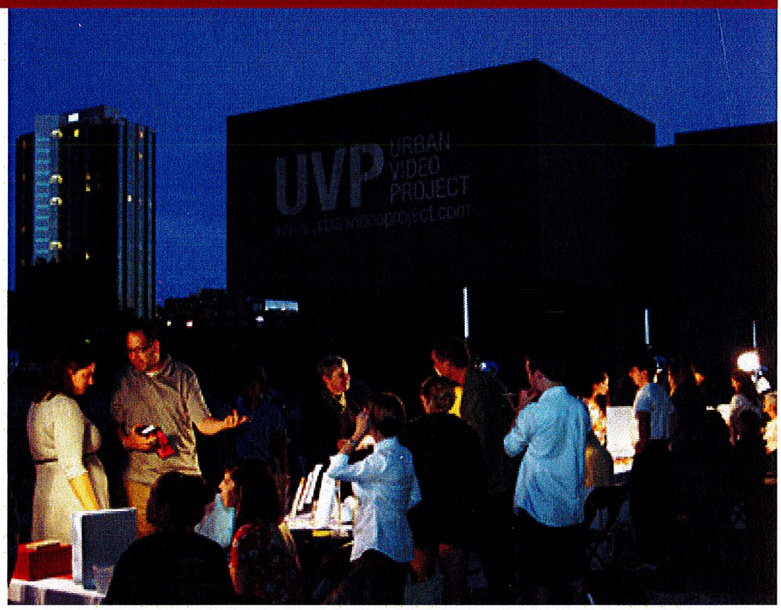
SHAPING AN AGE-FRIENDLY CNY

A study on how to retain and engage Boomers in our community

October 2014



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GREATER SYRACUSE

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The authors and F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse are solely responsible for the content of this report. Our donors were not involved in the drafting of the report and bear no responsibility for the content.

With this in mind, we wish to thank The Central New York Community Foundation, The Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation, KeyBank, Darco Manufacturing, the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County.

ABOUT F.O.C.U.S.

F.O.C.U.S. (Forging Our Community's United Strength) Greater Syracuse, Inc. is a citizen-driven organization that taps citizen creativity to impact change in Central New York by enabling citizens, organizations and government to work together to enhance the quality of our lives and our economic future.

WHAT IS F.O.C.U.S.?

F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse engages in research, public policy advocacy, public education and public outreach to promote intelligent, inclusive, sustainable decision-making. It is a unique organization that values and solicits citizens input in decision-making. It is positive, inclusive and non-judgmental.

To foster change within Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse, F.O.C.U.S. brings individuals and groups together to collaborate on common agendas and common goals. F.O.C.U.S. regularly informs the community regarding the advances made on the citizens' goals, and instills community pride that serves to unite and strengthen us as a community.

F.O.C.U.S. works with citizens to identify and explore current community projects, measure progress and prepare reports for the community, including Strategic Plans (Arts & Culture; Water and Waterways; Sustainability; CNY Pathways; Smart Growth); Patterns of Government; Civil Discourse Forums and CDC National Report on Pandemic Flu and Reconnecting to Onondaga Lake.

F.O.C.U.S. hosts all-inclusive community events to showcase civic trustees, regional assets, new ideas and opportunities, and communicates its findings in several ways. One is its monthly F.O.C.U.S. Forum. Sessions focus on three themes: economic vitality, social equity/social justice and environmental stewardship. It also distributes citizen plans to elected officials, citizens, nonprofits, government agencies, schools and colleges.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OUR COMMUNITY IS AGING.

In 2010, more than a third of Onondaga County's population was comprised of Boomers — those born between 1946 and 1964 — with more than 130,000 Boomer residents. As this population ages, Central New York needs to be innovative and proactive in planning services and activities to retain aging Boomers as part of our community. The economic and social contributions of this wealthy, active and productive population are vital to the sustainability of Central New York.

BOOMERS WANT TO AGE-IN-PLACE

As Central New Yorkers age, they will prefer to age within their own homes or neighborhoods, surrounded by familiar faces and places. We define aging-in-place as having the choice in the decision of where you age. An age-friendly community supports and accommodates that choice through offering the services necessary to aging-in-place.

The ability to age-in-place requires several services and opportunities.

- Safe, accessible and efficient transportation
- Navigable and excellent quality health care services, which use technology to facilitate in-home care
- Recreational and cultural activities
- Challenging and stimulating learning opportunities
- Inter-generational social networks
- Accessible, affordable and desirable shopping and entertainment
- Accessible, year-round physical activity opportunities
- Meaningful opportunities to contribute to their community
- Affordable, innovative and accessible housing options
- Flexible work opportunities

The good news is Central New York is currently a great place to grow older. It has excellent health care, which not only encourages Boomers to remain but encourages Boomers to relocate aging

parents to Central New York. Our cost of living is relatively low. Our numerous higher-education centers offer incredible cultural, recreational and learning opportunities for Boomers. Central New York's magnificent landscape and four seasons offer year-round opportunities for outdoor recreation and physical activities, from hiking, to boating to skiing.

The Syracuse metropolitan area was ranked No. 17 in the Milken Institutes 2012 "Best Cities for Successful Aging" report. Recently, Syracuse pledged to improve the lives of older adults by signing the Milken Institute's Best Cities for Successful Aging Mayor's Pledge.

So, in many ways, we are a great place to grow old, but there is more to be done. F.O.C.U.S. has identified many opportunities for our community to build upon and improve its Age-Friendliness. You will find these opportunities in the recommendation section, which was based on the findings from our year-long, community-wide project, researching how Central New York can retain its aging Boomer population.

We completed a survey, with nearly 2,000 respondents, asking residents to identify factors that would influence their decision to stay or leave. We convened five focus groups, digging deeper into what would keep Boomers here, discussing challenges and opportunities with housing; transportation; social networks; recreational, physical and cultural activities and retirement. We met with nearly 40 key-informants for interviews analyzing how an out-migration of Boomers would affect their sectors. This research was guided by a steering committee of more than 40 community and business leaders.

This report concludes our findings and recommendations for how to retain Boomers as significant, productive and contributing citizens and how we can make Central New York the very best Age-Friendly Community.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse, along with others, believed that Boomers make significant economic and social contributions to their community. And to ensure our community is sustainable, we needed to retain this population. We were concerned that if the community did not act to retain the aging Boomer population, many might leave the community and we would lose their dollars, knowledge, time and other resources.

In October 2013, funded by the CNY Community Foundation, The Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation, KeyBank, Darco Manufacturing, the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County, F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse launched its Age-Friendly CNY Research Project to identify how Central New York can retain the aging Boomer population as productive and contributing residents.

THE CHARGE TO F.O.C.U.S.

- To provide an information base that identifies what we need to know about the demographic profiles of our area's Boomers
- To identify what incentivizes Boomers to want to continue to live in Central New York
- To identify barriers and opportunities to retain Boomers
- To research housing alternatives, health care services, educational and business opportunities for an aging population
- To encourage participation in philanthropic and citizen engagement programs
- To raise awareness of this issue in the community and provide information to support local planning across all sectors: government, academia, business and nonprofit organizations.
- To provide recommendations on how to proceed

WHAT IS AGE-FRIENDLY?

In an age-friendly community, the policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to help older adults "age-in-place." In other words, the community is set up to help older adults live safely, enjoy good health, stay involved and remain in their chosen homes.

For example, in an age-friendly community:

- Sidewalks are well lit and kept in good shape.
- Buildings have automatic door openers and elevators.
- Older adults take part in all sorts of community activities, such as visiting museums or libraries, taking courses, civic engagement or physical activity.

AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY:

- Recognizes that older adults have a wide range of skills and abilities.
- Understands and meets the age-related needs of older adults.
- Respects the decisions and lifestyle choices of older adults.
- Protects those older adults who are vulnerable.
- Recognizes that older adults have a lot to offer their community.
- Recognizes how important it is to include older adults in all areas of community life.

WHAT DOES AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

IN AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY:

- Outdoor areas and public buildings are pleasant, safe and accessible.
- Housing is affordable, safe and well designed for older adults.
- Roads and walkways are accessible and kept in good shape.
- Public transportation is affordable and accessible.
- Neighborhoods are safe.
- Relationships are respectful.
- Health and community support services are available.
- Opportunities for older adults to be socially active exist.
- Older adults can take part in civic engagement, political and employment positions.
- Information is easy to find and easy to understand.

SOURCE: THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SYRACUSE ONONDAGA COUNTY PLANNING AGENCY

THE TYPICAL NEIGHBORHOOD IN CENTRAL NEW YORK HAS OLD, TWO-STORY HOMES WHICH NEED TO BE RETROFITTED WITH AGE-FRIENDLY FEATURES INCLUDING FIRST-FLOOR BEDROOMS AND BATHROOMS.

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

FINDINGS

- Housing is affordable, however the affordable housing available does not offer age-friendly features or is not in walkable, age-friendly neighborhoods.
- Housing is old and would need to be significantly retrofitted to be age-friendly and desirable to Boomers, specifically with a large portion of the Boomer population looking for smaller, single-family, single-story homes.
- Our community lacks the diversity of housing options that boomers prefer, including shared- and co-housing and niche communities.
- Our community is spreading out, creating communities that are less dense, less walkable and less accessible to services and transportation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in neighborhood centers throughout Onondaga County's towns and villages to create walkable communities. Invest in lighting, sidewalk maintenance, business development and attractive landscaping and building facades.
- Focus new development and re-development in these walkable neighborhoods, encouraging the use of Age-Friendly features both in commercial and residential properties.
- Update zoning laws to accommodate a variety of services and residences.
- Ensure housing is affordable by offering a variety of housing costs and tax incentives for older adults.
- Provide housing safety checks and maintenance services.
- Support entrepreneurs that provide age-friendly home maintenance services.
- Create a directory of age-friendly home-maintenance services, programs and products.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SYRACUSE IN FOCUS

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

TRANSPORTATION

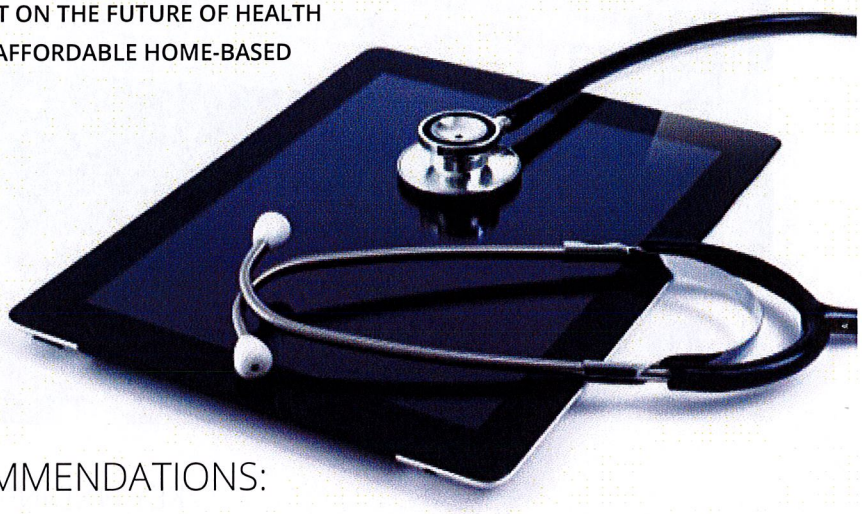
FINDINGS

- Transportation is a significant challenge for our community. Resources are being cut, while demand for services are increasing.
- Transportation is a significant concern for its residents. Car-dependent residents are very concerned about loss of independence as they lose their ability to drive as they age.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support public transportation, ensure it has the funding needed to provide convenient and accessible routes.
- Design routes to connect residential neighborhoods to desirable locations, activities and special events.
- Support business ventures that provide affordable transportation options like car-share, ride-share, bicycle-share programs.
- Organize volunteer-base organizations or time-share organizations to provide transportation for older adults.
- Designate parking spaces for older adults.
- Invest in infrastructure to ensure accessibility to services, health care providers and public transportation
- Invest in sheltered bus-stops with seating ensuring they are accessible, safe and well-lit.
- Create a network of walking and bicycling trails to connect neighborhoods, retail centers, entertainment and attractions.
- Create a directory of age-friendly transportation services, programs and products.
- Invest in neighborhood centers throughout Onondaga County's towns and villages to create walkable communities, ensuring they are accessible to public transportation.

TECHNOLOGY WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES WITH DEMAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOME-BASED CARE SIGNIFICANTLY GROWING.



KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES

FINDINGS

- Our health care system adequately meets today's needs. Health care is accessible with high quality of care. However, an aging Boomer population will increase demand on our health care system.
- NYS offers several unique, community-based aging services available to residents of all incomes. General awareness of these programs is lacking.
- Boomers have to consider and accommodate their parents' aging plans as well as their own aging plans, making many Boomers the primary or part-time caregivers to a parent, spouse and possibly grandchildren.
- Long-term health care options are limited; many of the privately owned nursing homes and retirement communities having wait lists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in recruiting, training and cross-training a cross-section of health care providers.
- Support business ventures that provide age-friendly community and health services, such as health care navigators and advocates, private case management, non-medical training programs for caregivers, respite programs for caregivers, and adult day cares.
- Invest in technology and access to broadband to facilitate in-home care.
- Develop diverse, affordable and accessible long-term health care options including home care, small group care and nursing home care.
- Support caregiver respite programs.
- Create a directory of age-friendly community and health services, programs and products.

SNOWSHOEING AT BEAVER LAKE NATURE CENTER. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES RANKED IN THE TOP FOUR MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR BOOMERS CONSIDERING RELOCATING.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SYRACUSE CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU/ONONDAGA COUNTY PARKS

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

RECREATION, CULTURE AND EDUCATION

FINDINGS

- Boomers, in general, are very active with interests in a variety of physical and recreational activities. Central New York offers plenty of year-round and accessible physical and recreational activities.
- Boomers want to continue to learn and are drawn to University-based learning opportunities.
- Boomers want access to a variety of affordable entertainment and cultural events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create an interactive digital forum for information sharing, including events, activities, programs fitness programs and learning opportunities.
- Support business ventures that provide age-friendly recreational, cultural and educational opportunities.
- Invest in on-campus residential housing for engaged Boomers.
- Expand accessibility to cultural activities by holding events in suburban communities, ensuring recreational and cultural opportunities and activities are accessible to public transportation.
- Collaborate with colleges and universities to engage Boomers on campus, through satellite campuses and online-based learning.
- Create a network of walking and bicycling trails to connect neighborhoods, retail centers, entertainment and attractions. Trails should be well-lit, safe, and attractive with access to charging stations.
- Support and promote affordable, accessible, age-friendly activities and events year-round.

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

TAXES

FINDINGS

- New York is perceived as being one of the worst states to retire in, both BankRate.com and Kiplinger rated New York as the worse state for retirement, mostly due to taxes.
- New York offers several unique, government-funded aging services that are supported by NYS taxes. Many of these programs cannot be found in other states and might encourage the frail and elderly to return to New York State once they require these services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

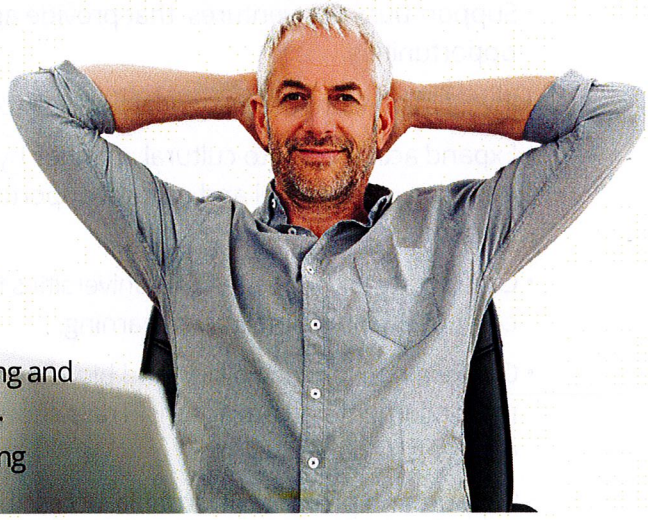
- Launch a community-wide campaign to educate citizens about the services and programs their taxes support.
    - Compare these services to other low-taxes states' services.
    - Provide itemized tax bills for all property owners.
    - Produce fact sheets about local and state taxes.

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

WORK OPPORTUNITIES

FINDINGS

- Boomers plan to postpone retirement, some indefinitely. The key reasons are retirement insecurity or simply the desire to remain engaged in the workforce. Boomers who plan to continue to work want flexible work schedules, opportunities to work from home and part-time positions.
- Boomers are the largest growing cohort launching new business ventures.
- Boomers feel a general lack of retirement preparedness, having faced many obstacles to successful retirement planning including the 2008 recession, age-discrimination, health issues and caregiver responsibilities.
- Boomers who retire from the workforce will take with them a lifetime of experiences, connections and knowledge with them. This will be a loss to the business community.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage work policies to accommodate Boomers, offering flexible work schedules, opportunities to work from home and part-time positions.
- Support Boomer-launched businesses, providing accessible and adequate funding and training.
- Launch a community-wide preretirement counseling and educational program addressing all aspects of aging.
- Create a digital forum to share information regarding age-friendly job opportunities and employers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOCUS IN SYRACUSE

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

FINDINGS

- Boomers want to feel valued by their community and have a purpose.
- A connection to their community plays a significant role in a Boomers decision to move.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organize groups of volunteer retirees to use their knowledge and skill set to implement major community projects.
- Support and promote meaningful civic engagement opportunities , where Boomers can combine interests with helping their community.
- Create a digital forum to disseminate information regarding civic engagement opportunities.
- Create civic engagement opportunities to engage older adults at risk of social isolation.

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS: PHILANTHROPY

FINDINGS

- Boomers are the largest philanthropic givers, supporting numerous local nonprofits and community programs and services.
- Boomers will support a community and program they are connected to.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create connections between Boomers and funding opportunities by engaging them in philanthropic organizations through civic engagement or part-time employment.
- Create a digital forum to inform Boomers of funding opportunities, where their dollars go and the communities they are affecting.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SYRACUSE CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU/ONONDAGA COUNTY PARKS

INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE VITAL TO RETAINING BOOMERS, WHO WANT TO STAY CLOSER TO FRIENDS, PARENTS, CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN. AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIVITIES THAT ALL GENERATIONS CAN ENJOY.

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

FAMILY AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

FINDINGS

- Boomers want to live near family and social networks.
- Boomers do not want to be isolated from other communities, they want to be a part of a larger, multi-generational network of friends and family.
- Technology is changing social networks, providing an online community for isolated older adults.
- Travel is important to maintaining connections to distanced family and social networks. Syracuse Hancock International Airport is perceived as being expensive with inconvenient flight schedules.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure a healthy economy where job opportunities and career growth are available to everyone.
- Create accessible, safe, affordable opportunities and activities for all generations to enjoy.
- Providing training and education for social media applications to reduce social isolation.
- Provide multi-generational housing options for Boomers that choose to live with their parents, children and/or grandchildren.
- Promote opportunities for multi-generational interaction through organized clubs, outings, religious institutions, cultural programs, civic engagement and neighborhood programs.

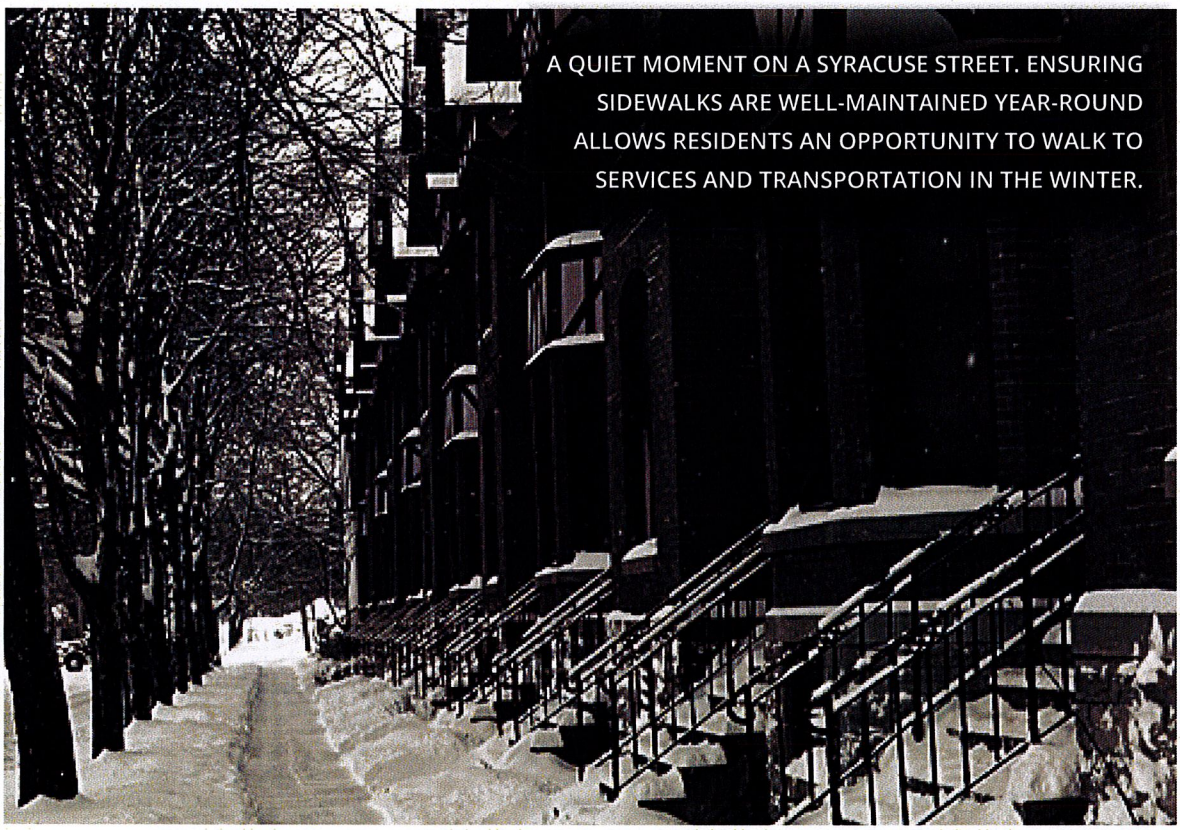
SAFETY

FINDINGS

- Safety was the No. 1 factor important to Boomers when deciding where to live. Safety includes safety from falls and personal injury, public safety, community preparedness and safety from natural disasters.
- Downtown is perceived as being unsafe with lack of accessible parking, unlit walkways and crime.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop and disseminate a community emergency responsive plan to residents of all ages, culture, languages and abilities.
- Ensure sidewalks are maintained and accessible year-round, including clear of snow and ice in the winter.
- Provide sidewalk maintenance services to older adults to maintain sidewalks.
- Invest in street lighting, signage, benches, and attractive landscaping to increase the perception of public and personal safety. Reduce litter.
- Provide opportunities for older adults to actively take part in neighborhood safety programs.



A QUIET MOMENT ON A SYRACUSE STREET. ENSURING SIDEWALKS ARE WELL-MAINTAINED YEAR-ROUND ALLOWS RESIDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO WALK TO SERVICES AND TRANSPORTATION IN THE WINTER.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SYRACUSE IN FOCUS

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

FINDINGS

- While Central New York offers several age-friendly services and programs, they largely are under-marketed and under-promoted within our own community. Perceptions are negative about our community.
- Information about aging services and programs is scattered and hard to navigate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a branding campaign to identify Central New York's age-friendly services, programs, organizations and neighborhoods.
- Create a community-wise, accessible database of age-friendly services, programs, activities, events and organizations.
- Launch a public outreach and education campaign, promoting the various age-friendly assets our community offers, with a primary focus on our own community to retain Boomers then reaching out to other communities to attract Boomers to our area.
- Encourage new businesses that provide age-friendly communications and information services, like professional navigators to help families identify and access services and make informed decisions.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SYRACUSE IN FOCUS

OLDER ADULTS PROVIDE AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFIT TO THEIR COMMUNITIES. CENTRAL NEW YORK NEEDS TO PROMOTE AGE-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS TO RETAIN ITS AGING BOOMERS.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SYRACUSE IN FOCUS

WHO ARE THE BOOMERS: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

boom•er. *noun*

: a person born during the demographic Post–World War II baby boom between the years 1946 and 1964.

WE ARE GETTING OLDER

Overall the country is getting older. By the year 2030, the United States Census Bureau predicts that one in five Americans will be aged 65 or older. This is due to several factors:

- People living longer, with a life expectancy increasing from 75 in 1990 to 79 in 2012.
- Fewer babies are being born, increasing the median age of the population.
- The sheer size of the Boomer generation, which is the largest bulge in our population ever.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Gender Roles. The generation that preceded the Boomers observed traditional gender roles. However, with the Boomer generation, traditional gender roles began to dissipate as female Boomers — compared with their mothers — became more educated, earned more and had fewer children, in part because of their increased involvement in the workforce.

Education. Not only are female Boomers more educated than previous generations, one-third of all Boomers acquired at least an undergraduate degree.

BOOMER FACTS

77 MILLION (REPRESENTING 25% OF THE TOTAL U.S. POPULATION)

REDEFINING TRADITIONAL VALUES

THE WEALTHIEST, MOST ACTIVE, AND MOST PHYSICALLY FIT GENERATION

THE LAST BOOMERS TURN 50 THIS YEAR

Consumption. A study using national survey data showed that Boomers have accumulated more wealth relative to than the income of the three previous generations. In light of this, Boomers' consumption is 27% higher than the previous generation. Despite more wealth accumulation, Boomers' financial security in retirement must be measured relative to consumption.

Health care. Health care costs for Boomers are higher than those of the previous generation. From 1990 to 2010, health care costs rose 30% for 45 to 54 year olds and 21% for 55 to 64 year olds including both premium and out of pocket expenses.

PERCEIVED CHALLENGES OF AN AGING POPULATION

Social security and health care costs are rising and the aging population is living longer. According to the Social Security Administration, "Social Security and Medicare accounted for 38% of federal expenditures in 2012. Both programs will experience cost growth substantially in excess of GDP growth through the mid-2030s due to rapid population aging caused by the large baby boom cohort generation entering retirement and lower birthrate generations entering employment."

Corporate benefits provided by employers have also declined for the Boomers, requiring that they plan more wisely for their retirement.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOCUS IN SYRACUSE

TWO MUSICIANS PERFORM DOWNTOWN ALONG EAST ONONDAGA STREET DURING 2014 ARTSWEEK SYRACUSE. BOOMERS ARE AN ECLECTIC GROUP WITH MORE MONEY, MORE EDUCATION AND MORE ACTIVE INTERESTS THAN ANY OTHER GENERATION.

A "brain drain" from the work force, will create a reduction in the overall tax base, higher health care costs, and other burdens on public resources. Brain drain is a result of highly skilled individuals retiring from the workforce, creating a vacuum of knowledge without sufficient human capital to replace it and in turn possibly reducing productivity levels.

THE BENEFITS OF RETAINING AN OLDER POPULATION

As our country ages, perceptions are that the aging population will cause a tremendous demand on services and challenges to our communities.

However, some of the generational differences— like dissolving gender roles and high levels of education — may result in Boomers being more productive as they age.

Other factors that distinguish Boomers from previous generations include increased wealth and improved health, which will allow them to more actively contribute to their community — economically and socially.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Older adults spend money. Many states and communities have been actively recruiting older adults for years, recognizing that retirees with the means to migrate, bring their wealth with them and provide a boost to their economy. They also create a growing need for businesses providing products and services targeting older adults, creating further economic benefits for communities.

According to the U.S. Consumer Expenditure Survey, Boomers' median household income is 55% greater than the post-boomer generation and 61% greater than pre-boomers. Boomers average $24,000 of disposable income and outspend other generations by an estimated $400 billion per year. They also currently represent the largest consumer demographic in the United States.

Older adults create jobs. A study by the University of Georgia shows that, on average, 16,000 retirees per year move to Georgia, bringing with them a net worth of $8 billion and creating approximately 28,800 jobs. The study predicts that for every one-hundred retirees who migrate to Georgia, 55 jobs are created in areas like health care, home construction, food and beverage services, and real estate.

Older adults pay taxes. Older adults

Boomers average **$24,000** of disposable income and outspend other generations by an estimated **$400 billion per year.**

make up a large portion of the tax base. People over the age of 45 contribute to 45% of the country's income taxes. According to the Women's Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University, 90% of U.S. net worth and 78% of financial assets are held by Boomers.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Older adults serve their community. An "Encore Movement" is growing among older adults, who desire to give something back to their community as they age. In 2011, 20 million people age 55+ gave more than 3 billion hours of community service, valued at $67 billion. The AARP Experience Corps had more than 2,000 volunteers tutoring students and Senior Corps had more than 360,000 people age 55+ participate in a variety of social service programs nationwide. **Civic engagement is vital to building stronger communities.**

Older adults are philanthropists. According to the Women's Philanthropy Institute, 86% of Boomers donate to charity, for a total of $47 billion a year. Women also are more likely to donate to charity and possess more wealth than previous generations of women. The desire of active, aging adults to contribute to improving their community helps support nonprofit organizations.

Boomers hold **90%** of the U.S. net worth and **78%** of our nation's financial assets.

Older adults strengthen communities. Aging-in-place allows Boomers to create "long-term residential stability... and strong social ties to neighborhoods and one another." Rural communities benefit from aging adults because they provide a demand for services, provide a larger tax base, and plug the "brain drain" caused by educated young people moving toward opportunities in metropolitan areas.

MIGRATION TRENDS OF OLDER ADULTS

DECREASING MIGRATION

Migration in the United States is decreasing, and has been for more than a half a century. Today, the country's migration rates are the lowest they have ever been. The decrease in migration may be partially related to the lack of job opportunities. Sun belt states — particularly Florida, Nevada and Arizona — have seen dramatic decreases or reverse trends in their Boomer populations from 2007 to 2012. Northeastern states, such as New York, saw relatively no change in their Boomer population.

REASONS FOR MIGRATION AMONG OLDER ADULTS

PUSH/PULL FACTORS that affect a person's decision to move. Push factors include loss of a spouse, loss of independence and environmental stresses. These factors greatly increase the need for an individual or couple to move. Pull factors are the potential amenities in a different community and the location of family and friends.

SOCIAL BONDS play an important role in motivating migration. Older adults want to be near family and social networks and have a connection to their community

TAXES AND STATE CHARACTERISTIC EFFECTS. Levels of tax burden and public services may marginally affect location choice, with income tax having the greatest effect. People across all ages and races were more likely to move to states with lower taxes. A 1% increase of income taxes is related to a 0.5% drop in population for those between the ages of 55 and 64.

However, variables such as climate, population characteristics, job loss, marital status change and public services have a much greater effect than tax rate. Changes of state tax policies over the years have little to no affect on migration patterns.

EFFECT OF MIGRATION ON DONOR AND RECIPIENT COMMUNITIES

The migration of retirees to retirement communities has many positive effects on surrounding communities. A study in

a retirement community in Maine found that in-migration creates about 55 more jobs for every 100 retiree migrants in fields such as retail, government, and health care. This job growth also attracts a second wave of migrants after the retirees, further expanding the population. The study suggests that for every 100 new retirees who migrate to an area, total personal income will increase by $651,000 or $6,510 per every in-migrating retiree. Retiree migration adds to the development of local nonprofits due to increased civic engagement and a growing need for services as the population ages.

For donor states, migration has a different story. According to the Empire Center for NY State Policy, between 2000 and 2009, nearly 60% of those leaving New York State went to southern states and 30% to Florida alone. Over those nine years, New York state lost $37 billion in net income to other states including $10.9 billion to Florida, $7 billion to New Jersey, $3.4 billion to Connecticut, $2.5 billion to North Carolina, and between $1 and $2 billion each to California, Hawaii, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia.

THE THREE MIGRATION STAGES

The first move tends to be following retirement, and those moving tend to be healthier and wealthier. This move is not always influenced by closeness to kin, but rather the amenities of retirement communities or small towns in Sunbelt states.

The second move is based on an individual's inability to carry out everyday tasks. This move is typically closer to offspring who can provide help. Individuals generally move after they've been widowed. Migrants tend to move North.

The third move happens when an individual's needs become too burdensome for their kin and other helpers. The move is often to a long-term care facility.

The Three Migration Stages are a theory of what might cause someone to move after retirement. This does not mean that everyone makes all, or even one of the described moves. There are many other factors that affect one's ability or desire to move after retirement.

Between 2000 and 2009, New York state lost

$10.9 billion in net income to Florida

ONONDAGA COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2010 Census, Onondaga County has 467,026 residents, with 145,170 residing within the city of Syracuse. Syracuse had 31,542 Boomers living within the city accounting for 21.7% of its population. Onondaga County had 146,715 Boomers, accounting for 31.5% of its total population.

Compared to the city of Syracuse, the surrounding Onondaga County residents are more likely to be white, wealthier, and older. **Figure 1** shows where Boomers are living in Onondaga County. While there are some concentrations of older adults in Syracuse, the largest groups appear to be in the surrounding area, especially in the more rural communities.

The median household income of Onondaga County exceeds the median household income within Syracuse by more than $20,000. Syracuse has significantly more households earning less than $20,000 a year than the surrounding county.

ONONDAGA COUNTY MOBILITY

While Onondaga County loses more residents to other states in the U.S. than it gains, the total net migration is small. The net loss of Onondaga County is only 0.23% of the county population.

According to the 2011 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Onondaga County has the greatest net loss of residents to Orange, Queens, and St. Lawrence counties in New York State, as well as Maricopa County, Arizona and Hartford County, Connecticut. Conversely, Onondaga County has the largest net gains of residents from the New York counties of Oswego, Madison, Jefferson, Suffolk and Kings.

Onondaga County has the greatest net losses of residents to southern states, while it gains residents from Western and Northeastern states. Using 2011 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the County has the greatest net losses to Florida (-843), South Carolina (-305), Tennessee (-271), and Georgia (-201). It draws the largest net gains from New Jersey (911), Pennsylvania (417), and California (140).

According to the Empire Center for NY State Policy, while our net migration is small, taxpayers who left the state had average incomes 22% higher ($58,899) than those who moved in ($48,432).

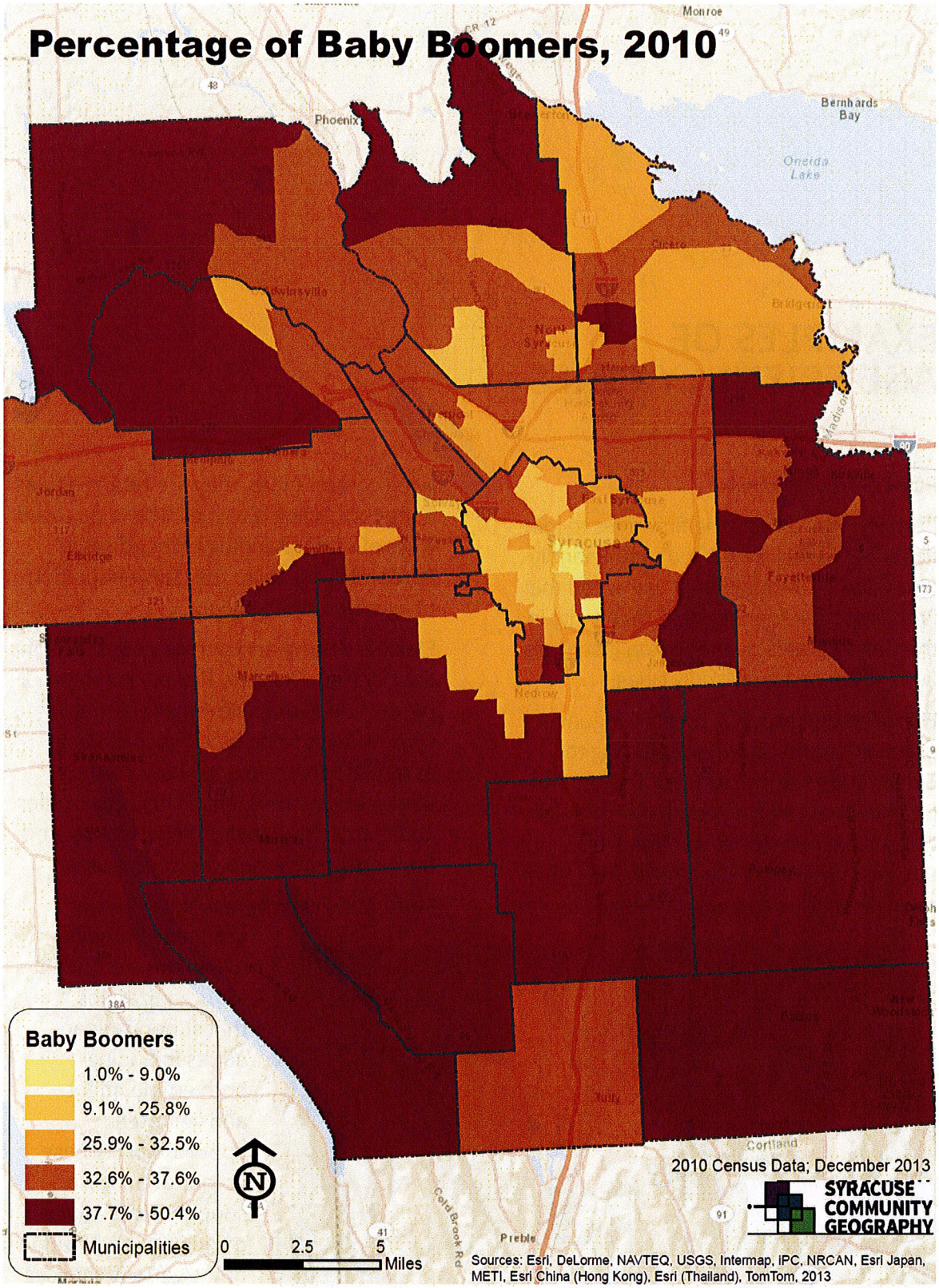


FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF THE BOOMER POPULATION IN ONONDAGA COUNTY

EXAMPLES OF AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES

PORTLAND, OREGON

Portland was among the first cities to join the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. It was rated the 24th most age-friendly large metro city in the United States by the Milken Institute's 2012 study on age-friendly cities.

Honored Citizens. The official language used within the city when referring to older adults sets the tone for the city's treatment of its aging population. Senior citizens are referred to as "Honored Citizens." Instead of the typical "long-term care" label given to many late-in-life senior living communities, they are referred to as "long-term living" facilities. These nuanced ways of understanding older adults in Portland is crucial to the city's adaptation of age-friendly initiatives.

Flexible zoning and permit codes. Within the city there are very flexible zoning and permit codes that allow for senior-style communities to be built in proximity to essential services (i.e. grocery stores, banks, pharmacies, etc.). This allows older adults to extend their independence and have easier access to desired services.

Fund Age-Friendly services. The city designates funding within the city budget for organizations that support older adults in finding both employment and volunteer opportunities. These organizations also support older adults through the navigation of the various services and service providers that serve older adults.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia was rated the 16th most age-friendly large metro city in the United States by the Milken Institute's 2012 study on age-friendly cities. It also is the largest U.S. city with has the highest proportion of older persons. The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging is one of the region's largest nonprofit agencies and is responsible for improving the quality of life for Philadelphia's large aging population. In 2011, PCA set an agenda with the mission to support older adults to age comfortably in their existing communities for as long as possible.

The plan called for marked changes in both the city's physical and social landscapes.

Age-friendly parks. Despite parks that touch nearly every neighborhood of the city, less than 10% of the city's seniors reported utilizing a public park over the course of a year according to a 2010 Public Health Management Corporation Household Health Survey. Similarly, in an effort to attract older adults to city parks, Philadelphia created an "Age-Friendly Parks Checklist." The checklist points includes safe and frequent access via public transit, sidewalks wide enough for wheelchairs and free of obstructions, public restrooms that are accessible and well-maintained, and signage that is clearly labeled and easy to read.

Housing. The key to Philadelphia's plan to create a better housing environment for older adults is its flexibility. There is a movement to modify homes so that they are more age-friendly (i.e. more handrails, better lighting, and more first floor bedroom and bathrooms) and to keep housing and rent affordable for older adults. Furthermore, in 2012 Philadelphia modernized its zoning codes making it possible for senior-style housing to be located closer to vital services.

Focus on the next generation. With their innovative initiatives, PCA is making strides to connect younger generations to older adults in the Philadelphia area. PCA has organized community meetings, created an active listserv, and hosts regular events in an effort to prove that including the aging population in the city and organizational initiatives is not only a good practice, but can be very beneficial to all involved.

IN SPITE OF ITS HARSH WINTERS, TOLEDO, OHIO POSSESSES MANY KEY AGE-FRIENDLY ELEMENTS

PROVO, UTAH

Provo was rated by the Milken Institute as the No. 1 most age-friendly large metropolitan city in the United States in 2012. Here are four highlights of Provo's age friendly characteristics:

- A vibrant economy in Provo has allowed for very low unemployment rates among all age groups, older adults included. The strong economy has allowed state educational institutions to fund educational initiatives for older adults in the community.
- Crime rates in Provo are significantly lower than the current United States average thanks to both a strong police force and an embraced culture of safety.
- Provo boasts volunteer rates among older adults that are among the highest in the country. Civic engagement is supported by a city-funded department that connects older adults to multiple volunteer opportunities.
- Provo's has easy access to green spaces for activity, a low levels of obesity and diabetes, and available health care.

TOLEDO, OHIO

Toledo was rated by the Milken Institute as the No. 8 most age-friendly large metropolitan city in the United States in 2012. Despite a struggling economy and harsh winters, Toledo still possesses several key elements that make it a good city for older adults.

- Toledo's health care system is well-reputed. The city has 11 facilities that are Joint Commission. Joint Commission accreditation and certification is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality that reflects an organization's commitment to meeting certain performance standards.
- Toledo has the highest number of nursing beds per capita providing the aging population with many potential locations for acute and long-term care.
- The slow economy has created some of the most affordable housing and rental options in the United States in Toledo. The average rental property in Toledo is $683 while the national average is $871.

SYRACUSE WAS RANKED THE NO. 17 MOST AGE-FRIENDLY CITY, PARTLY DUE TO ITS ABUNDANCE OF ACCESSIBLE RECREATIONAL, CUTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SYRACUSE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU/WAINWRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

Syracuse was rated the 17th most age-friendly large metro city in the United States by the Milken Institute's 2012 study on age-friendly cities. Specific ranking for Syracuse by the Milken Institute's Age-Friendly Indicators: 5th for public libraries, 7th for community colleges, 6th for accredited hospitals, 3rd for MRIs, 2nd for golf courses, 92nd for tax burden, 93rd for cost of nursing home bed, 99th for weather, and last for inpatient Alzheimer's units.

Other reasons why Syracuse was highly ranked as an age-friendly community are ample and ready access to medical care in the city and access to many services used by primarily older adults (i.e. MRI clinics, physical therapists, and orthopedic surgeons).

There is an active and mobile population, thanks to walkable distances between housing and various services. There is an abundance of easily accessible libraries, parks, golf courses.

Because of the large university and college presence, as well as high enrollment in area community colleges, Syracuse has high levels of secondary education engagement.

Livability.com ranked Syracuse as the No. 7 best cities for best places for military veterans to live – whether they are looking to retire or start a second career. This was based on Syracuse's quality-of-life attributes that appeal to veterans such as moderate climate, low cost of living and unemployment rate, as well as availability of outdoor recreational opportunities and cultural amenities and its close proximity to military installations and a highly-ranked VA hospital.

Syracuse was rated the 17th most age-friendly large metro city in the United States by the Milken Institute's 2012 study on age-friendly cities

Recently the city of Syracuse signed the Milken Institute's Best Cities for Successful Aging Mayor's Pledge, committing to improve the lives of older people in Syracuse.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse identified four research approaches to meet the objectives for the CNY Age-Friendly Project.

STEERING COMMITTEE

F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse convened a group of community and business leaders (See **Appendix I)** to guide the research project. The steering committee met on four occasions over the course of December 2013 through September 2014. Members of the committee provided first-hand information on their individual sectors which included: housing, transportation, business and economic development, taxes, recreation, culture, fitness, philanthropy, and entrepreneurship.

Members of the steering committee were charged with the following:

- To provide a cross-sector perspective to the project
- To provide critical thinking toward the end product
- To serve as a diverse group of key informants across multiple sectors and cohorts
- To provide input, to act as overseers on data collection, surveys, and recommendations
- To provide staff and project committees with direction

The steering committee members brought a wide perspective of thought to the project. They provided expert information on the interests, needs and wishes of the boomer cohort that were unique to their sector. The meetings were interactive providing for in-depth conversation allowing members to have a "say" in the final report to the community. The committee members evaluated, made additions and approved the final recommendations providing special value and benefit from their deliberations.

SURVEY

The second research approach involved creating, distributing and analyzing a community-wide survey. Survey questions were selected based on an extensive literature review, which included a search

F.O.C.U.S. Age-Friendly Report included:

1,990 surveys

46 Steering Committee Members

38 Key-Informant Interviews

5 Focus Groups

for existing surveys. Some of the questions were taken from surveys used in other cities, with modifications suggested by the literature and reflective of conditions unique to Syracuse and Central New York. The surveys were pre-tested by the project's steering committee and F.O.C.U.S. forum participants (approximately 80 individuals) and, based on their feedback, additional modifications were made to improve the survey's clarity and comprehensiveness.

The survey was constructed by academic professionals from SUNY Oswego, supervised by Kim Armani and with the assistance of Nancy Smith, consultant and F.O.C.U.S. board member. The survey was approved by the State University of New York at Oswego Human Subjects Committee. It consists of thirty-eight questions. These questions measure topics such as intentions to move and community involvement and most use a scaling methodology to rate people's feelings about topics related to aging in the Central New York are as well as basic demographic questions to identify information and trends within the population surveyed (see **Appendix II** for complete survey).

The survey was conducted over a span of three months, February through April in 2014. It was administered primarily via an online form along with print copies. It was distributed using a snowball technique, meaning that it was issued by individuals and groups associated with F.O.C.U.S. creating awareness for the survey through word of mouth and among established groups associated with one another. F.O.C.U.S. distributed the survey electronically as much as possible, to ease data collection and distribution. The distribution plan identified possible community groups and public places to solicit respondents and relied heavily on the connections F.O.C.U.S. has within the community. We publicized the survey through local media and contacts with large employers in the Central New York area, in order to get responses from the general public. Additionally, large public events were targeted, in order to solicit responses from the general public. There was a component constructed to directly target

individual responses through large listservs of community organizations, educational institutions and more as well as a Facebook campaign in which F.O.C.U.S., as well as associated organizations, shared the survey. The last component attempted to get respondents from minority populations, the refugee population, the LGBTQ community of Central New York, the Veteran Community and the disabled population of the area.

The online survey was administered through the F.O.C.U.S. web site. The printed responses to the survey were recorded by graduate assistants at SUNY Oswego by keying directly into the electronic form. After being administered, the survey garnered 1,990 responses. The full survey results can be found in **Appendix III**.

FOCUS GROUPS

The third research approach involved identifying and engaging different groups of survey participants in a dialogue based on a set of discussion questions generated by SUNY Oswego's Research Designs and Applications in Human Development 400 Class, under the direction of Dr. Laura Brown. The students identified five discussion items including, Housing, Retirement, Family/Friends, Transportation and Activities/Recreation. Under each discussion topic, the students developed a set of questions meant to engage, explore and exit. (See **Appendix IV** for complete set of questions.)

Through the survey, we had 230 participants volunteer to be part of a focus group. We wanted focus participants to be within the Boomer cohort, so 63 of those volunteers were disqualified due to their age. The committee considered the characteristics of the remaining 167 volunteers in terms of age, gender, income and interest in aging in Central New York versus moving away. There were discussions about whether or not to have mixed-gender groups, mixed income groups, mixed age groups, and mixed groups of those who intended to age in place versus those who planned to leave. It was decided to create groups of mixed gender, but separate the groups by age, income, and intent to remain or leave. Ethnicity or race were not considered as factors in forming the focus groups. We broke the remaining 167 volunteers into five groups.

Five focus groups were held on week nights from 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. in late May and June at Destiny USA, an accessible, centrally located and well-known facility with ample

free parking. Volunteers who fit into one of the groups were called until each was filled. Each focus group was facilitated by Norma Feldman, a F.O.C.U.S. volunteer and was recorded for accuracy. (See **Appendix V** for coded transcripts).

The focus group discussion was then transcribed and coded by SUNY Oswego teaching assistants.

KEY-INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

F.O.C.U.S. and the Age-Friendly Working Group produced a master list of community stakeholders by sector, including Business/Professional, Nonprofit/Community Organizations, Economic Development, Education, Entrepreneurship, Financial, Government, Health Care, Housing, Legal, Leisure/ Recreation, Manufacturing, Media, Planning/Engineering/Development, Religious and Technology. See **Appendix VI** for full Key Informant Interviewees.

Some of the interviews were with individuals and other interviews were held in small groups of similar sectors. F.O.C.U.S. staff members Charlotte "Chuckie" Holstein and Jennifer Creighton met with 38 individuals to ascertain their thoughts on how the aging Boomer population will affect their sector. These interviews took place at F.O.C.U.S. offices from June through September and lasted approximately 60+ minutes each. A set of questions were developed by the Age-Friendly Working Group (see **Appendix VII** for full list of questions). Extensive notes were kept for each interview. Each conversation contained a richness of experience, knowledge of the sector, and prediction of the future. Interviewees shared their vision for CNY as Age-Friendly.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Four major F.O.C.U.S. Forum sessions were convened to inform and involve citizens. The first forum was to announce the Age-Friendly CNY study and solicit community support to collect data. The survey was pre-tested to make it relevant and easy to use. The second forum was a Power Point presentation followed by a panel discussion with executives from Home Builders and Remodelers of Central New York and Greater Syracuse Association of Realtors. The third session was a review of what was learned from the national literature, with the fourth session presenting F.O.C.U.S.'s findings and recommendations from its Age-Friendly report. These meetings were held at City Hall Commons and were attended by more than 150 citizens.

F.O.C.U.S. also made presentations for several community organizations to raise awareness of the project and the importance of keeping Boomers living in Central New York. Presentations were made to:

- Onondaga County Planning Federation Annual Symposium
- Century Club Luncheon Group
- AARP Onondaga County and Syracuse Chapter
- Onondaga County Supervisors
- Onondaga County Village Mayors
- F.O.C.U.S. Monthly Forums
- Syracuse University's Institute for Retired People

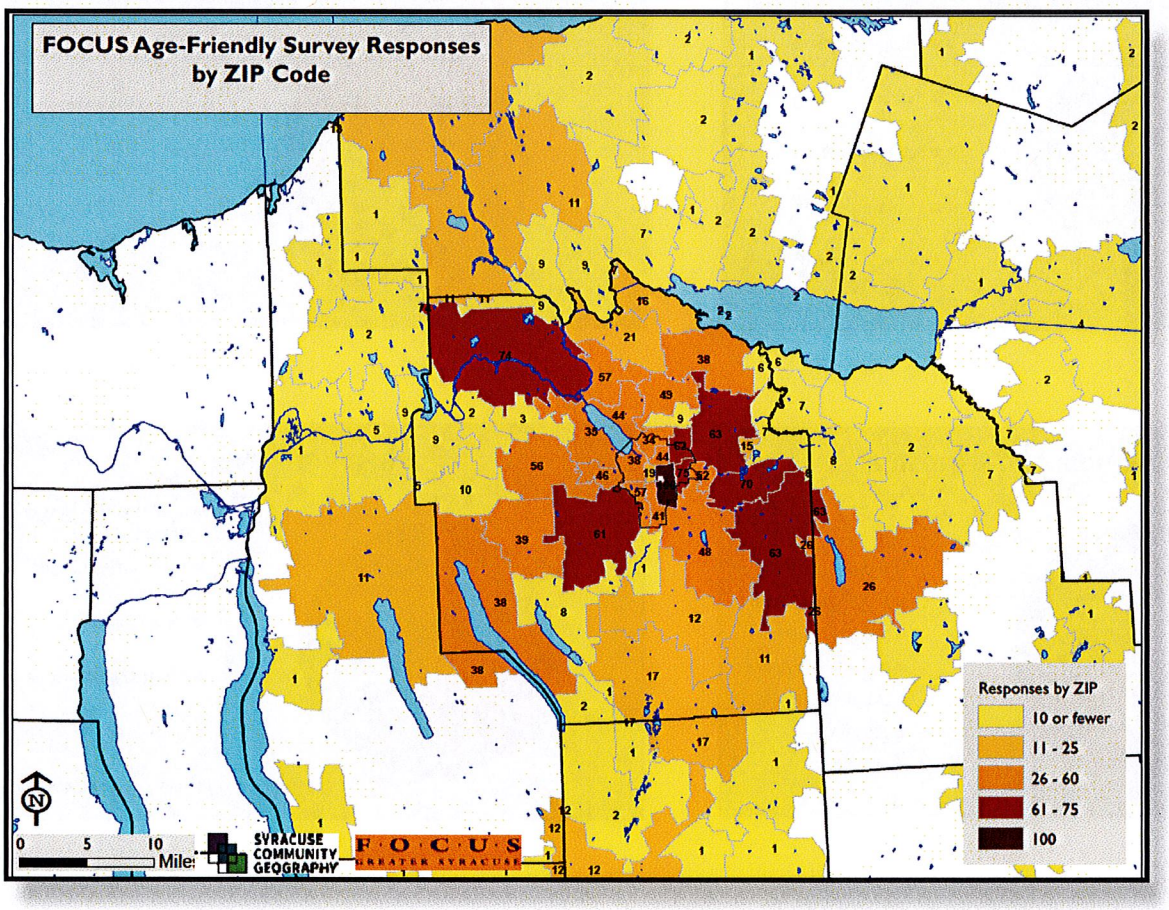
SUMMARY

F.O.C.U.S. developed a community-wide survey to identify how Central New York can retain its Boomer population. The survey was distributed throughout the community and online from January through April 2014. A total of 1990 respondents completed the survey. For full details of the survey research methodology, see **page 34.**

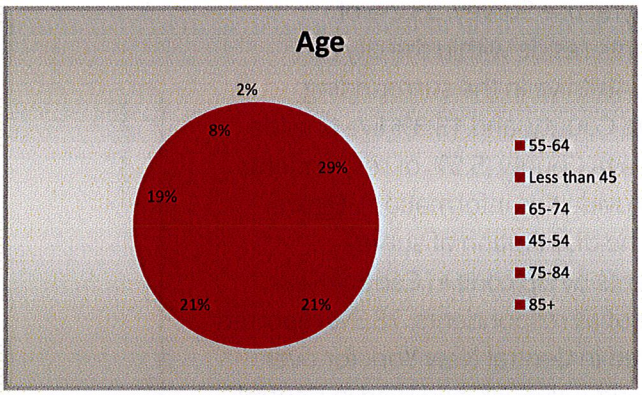
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

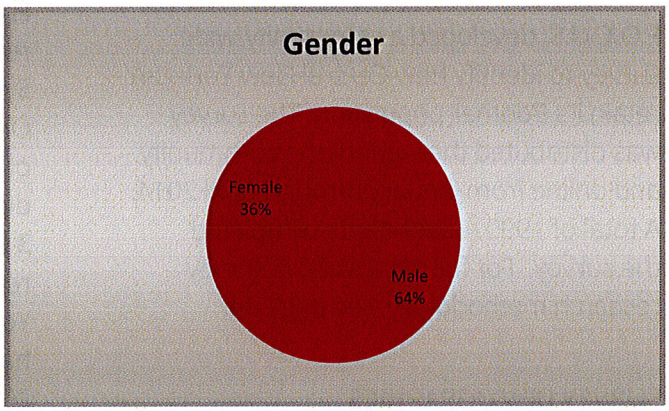
1,990 individuals completed the Age-Friendly Syracuse Survey. 33.2% of respondents reside within the city of Syracuse, 48% live in the surrounding Onondaga County, and 13.3% live outside of Onondaga County (5.5% of respondents did not provide this information). **Figure 3** shows the distribution of survey respondents by zip code in Central New York. Out of all respondents, 78.3% reported having lived in Central New York for over 20 years and only 6.6% had lived in Central New York for less than 6 years.

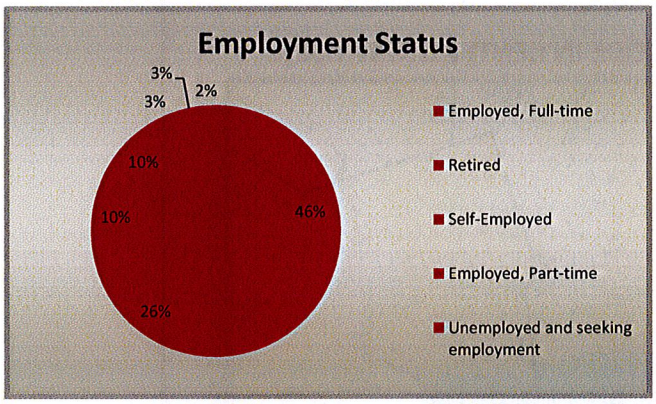
FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY ZIP CODE IN CENTRAL NEW YORK

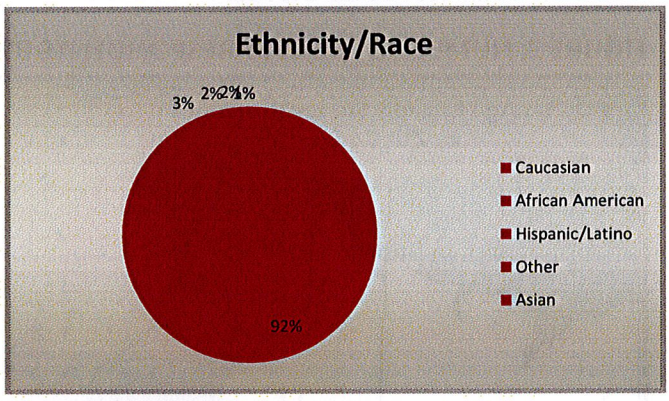


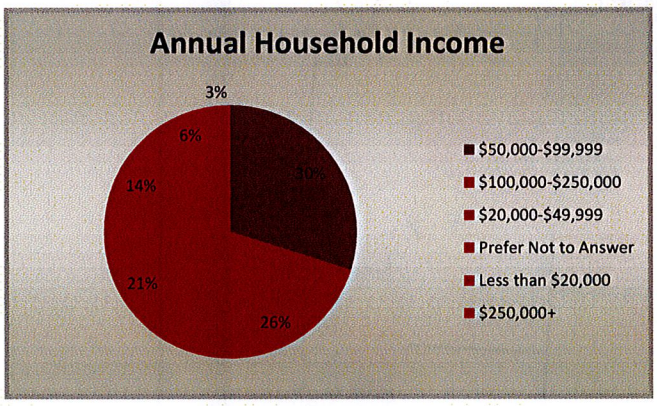
DEMOGRAPHICS

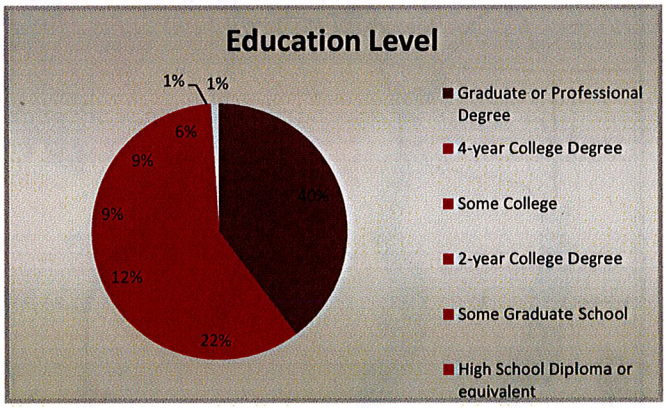












We asked survey participants about what factors were most important to them when deciding where to grow old. We asked them to rank each factor on a sliding scale. The four most important factors to Boomers when deciding where they will live are : Cost of Living, Safety, Opportunities for Physical Activity and Taxes.

FIGURE 4

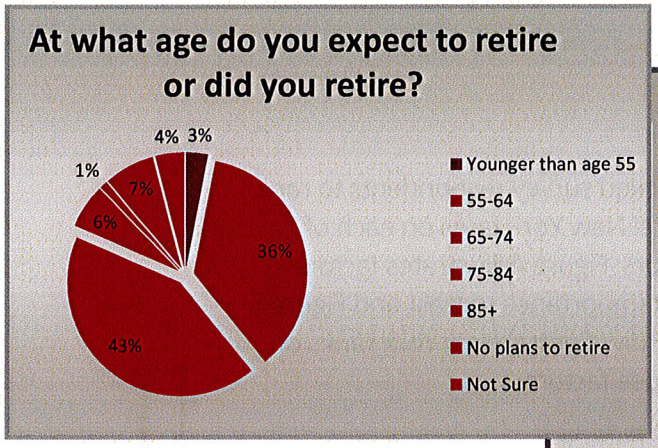
Where to Retire? We asked what factors are most important when deciding where you will live as you grow older.	
1	**Cost of Living**
2	**Safety**
3	**Opportunities for Physical Activity**
4	**Taxes**
5	Being Close to Family and/or Friends
6	Housing
7	Outdoor and Other recreational activities
8	Walkability
9	Health Care
10	Arts and Cultural Activities
11	Access to Shopping
12	Climate/Weather
13	Transportation Services
14	Access to Restaurants
15	Work Opportunities
16	Services for Older Adults
17	Volunteer Opportunities
18	Education Opportunities
19	Household Services
20	Religious/Spiritual Opportunities
21	Services for Persons with Special Needs

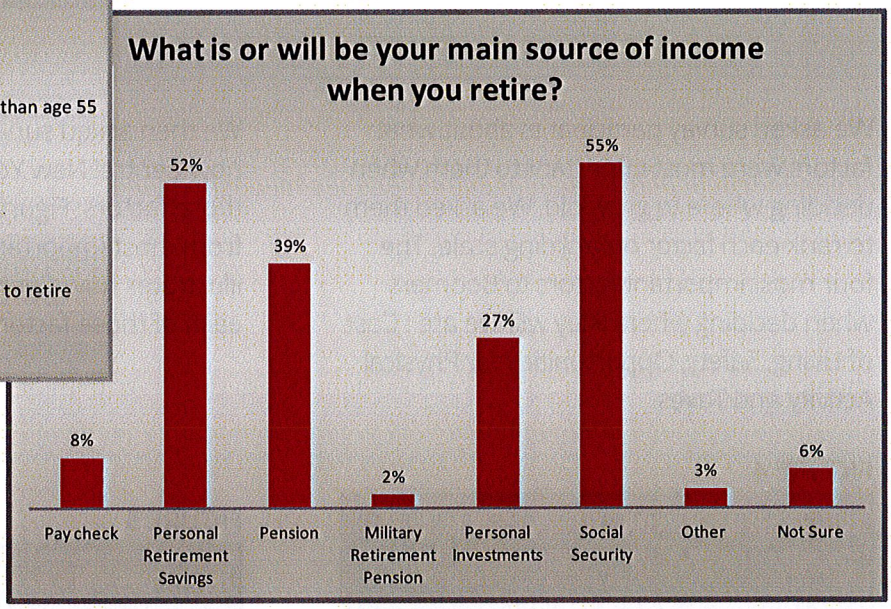
We then asked survey respondents to rank how Central New York fares on each of those factors. Figure 4 illustrates factors from most importance to least and Figure 5 illustrates how Central New York ranks on each of those factors.

FIGURE 5

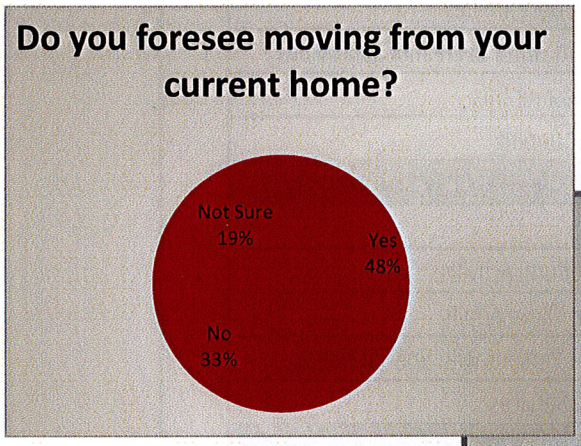
How does CNY Rank? We asked participants to rank these factors by how Central New York's fares.	
1	Education Opportunities
2	Religious/Spiritual Opportunities
3	Health Care
4	Volunteer Opportunities
5	Outdoor and Other Recreational Activities
6	Access to Restaurants
7	Access to Shopping
8	**Opportunities for Physical Activity**
9	Housing
10	Arts and Cultural Activities
11	Services for Older Adults
12	Services for Persons with Special Needs
13	Household Services
14	**Safety**
15	**Cost of Living**
16	Transportation Services
17	Walkability
18	Work Opportunities
19	Climate/Weather
20	**Taxes**

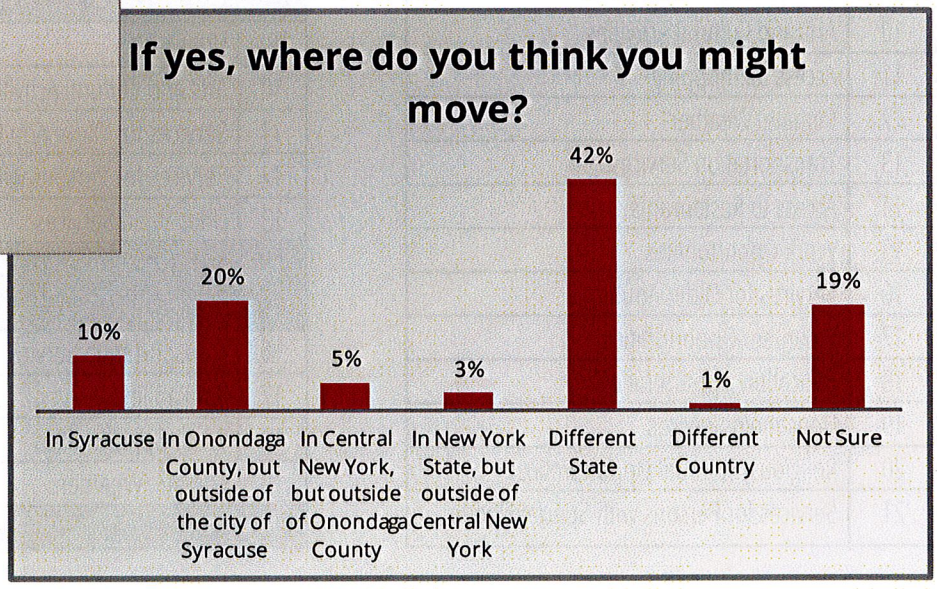
WE ASKED ABOUT RETIREMENT.

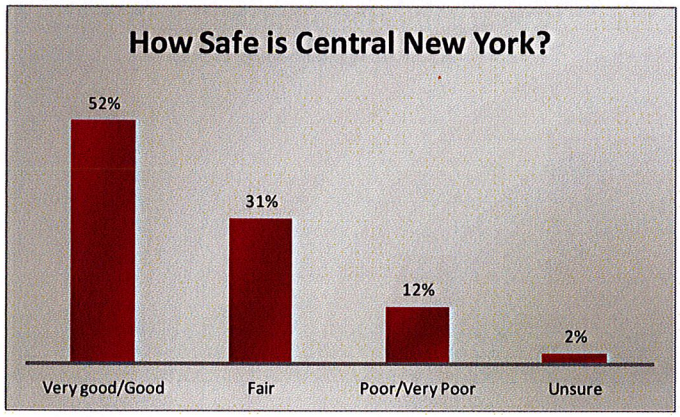


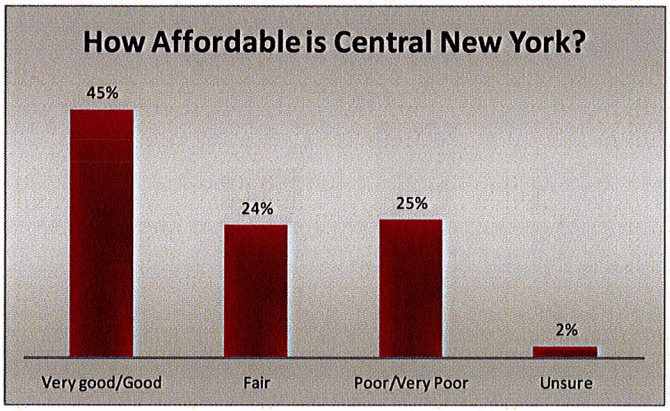


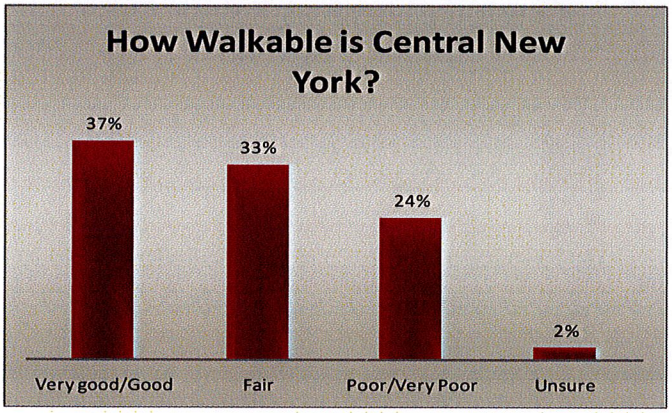
WE ASKED ABOUT INTENTIONS TO MOVE EITHER WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY OR OUT OF IT.

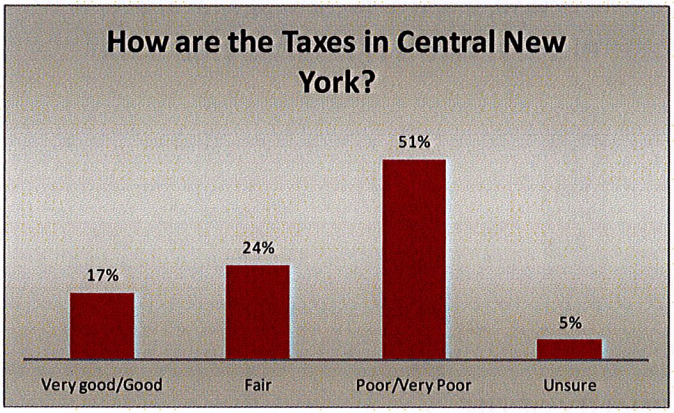


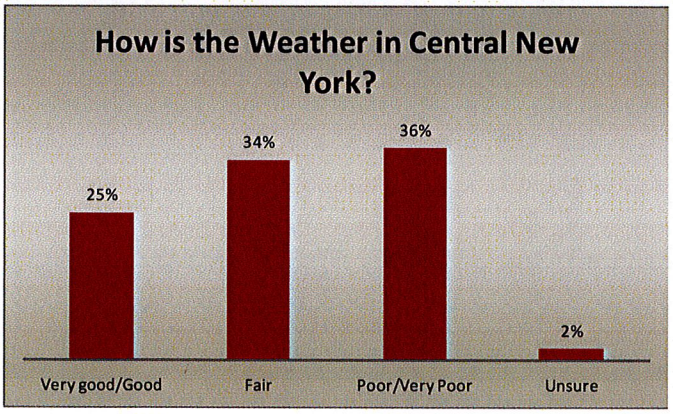


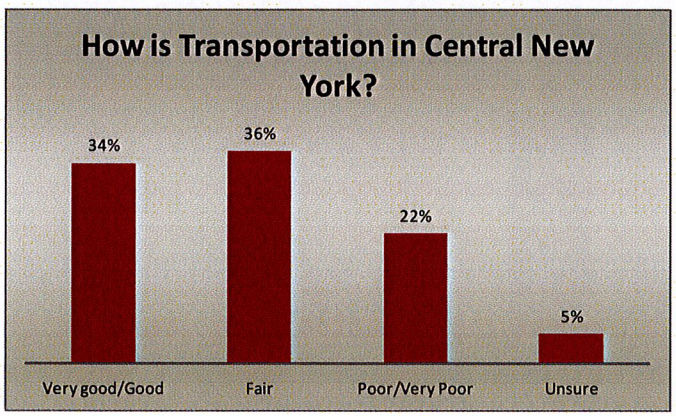

How Safe is Central New York?
52%
31%
12%
2%
Very good/Good
Fair
Poor/Very Poor
Unsure

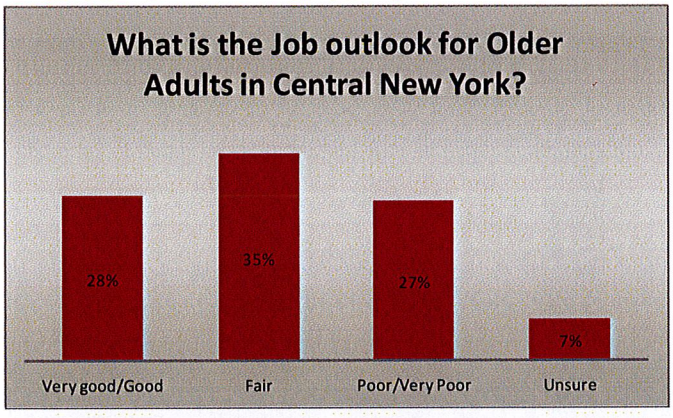

How Affordable is Central New York?
45%
24%
25%
2%
Very good/Good
Fair
Poor/Very Poor
Unsure

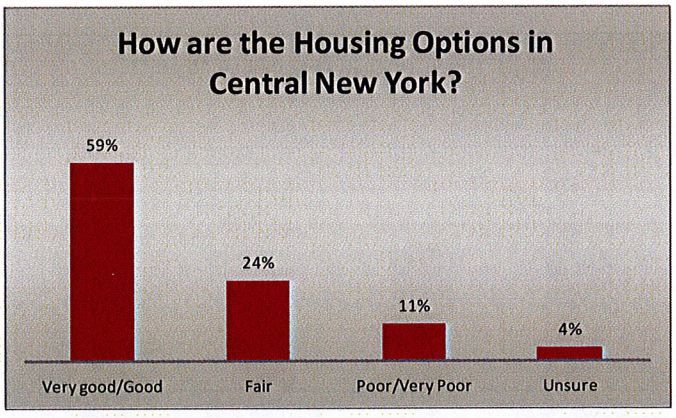

How Walkable is Central New York?
37%
33%
24%
2%
Very good/Good
Fair
Poor/Very Poor
Unsure

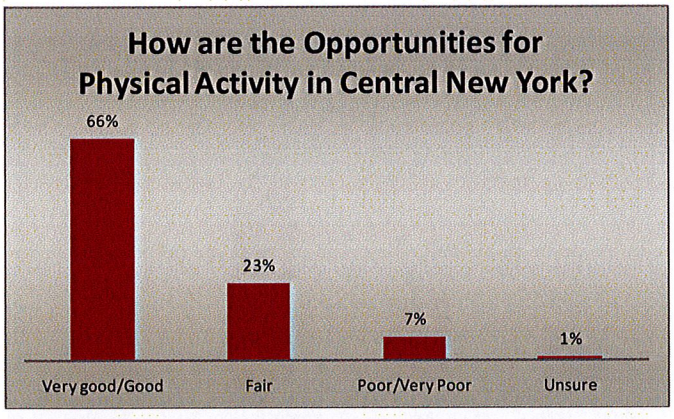

How are the Taxes in Central New York?
17%
24%
51%
5%
Very good/Good
Fair
Poor/Very Poor
Unsure

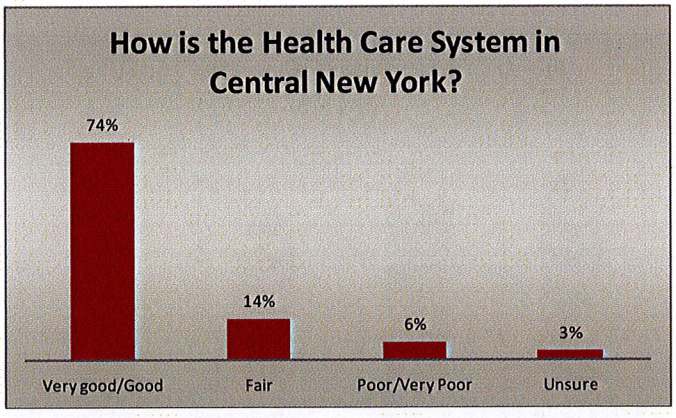

How is the Weather in Central New York?
25%
34%
36%
2%
Very good/Good
Fair
Poor/Very Poor
Unsure


How is Transportation in Central New York?
34%
36%
22%
5%
Very good/Good
Fair
Poor/Very Poor
Unsure

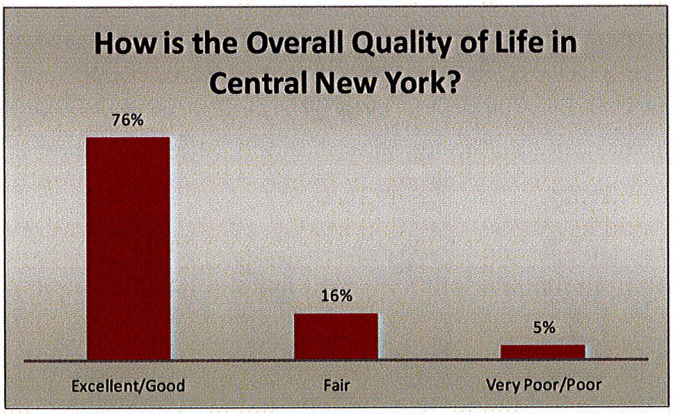


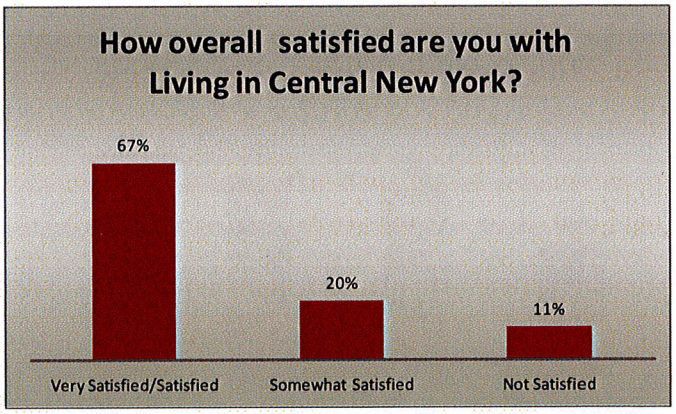






QUALITY OF LIFE





FINDINGS: **SURVEY**

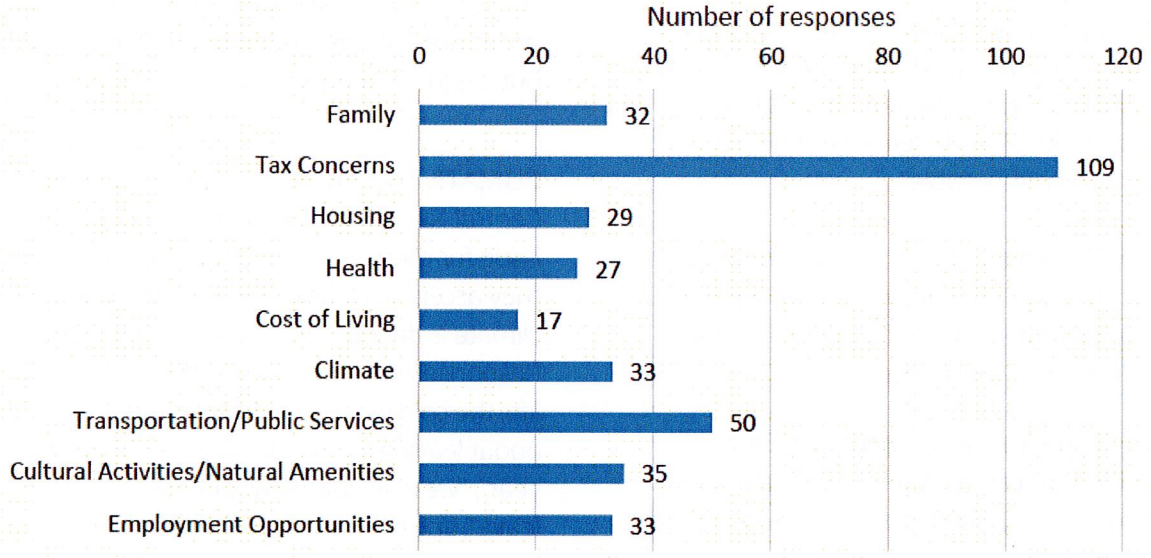
OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

At the end of the survey, we asked participants if there was anything left unsaid. We invited them to tell us what we missed, and we received more than 300 responses ranging from a variety of topics. **Figure 2** shows the main themes. Tax concerns were repeatedly mentioned throughout this section and received the highest number of responses than any other theme.

TAX CONCERNS. All of these comments regarding taxes were negative. 109 responses contained the themes "tax concerns," including many people worry about having a diminishing income as they move into retirement because of high taxes. Comments included "Lower taxes and I'll put up with the weather", "I love Central New York but taxes are becoming ridiculous", "New York State Personal and Property Taxes are a detriment for many senior citizens who may be planning on retiring", and "New York State property and school taxes are a huge impact on retired income."

FAMILY. As identified in other parts of the survey, family concerns are important to the survey respondents. Some respondents stated that they were considering moving away to be near family, while others said they were staying in the area to be near family. Some of the 32 responses related to family included "Honestly I am in CNY to be

FIGURE 2: THEMES FROM THE OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS



"The **colleges** and the universities in the area make for a **culture of free-thinking** and **diversity**"

near family," "where my children choose to settle, presumably not Syracuse, will influence my thoughts over the next ten years," "I will be moving out of Syracuse at some point to be closer to family," and "A great place to raise a family after that there's not much growth happening."

HOUSING. This category differs slightly from the aforementioned 'housing options.' Answers coded for this theme were specific to affordable housing options that fulfill an aging person's needs. A total of 29 comments contained a "housing" theme. Comments included "For the builders in Syracuse and surrounding area, look at Tiny House Design", "I feel housing is a major issue for the aging in our community. We need more affordable (NOT 200,000 CONDOS) for our seniors in safe communities", and "Retirement homes in CNY are unaffordable".

HEALTH. Respondents' personal health and access to affordable medical services appears to be concern for people as they age based on these responses.

Despite the relatively high rating Central New York received in terms of health care options, many of the responses negatively portrayed the health care options in the area. Responses included: "Specialized health care in certain health domains is limited in Syracuse", "Quality health care is limited. Free or low cost programs for seniors is lacking", and "increase health care provider for aging community/increase for all access."

COST OF LIVING. This category was separated from Taxes. Cost of living describes other expenses that effect people living in Central New York. There were 17 comments that mentioned "cost of living", comments being both positive and negative. Comments included "[I'm] paying through my teeth for goods and services", "Syracuse is very affordable", "Fuel prices are outrageous", and "I truly love CNY but it is just too expensive to live here."

"I truly **love CNY** but it is just **too expensive** to live here"

CLIMATE. Thirty-three responses mentioned Central New York's weather as a major issue for them. Some acknowledged they accept it, while others fear the cold climate is dangerous for them as the age. Responses included: "At this stage of my life, the cold weather will make me think about leaving for warmth 4-5 months of the year", "weather will be what causes me to leave", and "the weather is so dangerous for

older folks here". Note that the survey was administered in winter, and that may have skewed results slightly.

TRANSPORTATION/PUBLIC SERVICES. This was the second most identified theme of question 37, with 50 responses containing the theme. Most of the comments focused on public transportation opportunities, both positive and negative.

Comments on public services focused mainly on snow removal or community improvements. Responses included: "Community...that is walkable with transportation access", "in the suburbs ....there is no reliable, affordable, accessible transportation", "very limited bus transportation in our area", "more bicycle lanes", "need sidewalks repaired", and "sidewalks are seldom kept snow and ice free which makes it dangerous for aging people".

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. **Thirty-three** comments consisted of statements regarding employment opportunities for older people or employment for their family members. All were negative and focused on the lack of opportunities available in Central New York. Responses included: "full time jobs for people over 50 are hard to find", "I wish the local economy would improve and attract more skilled young people to move and live here", and "jobs for our kids that pay well and are in their chosen field are very important to keeping us here".

"Full-time jobs for people over 50 are hard to find."

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES/ NATURAL AMENITIES. Multiple respondents referenced the parks and beauty of Central New York, and others mentioned the many cultural or educational activities available to them. A few responses mentioned the lack of culture, but most comments in this section were positive. 35 comments were coded to this theme, including "CNY is a beautiful area with many benefits, changing climate, great educated and interesting people, fine architecture, diverse landscape and wildlife, and wonderful history", "I don't feel that our institutions of higher learning offer enough extended learning opportunities, especially for those in their 50s and 60s", "Many academic and musical performances are available for free or no cost", "the colleges and the universities in the area make for a culture of free-thinking and diversity", and " the challenges of accessing the arts, culture, and shopping are simply the distance of our communities".

FINDINGS:

FOCUS GROUPS

SUMMARY

As its third research method, F.O.C.U.S. convened five focus groups. The groups were comprised of 100% survey participants who volunteered to participate in focus groups by providing their name and contact information at the end of the survey. We had a total of 32 focus group participants. The focus groups were divided into five groups being organized by income, age, and whether they had stated they planned to leave the area. **Figure 7** shows the demographic makeup of the focus group participants. After analyzing and coding the transcripts, we identified six categories that were discussed: Housing, Transportation, Health/Mental Health, Recreation/Culture, Community and Economic Factors. Transcripts of each focus group are in **Appendix V.** For a full description of the focus group research methodology, see **page 35.**

FIGURE 7

FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS	
GENDER	
Male	16
Female	16
AGE	
45-65	19
65+	13
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	
$0-49,999	7
$50,000-100,000	3
$100,000+	21
No answer	1
RESIDENCY	
City of Syracuse	14
Onondaga County, outside of Syracuse	14
Outside of Onondaga County	4
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	**32**

HOUSING

AGE-IN-PLACE. Housing is a significant concern for Boomers in Central New York. Focus group participants cited aging-in-place as having access to transportation and services, which would facilitate aging in chosen home. Aging-in-place does not necessarily mean remaining in their current house. Participants see aging-in-place as having control over the decision on where they live.

LOW-MAINTENANCE AND SMALL. Boomers are looking for smaller, single-family homes, which have the main living quarters on one story, including bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, living rooms and laundry rooms. Boomers are assuming that as they age, there will be mobility issues so housing needs to accommodate all-abilities, such as wider doorways, accessible showers and bathrooms and few, if any, stairs. Boomers are looking for housing with accessible, if not attached, enclosed parking for both convenience and safety concerns. Boomer also expressed a need for low-maintenance or maintenance-free homes.

AFFORDABLE. When it comes to cost, the perception of affordable housing is generally positive for Central New York, although focus group participants expressed a concern that the affordable housing is not available in desirable, walkable neighborhoods nor have the accessibility to the features and services boomers are looking for as they age-in-place. The housing in Central New York is perceived as old and needing significant repairs and maintenance. Retrofitting these properties might be a possibility but focus group participants expressed a concern with costs of maintaining these properties while on a fixed-income in retirement years. Participants perceived taxes as being too high and unpredictable for seniors on a fixed-income and high taxes were cited as a reason why participants would consider leaving the area. Focus group participants perceived a lack of housing options for middle-income boomers.

Aging-in-place: Being able to comfortably and conveniently age in the home of choice.

LIFESTYLE. According to focus group participants, Boomers are not interested in multiple moves. They are looking for communities and neighborhoods with accessible services and network. They like the idea of living closer together while maintaining individual space. The idea of sharing a communal space, while offering opportunities for privacy and private space is appealing. Having services such as grocery store, pharmacy, post office, bank, medical offices, restaurants and shops within walkable distance of their home is highly desired.

SAFETY. Participants expressed a concern regarding safety while walking within their communities. Safety concerns due to unshoveled sidewalks, broken/damaged sidewalks, crime and falling all were discussed. After identifying "safety" as a major factor in the decision to relocate, focus group participants were asked about the perceptions of safety in Central New York. Their perception is that safety from crime is better in the suburbs and a significant concern in the city. The perception of crime in downtown deters people from taking advantage of the services and cultural opportunities available downtown and causes them to not want to live in the city due to the fear of crime. However, personal safety from falls is an equal issue for both suburbs and city life.

HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH

GOOD HEALTH CARE. Health care is generally perceived as good and accessible in Central New York but there are areas where medical services are not available and require a long commute to access, especially in the rural communities. Focus group participants expressed a concern about whether the current health care services were accommodating the growing needs of an aging population. There also were concerns regarding physicians leaving and what our community is doing to attract and retain credible physicians and specialists. With Boomers being more active, there is a recognition that the need for medical interventions will increase, creating a significant demand on the system.

HOME-BASED CARE. Focus group participants also recognized the need for home health aides and innovative technology-based health care, especially to facilitate aging-in-place. The perception is that home health aides are undervalued, underpaid, and understaffed to meet current demands, which will only increase as boomers age. The Onondaga County Office of Aging was cited by participants as offering valuable services, especially for caregivers.

TRANSPORTATION

CAR-DEPENDENT. Our community is largely perceived as a car-centric society, where the majority of households depend on the personal vehicle to get around. Participants identified transportation as another key to aging-in-place and expressed the concern that once an individual loses the ability or right to drive, it would have significant impact on that person's independence.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. Our focus group participants perceived public transportation, specifically the public bus service, as inconvenient, time consuming and difficult to understand. Bus service is not available in many of the suburb and rural communities, while other communities only have two routes each day, in the morning and evening. Participants cited the service *Call-A-Bus*, which is available for people with disabilities, but it is perceived as being time consuming, expensive and limited since user must reside within two miles of a current designated bus stop, have a physician authorization and submit an application to CENTRO.

While other transportation options were discussed, including taxis, private drivers, volunteer-based programs and car sharing programs, these were all seen as inadequate, costly or undesirable alternatives. Delivery-based systems were discussed but prompted concerns about social isolation issues.

AIR TRAVEL. Participants described the Syracuse Hancock International Airport as inadequate, with expensive flights and limited flight schedules. Air travel is valued since traveling for pleasure as

well as familial obligations are high on the boomer's activity list.

Biking is a growing activity with boomers, especially for recreation, and the city is perceived as being proactive and building many accessible bicycle trails. According to focus group participants, walking is a preferable alternative to the personal vehicle but our community needs to ensure safety and eliminate barriers, such as unshoveled sidewalks, broken/damaged sidewalks and creating pedestrian-friendly commercial centers within walking distance of homes.

RECREATION AND CULTURE

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND. Central New York is overwhelmingly perceived as rich in recreation and cultural opportunities. Outdoor activities are available and accessible year-round. Hiking, bicycling, golfing, boating and skiing were cited as valuable recreation activities. Cultural venues such as Syracuse Stage, Syracuse University sporting events, and art museums were cited as valuable experiences which would keep people living in Central New York. Safety issues were cited as a barrier for people seeking social and recreation activities in downtown.

Participants suggested Senior Centers rethink their programming to align better with the needs and interests of Boomers.

SOCIAL NETWORKS. Recreation and cultural activities are closely associated with nurturing social networks with similar interests. Recreation and cultural activities were cited as very important by focus group participants as they consider where to live post retirement.

COMMUNITY

DEEP ROOTS. Central New York is perceived as having a "real sense of community," with deep roots in neighborhoods and communities. Community and social networks are

important to boomers with friends and family playing a vital role in the decision of remaining in Central New York. Friendships, specifically, take on a more significant importance in retaining residents. Focus group participants expressed a few concerns regarding maintaining, building connections and re-engaging boomers whose family and social network are scattered. Social networks were cited as instrumental to keeping people active and connected to a community, but also to facilitate aging-in-place. Participants expressed a fear of losing current social network and rebuilding new networks. Shared-interests and activities are perceived as the most common method to building social relationships, and it was cited that planned communities around a shared-interests would be positively received.

AS CAREGIVERS. Focus group participants cited the concern of not only having to plan for their own aging, but for their parents. Familial obligations as caretakers have placed Boomers in a unique position. Focus group participants perceived themselves as caregivers for their parents, who may or may not live in the area. Those with parents living outside the area are having difficult discussions regarding relocating parents and how to support them financially, physically and emotionally.

Focus group participants are not interested in the traditional Senior Center as a source for community, citing they do not offer appealing activities and events.

A PURPOSE. Focus group participants said that they need to feel valued and have a purpose within their communities. This was an important takeaway with participants saying if they were not contributing to their immediate community, they have no reason to stay in that community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Focus group participants are not thinking about retirement in the

traditional sense. They want to remain busy, challenged and valued. Participants cited that all they know is "work," and they plan to continue to "work" throughout their lives. They perceived their "first" retirement as their next career transition, not an end to their career. Participants perceived retirement as having several phases.

AGE DISCRIMINATION. Participants are concerned about being forced out of the workplace due to age discrimination.

RETIREMENT PLANNING. Participants cited a sense of being unprepared for retirement. Regarding retirement planning, many participants cited that unexpected life circumstances have affected retirement planning. Boomers are prepared for the old paradigm where life-long loyalty to a company resulted in life-long support into retirement, not the new paradigm where employer and employees devalue loyalty for growth.

Participants cited professional guidance to assist with all aspects of retirement planning is necessary. There is a perceived difference between being financially prepared for retirement and being emotionally prepared.

TAXES. The perception is that taxes are very high compared to other areas in the country. The unpredictable increases in property taxes are a challenge for those on a fixed-income.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SYRACUSE IN FOCUS

FINDINGS:
KEY-INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

SUMMARY

F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse and its Age-Friendly Working Group identified key-informants which would have a unique and vital perspective on how an out-migration of Boomers in our community would impact on their sectors. We discussed how it would affect their customer base, their employee base, their supplier stream, the demand for their services and/or products and more. The complete list of interviewees is available in **Appendix VI.** These interviews served two functions: 1) They provided F.O.C.U.S. a rich profile of the influence Boomers have on each of these sectors and 2) It raised awareness of the impact Boomers could have on our economy and community. Many of these interviews were done in groups of similar or the same sectors. Many of them lasted much longer than the allotted hour. For a full summary of the Key-Informant Interview Research Methodology, see **page 36**. Here is what F.O.C.U.S. heard:

HOUSING

The key informants raised concerns about the necessity to provide accessible housing in sufficient quantity to serve the increasing CNY aging population. The challenge is to provide affordable housing in the suburbs that are walkable, near or in village centers, and where zoning permits residential development. Homes where aging in place occurs will need home safety checks to assure a safe and healthy environment.

The advent of new technology that aids and enhances aging at home may be an answer for many who are marginally independent. However, the health care system does not seem to be ready at their end to monitor all the information that will be coming from all those who will be using the technology.

TRANSPORTATION

A high percent of older boomers live in the suburbs where public transportation is limited or non-existent. Of major concern is the transportation accessibility for caregivers who don't drive or do not own a car. It is almost impossible for them to be able to care for suburban clients. Lack of public transportation to doctor's offices and other health care providers who have located in business parks where there is no public transportation is an added burden for individuals as Call-a-Bus is not available to many and is primarily for persons with disabilities.

To avoid building housing developments in non-accessible places it is suggested

that town planning boards take into consideration public transportation when approvals for new developments are made.

Safety and comfort are important to those using public transportation. People need a place to sit in bus shelters while waiting for the next bus. Snow removal at bus stops and adequate lighting are both important safety features as well as walkable sidewalks. Sidewalk safety is a big issue along with readable signage in large print and voice announcements for visually impaired.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

It is almost certain that the growth of our aging population will place greater demands on health care providers. Currently, nurses and doctors are leaving retirement to provide needed health care services. But the need is even greater than the current trained staff can provide. We need multiple teaching programs for certifications at all levels.

Health care managers are in short supply. Special training and recruitment of health care managers is vital so the individual receives adequate and appropriate treatment and care.

Substance abuse and behavioral programs have seen a big leap in numbers of individuals in their care. Most health care facilities do not have enough beds or trained caregivers to serve for this segment of the population. This is a growing problem and needs attention.

RECREATION/CULTURE:

One of the area's greatest assets is a rich assortment of venues for recreation and culture. The City and County parks are beautiful, nearby, and some are accessible by public transportation. Public recreation programs are well attended and reach a varied population. Public libraries in towns, villages, and city are re-making themselves into library/community centers. Private fitness centers are growing though they are beginning to see boomers needing medical fitness training due to more frequent injuries. Public art has encouraged the arts community to display their art around the community; the Symphoria is committed to providing concerts in public places around the community; dramatic arts are growing with new productions almost weekly. Recreation activities and cultural programs provide multiple opportunities to be involved.

COMMUNITY — CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT, PHILANTHROPY, SOCIAL NETWORKS, AND FAMILY

"People who are civically engaged are more likely to stay in CNY". This quote and many like it express a good reason why some people wish to continue to live in CNY. They do not want to see the loss of institutional memory and experienced mentors. It is imperative that the community to provide opportunities for retirees to be productive and engaged. One idea is to engage retirees in a major community project where they could use their experience, knowledge and skillset to accomplish. Several ideas are already percolating.

However, some philanthropic citizens have moved away which has had a negative impact on charitable giving and support for non-profit organizations, especially at a time when the community needs are even greater. Others have moved away to be with family or their social networks.

Some report that access to civic engagement is often hard to find. It was suggested an "Angie's List" of opportunities should be an online resource.

ECONOMICS/PLANNING

Until recently the aging boomer population was not on the radar screen with planning agencies. It was suggested that a "tool kit" for town and city planners should be prepared that would be motivational and helpful in approvals of developments in urban and rural settings.

In urban settings it is an issue when older citizens sell their residences to non-local investors. These sales often result in the change in character of the neighborhood, a situation that should be of concern to all.

To counter the comment that "New York State taxes and property taxes are the major reason people leave New York State" a case study should be prepared and distributed to explain exactly what taxes are collected and where these taxes are spent. Some suggested an itemized tax bill with this information.

It is recognized that the local economy is impacted when former CNY residents come back to CNY less wealthy, frail and in need of major health care services. Upon their return they may qualify for the generous NYS Medicaid benefits, taxpayer supported.

WHAT MIGHT INDUCE PEOPLE TO STAY IN CNY?

Key informants believe strongly that people will want to continue to live in CNY if they are intrinsically involved in the community whether it is continuing in the workforce or civic ventures. Retirees have a strong desire to contribute to community life in

a big way but need access points. One interviewee offered to invite other retirees to an exploratory session to identify major community projects on which they could share their skills and expertise.

Affordable, universal designed housing in walkable neighborhoods is another inducement to continue to live in CNY. It was universally agreed that while CNY markets our assets such as low housing costs, beautiful parks, and all season activities, the marketing does not reach deeply into our own community. And, as family ties along with social networks are important in decisions to stay or leave, it is suggested we do more to keep young families in the area by providing jobs and affordable housing opportunities.

WHAT WOULD MAKE CNY THE BEST PLACE TO GROW OLDER?

CNY can proudly claim to be well on its way to becoming the best place in the north-east to grow older! However, key informants identified several opportunities for improvement.

Aging in place is important to boomers. They want to continue to live in their own home for as long as possible and perhaps, never have to leave to receive services at a long term care facility. To make this wish a reality, interviewees suggested there needs to be a sharp increase in trained, skilled home care workers. There needs to be a walkable neighborhood where services are available. And, there needs to be appropriate public transportation or alternative transportation to serve the needs of both the boomers and caretakers for whom public transportation is their only means to reach their clients.

They recommend housing designed for the residents of all abilities as they age - considered a good investment. As boomers are downsizing to smaller homes in walkable neighborhoods, in or near village centers or urban neighborhood centers with a variety of services including shopping, entertainment, health care providers, restaurants, and green spaces, town and neighborhood centers will need to plan for this growth and change.

Keeping young families living in the area will keep their parents and grandparents also living in the area. Consideration should be given to multi-generational housing or other housing styles that appeal to the diversity of the boomer cohort.

It is important to maintain and support the city and county parks, cultural venues, schools, roads, sidewalks and other infrastructure.

Meeting the criteria for WHO Age-Friendly communities around the world will continue to be an effort for those who live in CNY.

CONCLUSIONS

The Age-Friendly CNY study had its early beginnings 12 years ago as F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse realized that for communities to prosper and be economically sound, they need to retain and engage aging Boomers as significant, productive citizens and taxpayers. In 2002, the Boomers had not yet reached retirement age and no one seemed interested in pursuing our concerns. So, all our efforts were shelved until in 2013 when there was an awakening all over the country, including Central New York. Communities took notice that Boomers — the largest bulge in the population — were a force to be considered in municipal planning. The potential economic implications for localities and regions of the aging Boomers are vital to the sustainability of our community.

2,100 VOICES. The report you are now reading represents the voices of more than 2,100 individuals who live in Onondaga County, the City of Syracuse and adjacent counties. These citizen voices made their visions and concerns very clear on what keeps them living in Central New York and what will continue to keep them living here.

After listening to more than 2,100 voices, it became clear you cannot put the Boomer population in a box. They differ as much in lifestyles choices as they do in age. However, we have identified consistencies in the Boomer population.

CHOICES. Boomers want to choose where to live. Our findings indicate that Boomers want to stay near family and friends. Repeatedly, we heard how important it was to create a welcoming and successful economy so younger generations have the opportunity to succeed here. The younger generation serves as the anchor to the older generation. We challenge Central New York to provide jobs and career opportunities for young families to keep their parents and grandparents in the community.

FAMILIAR FACES AND PLACES. Boomers want to stay around familiar places and faces. They might be considering a move to another home, but they prefer that home be in their familiar community. They want that community to offer a variety of housing options. Our findings indicated that the majority of Boomers would like to move into a smaller, single-family, single-story house in a walkable neighborhood. Boomers want to have the choice to live in that home for as long as possible. While

our housing is considered affordable, the affordable and available properties are not in desirable communities or with desirable features. With 63% of the housing stock in Onondaga County being 50+ years or older, according to a study by the Cornell Program on Applied Demographics, homes need to be rebuilt or renovated to accommodate aging-in-place. Our challenges to the villages and towns of Central New York: Retrofit neighborhoods to accommodate aging population that wants to remain in a familiar neighborhood or suburb and encourage developers and remodelers to consider the aging population as they make their plans.

WORK OPPORTUNITIES. Boomers are concerned about maintaining their current lifestyle into retirement. Our findings indicated that many Boomers are postponing retirement, some indefinitely. The challenge: We need to offer flexible work opportunities.

TAXES AND WEATHER. We expected taxes and weather to be the two largest factors that encourage Boomers to move out of Central New York. In truth, yes, taxes and weather were frequently cited in our survey, focus groups and interviews. But our findings also indicate that taxes and weather were not a significant factor when considering where they live. However, we need to clearly explain to the community where their taxes go and what services they provide. That way, people can accurately compare New York state with other lower-taxed states. With the data that is currently available, New York state does not compare favorably.

SELF-AWARENESS. Boomers are being actively recruited by other communities, however, we found throughout our research that Central New York offers many of those same attributes and more. We offer a myriad of outdoor recreation and physical activities year-round. We are rich in cultural and learning opportunities. We have a low cost of living. Yet, we don't know it. We need to capitalize on these attributes and promote them within and out of our community.

If you have read this far you know there are other concerns, challenges, and opportunities for making CNY Age-Friendly.

It is our intention that this report and the recommendations guide the steps we take as a community to shape Central New York into a community for all ages.

WHAT'S NEXT?
AN AGE-FRIENDLY CNY: PHASE II

ORGANIZE A COMMUNITY COALITION FOR AGE-FRIENDLY

The Coalition for Age Friendly will be dedicated to making the case for an Age-Friendly Central New York and will include community and business leaders. Its mission will be to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented age-friendly communities and to ensure the recommendations of this report are accomplished. Want to be part in the Coalition? Send your name and contact information to *focus@syrgov.net*.

CREATE AN ONLINE DIRECTORY OF AGE-FRIENDLY SERVICES, PRODUCTS, EVENTS, ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Do you offer or know of a service or program that should be included in our age-friendly database? Send listings and contact information to *focus@syrgov.net* with the Subject Line: AGE-FRIENDLY DATABASE

CREATE A CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ORGANIZATION, CONNECTING BOOMERS AND OLDER ADULTS TO MEANINGFUL AND SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Interested in knowing more or helping create a civic engagement organization? Send your name and contact information to *focus@syrgov.net.*

CREATE A FACT SHEET ON LOCAL AND STATE TAXES TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC

Is New York truly the worst state for taxes? Let's set the facts straight.

CREATE AN AGE-FRIENDLY CHECKLIST FOR VILLAGES AND TOWNS AND PLANNING BOARDS

Is your town or village age-friendly? Creating walkable neighborhoods will make our community more age-friendly and more desirable to Boomers. This checklist will help identify opportunities for the towns and villages to make their communities more age-friendly.

CONDUCT SURVEYS AND EVALUATIONS OF OUR VILLAGES AND TOWNS TO HEAR HOW CITIZENS ENVISION THEIR AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

F.O.C.U.S. will identify and engage a local neighborhood to become a model for other age-friendly communities.

CREATE AN AGE-FRIENDLY CHECKLIST FOR BUSINESSES

Need help making your organization more age-friendly? This easy-to-follow checklist will help identify challenges and opportunities for you to make your organization more age-friendly.

HOST "TOO YOUNG TO RETIRE" PRE-RETIREMENT PLANNING WORKSHOPS

What does retirement mean to you? Join other Boomers who are taking a new approach to retirement by starting new businesses, launching new careers, or become civically engaged by taking on major community projects. These workshops will help Boomers plan for life after 65.

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