PROJECT?

Multnomah County is a place whose residents pride themselves in promoting social justice. Social justice includes ensuring dignity and care for older people in our public policies. Unfortunately, there is much evidence that older people in our society are experiencing high rates of socioeconomic vulnerability. Despite knowing that a larger proportion of the population would be older adults as the “baby boomer” generation ages, our public policies have not given sufficient attention to ensuring the rights of older people to have their basic needs and well-being met.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted this fact. The lack of systemic prioritization of the older adult population has contributed to mismanagement of the response to and the neglect of necessary actions to contain the virus.¹ Here in Oregon, over 90% of all COVID-19 related deaths have been people over 60 years old.² The public health crisis has also pulled back the curtain on the economic and health inequities along race and ethnicity lines. Black and Brown communities have experienced more negative consequences as a result of the pandemic due to existing discrimination or bias written into public policies since this country’s existence.³ These realities are present here in Multnomah County.

People of color are disproportionately represented among people living in poverty in Multnomah County.⁴ Further, the 2019 Point in Time Count (PIT) for the county showed that homelessness is increasing for people 55 years and older, while decreasing for populations younger than 55.⁵ Additionally,

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2020/03/americas-ageism-crisis-is-helping-the-coronavirus/608905/>

² <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASESCONDITIONS/DISEASESAZ/Emerging%20Respiratory%20Infections/COVID-19-Weekly-Report-2020-10-07-FINAL.pdf> page 6 accessed 10/12/20

³ <https://www.gcpartnership.com/en/news/GCP-News/June-2020/The-Great-Revealer-Racial-Disparities-Uncovered>

⁴ Poverty in Multnomah County, DCHS, YFSD, Prepared by Kristina Smock Consulting, October 2019, pg. 16 accessed 9/17/20 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bx48_RZJeqR9dIJCbY5Kkk--FgWuAW/view

⁵ 2019 Point-in-Time Count of Homelessness in Portland/Gresham/Multnomah County, Oregon, pg.25 accessed 10/02/2020 <https://multco.us/file/82568/download>

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the county is predicted to see a 32% increase in the number of 65+ residents by 2030 – or around 35,000 more seniors living in our community than today.⁶

Many of those older people are currently living with economic insecurity. In 2019, over 23,000 adults 55+ lived off an income of \$1,041/month (the Federal Poverty Level-FPL) or less.⁷ Considering this, the situation is made more alarming because the Oregon State Office of Forecasting predicts a 46% increase in the number of seniors living in poverty by 2030 in Multnomah County.⁸ Because we already know that older adults who are Black, Indigenous and from other communities of color are disproportionately impacted by poverty and homelessness, we must ensure that our service providers and county are equipped to meet the needs of this growing population and address their circumstances which are rooted in inequality.

Multnomah County, like our nation as a whole, has a deeply racist history to acknowledge and make amends for. Racist laws and practices within all sectors of society have direct negative consequences for today’s seniors of color. Unfortunately, it is well documented that racist policies and practices continue today. However, as the popularity of the Black Lives Matter movement grows in our country, more people as well as public and private institutions have been pledging to work with intention to dismantle white supremacy culture. Thus, this analysis will center older adults of color in an effort to further racial justice in Multnomah County.

Any inquiries, please contact: Molly Hogan, Project Manager at mollyh@nwpilotproject.org

⁶ Population Projections from Office of Economic Analysis (http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/OEA/docs/demographic/pop_by_ageandsex.xls) Accessed 9/23/20
<https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/SENIORS-DISABILITIES/LTC/LTC30/LTC30/multnomah.pdf>, slide 1

⁷ Poverty in Multnomah County, DCHS, YFSD, Prepared by Kristina Smock Consulting, October 2019, pg. 26 accessed 9/17/20 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bx48_RZJejqR9dIZJCby5Kkk--FgWuAW/view

⁸ Population Projections from Office of Economic Analysis (http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/OEA/docs/demographic/pop_by_ageandsex.xls) Accessed 9/23/20
<https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/SENIORS-DISABILITIES/LTC/LTC30/LTC30/multnomah.pdf>, slide 5