

Moving Toward a Livable Chicago for All Ages: Action Steps for the Mayor-Elect

Context Issues

- The Chicago Aging Collaborative (CAC) envisions “A Livable Chicago for All Ages”;
- “A Livable Chicago for All Ages” is very consistent with Mayor-elect Lightfoot’s vision of strengthening communities via more inclusive neighborhood planning;
- Unlike most of our peer cities, Chicago’s “Age-Friendly Chicago” designation is skeletal at best and has not resulted in an ambitious, a well-integrated or impactful Age-Friendly Chicago plan that incorporates best practices and models;
- Our review of key Chicago public and civic sector plans and programs shows that our burgeoning older adult population has received little attention;
- Surveys show that concerns of older adults mirror those of others: safe neighborhoods, affordable housing, accessible communities, and transportation options, yet, older Chicagoans are particularly concerned about their city’s lack of attention to their contributions and needs as they grow older;
- The Chicago Division of Senior Services/Area Agency on Aging currently operates with a very limited vision, minimal strategic partnerships, and a dearth of innovation and collaboration; and
- Socially-isolated individuals are at substantially greater physical, emotional and economic risks while those in better circumstances experience worse outcomes as they age due to inadequate services and lack of thought leadership on a city-wide level.

Action Steps

- Develop and integrate the vision of “A Livable Chicago for All Ages” within a robust new comprehensive plan that addresses the needs of all communities;
- Complete a robust Age-Friendly Chicago plan and implementation strategy that integrates the work of key city departments and sister agencies, and is consistent with other area plans and initiatives;
- Establish a lean Mayor’s office-level presence to coordinate this integrated planning agenda;
- Install new, visionary leadership at the Chicago Division of Senior Services/Area Agency on Aging;

Action Steps (cont'd)

- Foster ongoing strategic coordination with the leadership of key city departments & sister agencies;
- Institute an enhanced level of service delivery to be coordinated by Chicago Division of Senior Services/Area Agency on Aging, including innovation of services and increased collaboration between Chicago's aging network and allied professions, business and medical communities, philanthropy, and technology sectors;
- Work with the State Department on Aging and other State Area Agencies on Aging to strengthen and provide leadership for the statewide network of programs and services;
- Search outside our state and even internationally for best practices and evidence-based models that can be culturally adapted in Chicago; and,
- Proactively empower individuals and community-based organization to better coordinate services and especially to socially isolated and at-risk individuals.