

# *Age Matters Initiative Task Force Final Report and Recommendations*



*What Denver City Government Can Do to  
Help Make Denver the Best City to Live and Grow Older*

*2010 and Beyond*



1 February 2010

Dear friends:

I am pleased to share with you this report, summarizing the recommendations of the Age Matters Task Force. Formed in late 2008 by City and County of Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, the task force has brought together representatives from a broad spectrum of city agencies and Denver's City Council to address these questions:

- How can Denver city government plan for the growth in our aging population and simultaneously meet the needs of today's seniors?
- How can Denver city government engage every sector of our community in this endeavor?

Months of robust discussion, deliberations and follow-up research have led to the recommendations for Denver city agencies outlined in this report, as well as an increased understanding of the view that older adults should not be viewed merely as service consumers, but as knowledgeable, experienced and talented resources for our community. This is part of a new view of aging that is transforming the country; a view in which older adults are respected for their contributions for their overall stability of the greater community.

Our work was built upon the foundation laid by the 2006 Mayor's Summit on Aging, as well as the work of the Denver Aging Steering Committee. The contributions of both of these instrumental efforts to the task force's effort are further mentioned in this report. Since the beginning of our work several years ago, Denver has become, even more, a city attractive to older adults. With the introduction of Universal Design concepts, as well as additional support for housing for seniors, the Living Streets Initiative, easier connections to downtown to neighborhood business districts, and an airport that is considered one of the worlds most accessible, Denver has become even more popular for international travelers, encouraging older adults to visit. Thanks to the many efforts of volunteers, staff and employees of the City and County of Denver, both young children and older adults can live longer in their home and can share their assets to strengthen community and revitalize businesses.

I want to thank all of my colleagues for their work, their thoughtfulness and their willingness to become champions for this idea: That as in the same way other cultures honor their elders, we have the opportunity in Denver to create a city in which the talent and experience of our older adults are used to make our community better. I also want to thank everyone for their simultaneous commitment to the idea that Denver residents, as they grow older, should experience respect, dignity and stability.

We look forward to working with the Mayor, the City Council, and our city agencies and employees to make Denver, as our mayor says, the "best city to be and grow older."

Sincerely,

**Lucía Guzmán**

Executive Director, Agency for Human Rights and Community Relation

# What is Denver Doing

Denver is recognizing that “Age Matters” and the importance of focusing decisions and policies towards our largest population group.

## ***DISTINCT** generations*

Denver’s older adult population currently comprises distinct generations based on a particular age group and year born. How seniors will choose to live and age can vary based on the age sectors. Generally they are divided by those born between 1901 and 1924, followed by the age group of those born between 1925 and 1945, with the largest group having been born between 1946 and 1964. This generation started turning 62 and receiving social security benefits in 2008. Recent research is demonstrating that these generation groupings, some of which are the largest in U.S. history, are approaching aging and retirement in different ways. As Denver-based JVA Consulting found in a recent study on this generation’s impact in the Denver metro area, the current “baby boomer generation” study showed that:

- Nearly three-quarters of this generation plan to or will volunteer now and in the future
- Most plan to stay in the workforce past age 65
- With over 60% planning to continue working at least part-time
- 23% want to start a business
- 70% plan to travel



*Leveraging the knowledge and potential assets our seniors offer can be an enormous opportunity for Denver as it plans to become the best city to “be and grow older.”*

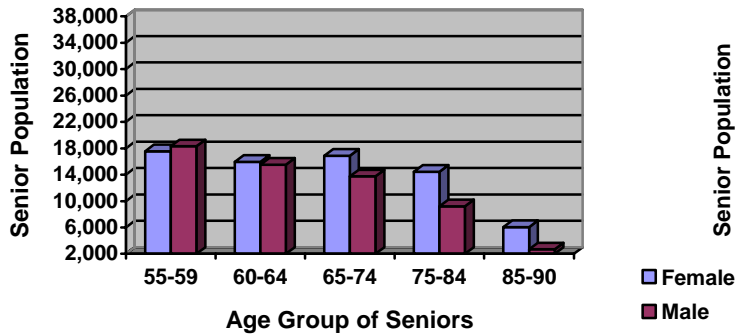
[The full study can be found at [www.coloradoboomers.com](http://www.coloradoboomers.com)].

# WHO are Denver's Older Adults

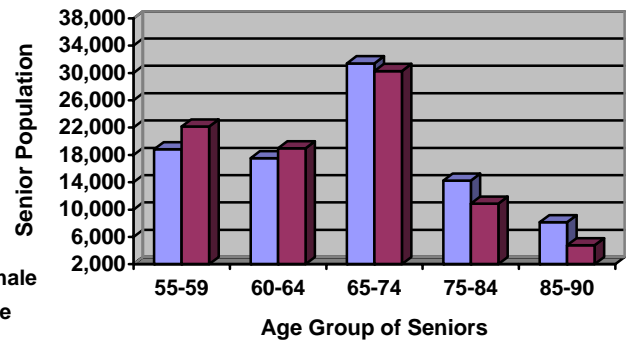
The following charts represent a culmination of statistics gathered from the latest population estimates as documented by the Colorado State Demographer's Office and the forecasted estimates from the "American Community Survey".

The following summary facts can be correlated into the following picture of Denver's older adult population.

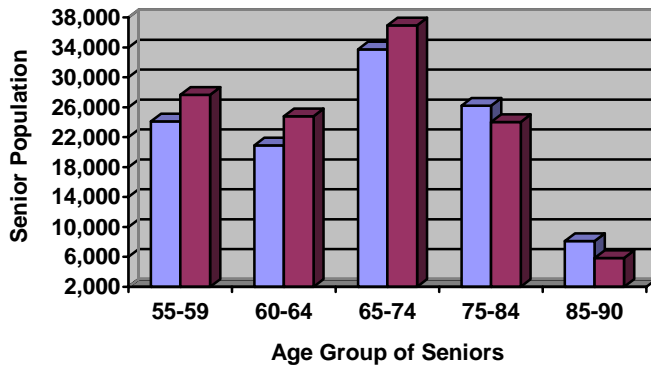
Senior Population in Denver Year 2010



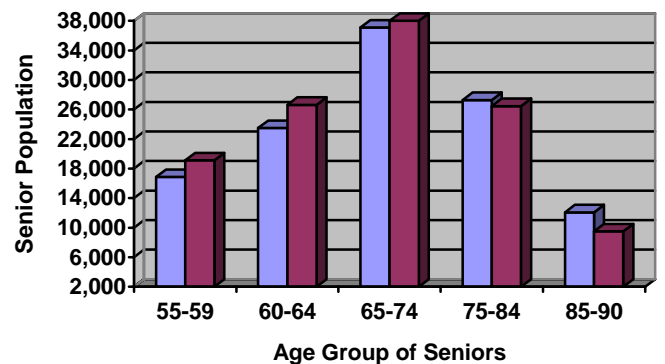
Senior Population in Denver Year 2020



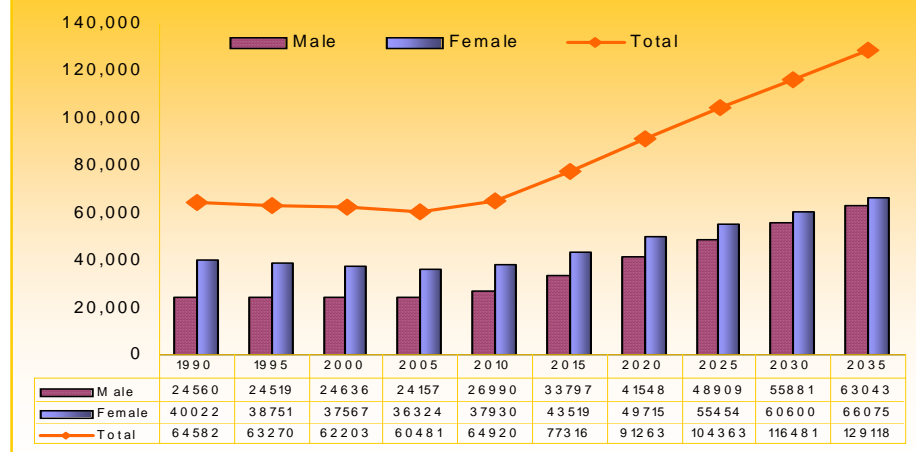
Senior Population in Denver Year 2030



Senior Population in Denver Year 2035



Population of Persons 65 Years and Over, 1990 - 2035  
Source: Colorado Demography Office



## **BACKGROUND** *Developing the Framework*

The Age Matters Initiative is a strategic endeavor to coordinate, streamline and enhance Denver city government efforts to make this a great city for older adults. Success through this initiative, will define Denver as an innovative leader in creating vibrant, livable communities for people of all ages.

### **A strong foundation**

The initiative builds on several significant efforts in which the city has been involved since 2005:

**First:** Denver prioritized identifying the rapidly aging population as an important policy guidepost in 2005. The Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations (HRCR) worked with the Denver Commission on Aging to prioritize the needs and issues of the city's older adults

**Second:** HRCR called upon local and national experts, city agencies, policymakers and community members in 2006 for a daylong "**Mayor's Summit on Aging**" to raise awareness and gather recommendations to advise other policymakers, city officials and key stakeholders on "making Denver a livable community for people of all ages and abilities"

**Third:** The Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations created a new Office on Aging to follow through on many of the recommendations made during the summit and to continue to spearhead work focusing on aging issues

**Fourth;** Following the recommendations from the Summit on Aging, a committee was convened in conjunction with the Denver Office on Aging and Councilman Doug Linkhart's office called the Denver Aging Steering Committee to discuss feasibility of the summit recommendations and to develop a framework for their implementation. This committee had many members from other agencies, non-profits, and experts on senior issues.

**These efforts resulted in two reports containing comprehensive goals and specific recommendations in a variety of areas, including:**

- housing
- transportation,
- healthy behaviors
- safety
- workforce development
- economic stability

**A summary of goals established during the Mayor's Summit on Aging appear on the following page, and the full report can be accessed at the Office on Aging website at [denvergov.org/aging](http://denvergov.org/aging)**



## *Summary of Goals from the 2006 Summit on Aging*

- 1) **Promote housing, development patterns and community design features to make Denver a livable community for people of all ages and abilities, especially our elders.**
  - Provide affordable, appropriate, accessible housing.
  - Adjust the physical environment for inclusiveness and accessibility.
  - Ensure accessible, affordable, reliable, safe transportation.
  
- 2) **Promote healthy behaviors among older residents of Denver in order to reduce their risk of disease and disability, improve their mental and physical functioning and empower older adults to stay active and engage in community life.**
  - Increase physical activity.
  - Promote affordable, nutritious food.
  - Provide health information and outreach.
  - Educate local health care professionals about senior health issues.
  - Promote opportunities for lifelong learning, creativity and social engagement.
  - Design and promote the “social software” to help elders “age in community” – to age in place in their own home and maintain meaningful connections with the community.
  
- 3) **Address Workforce challenges by supporting a variety of innovative strategies to encourage employers to retain, retrain and hire older workers, as well as incentives to entice older employees to remain longer in the workforce.**
  - Take stock of employee profile.
  - Work toward age diversification.
  - Establish mentoring relationships.
  - Develop systems of knowledge transfer.
  - Create alternative work arrangements.
  - Develop a plan for phased retirement.
  - Provide opportunities for career development and advancement.
  - Target benefits to an older population.
  - Formulate new recruitment strategies to reach midlife and older workers.
  - Redesign the health and safety.
  
- 4) **Educate the public about planning for retirement and late life issues, including financial, long-term, healthcare, legal, end-of-life, personal, and other important matters.**
  - Provide education, opportunities and incentives for all employees to save for retirement.
  - Provide opportunities to learn about life planning and retirement planning as it relates to housing, lifestyle, health, relationships and volunteer and civic engagement opportunities.
  - Provide opportunities to learn about legal and financial planning.

## *Working Towards an Initiative*

Once the two initial steps were complete, the Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations' focus was on developing a task force and increasing awareness of the Denver Office on Aging.

In 2008, Mayor Hickenlooper appointed a task force composed of key decision makers from city agencies to specifically identify strategies to help Denver prepare for the anticipated “age wave” of baby boomers while continuing to ensure a high level of service and engagement for the city’s current aging population. The task force was titled the “Age Matters” Initiative. The task force specifically focused its work on the City and County of Denver’s internal infrastructure. It began by;

- Reviewing, studying, and prioritizing recommendations from prior work
- Inventorying the current services provided to older adults by each city agency which is available on the Age Matters website
- Developing recommendations for city agencies to integrate the concept of *“focusing through a senior lens”* in all aspects of their work department wide
- Discussing strategies to implement and educate all agencies on the importance of our present and future aging population
- Focusing its monthly meetings and discussions over the course of the year on a single question:

**How do we prioritize, coordinate, and streamline our work to make this a better city in which to live and grow older?**

*The Denver Office on Aging* also is working on various aging issues including:

- Assessing the needs of older adults and identifying gaps in service
- Review and comment on policies and legislation affecting older adults in Denver
- Advising the Denver Regional Council of Governments, Advisory Council on Aging regarding applications submitted for funding services to the aging population
- Acting as an advocate for older adults to encourage their role as contributing member of society;
- Encouraging cooperation and coordination among agencies and groups working on behalf of older adults.

## Emerging Best Practices and Big Ideas

As a city and metro area with the largest percentage per capita of the baby boomer population, Denver is well-positioned to take advantage of several movements and trends, which together can make Denver a magnet for older residents and travelers, and tourism in general, and thus significantly adding to its economic base.

**Universal Design.** Developed in the late 1970s, universal design supports the idea of sustainability by “designing all products, buildings, urban environments, and interiors to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible.” As quoted by Laureen Ferris from the Agency on Human Rights and Community Relations. “If these concepts are promoted to their fullest extent, they benefit people of all ages and abilities and can promote a lifetime of sustainable solutions.” Universal Design is useful and marketable to people of varying ages, cultures, and abilities, thus contributing to a city that is a more friendly place in which to live and travel to.

With the multitude of current and upcoming public/ private sector investments such as Union Station, Fastracs and others, Denver can take a leadership role in incorporating Universal Design concepts in all of its work, and increasing its attractiveness as a local, regional, and international destination.

**Civic Engagement.** The 2007 Rose Community Foundation/ JVA Consulting community assessment of older adults in metro Denver confirmed what national studies are showing: Members of the baby boomer generation intend to make a contribution as part of the next phase of their lives, whether that is continuing to work (maybe in a different career), volunteering, starting businesses, or running for office. Across the country and locally, some organizations are starting to tap into this desire to “give back,” some deliberately recruiting boomers to their

communities to help address community issues

With Denver’s strong base of nonprofit organizations and large percentage of the baby boomer generation, this untapped talent can be a force for advancing some of the city’s social priorities, such as ending homelessness or supporting early literacy.

**Boomers as economic force.** Even with wealth decreases in the last year and a half by the collapse of the stock markets and real estate, many boomers still have substantial financial and social capital. Cities like Milwaukee have made deliberate efforts to lure “snowbirds” to stay in their downtown areas, with housing, transportation, low-cost recreation centers and other amenities making these areas desirable to live for older adults. With Colorado already being a popular retirement destination for members of the baby boomer generation, Denver has an opportunity to capture much of this market.

**The opportunities these ideas create for Denver is exciting.**

They affect not only city agencies that specifically provide services to older adults, but virtually any agency whose actions or policies could affect older adults, whose programs and partnerships could benefit from the wealth and talents that older adults might bring to the table. These opportunities can also extend to those offices promoting tourism and economic development. The Office of Economic Development may be assisted by the knowledge, experience, and future intention of older adults to start new businesses, as well as the city’s newly adopted principles of universal design through the development of the Universal Design Advisory Board which will make all areas more user friendly, sustainable, and inviting for older Americans to come and for to tourists visiting our city.

# Recommendations

The *Age Matters Task Force* developed and endorses a set of *six recommendations* for city agencies to focus on in this first phase.

Each recommendation addresses an area in which Denver city government can have a positive impact on making the city a better place for older adults.

Underpinning each of these recommendations is a deep understanding that success will mean not new initiatives, but integrating the principles articulated earlier in this report into the daily decision-making process and current city agency infrastructure.

There is an equally deep understanding that, in this economy, more isn't necessarily better (or possible!), but that better is better. Deputy Mayor Guillermo "Bill" Vidal said it this way:

*"During these hard economic times, we may not have more money to fund more projects, but we do have an opportunity to improve our standards, and guide our cities priorities to make our city accessible for people of all ages and cultures."*

*Guillermo "Bill" Vidal, Deputy Mayor*

*Focusing through a multifaceted lens that sees all ages, abilities, and cultures*



The Task Force is asking that as city agencies are taking actions, making decisions and/or establishing policies in the course of their everyday work, they should keep the following mantra in mind—*Focusing Through a Senior Lens.*"

Focusing through a senior lens will keep all agencies and policy makers mindful whether the choices they are making consider our **largest population group**.

Always asking the question; what can we integrate into these actions, decisions or policies that will help older adults better live and grow old in our community?

*The recommendations, which follow this page, are intended to be guideposts in these discussions and decisions that take place every day in city agencies.*

# Recommendation TRANSPORTATION

## Primary Participating Agencies:

Community Planning & Development

Denver International Airport

Denver Office on Aging

Department of Safety

Parks & Recreation

Public Works

Outside Partnering Agencies:

DRCOG

RTD



## Recommendation:

Develop standards and policies that incorporate physical requirements for all ages and abilities when making transportation decisions. Emphasize:

- Educating riders on the ease of utilizing all transportation options - how to use each mode
- Develop a rider “buddy system” for first time users
- Creating full connectivity by coordinating with other agencies already providing options
- Reinforcing safe modes to and from transportation alternatives
- Providing access to information about more senior-friendly, non-technology alternatives

“I wish I could get from place to place with less waiting and walking. We need more places to get on the bus, a bench to wait on, and buses that drop me off where I need to go.”

Bessie Smith  
Senior Resident



# Recommendation **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

## Primary Participating Agencies:

311

Career Service Authority

Community Planning & Development

Denver Commission on Aging

Denver Election Commission

Denver Human Services

Denver International Airport

Denver Office of Cultural Affairs

Denver Office on Aging

Department of Safety

Mayor's Office—Neighborhood Liaison

Office of Economic Development

Office of Emergency Management

Parks & Recreation

Technology Services



## Recommendation:

Utilize GIS services to map senior housing (including senior high rises, assisted living and residential care facilities, transportation, and recreation patterns) to identify areas of consolidated senior users. Use this data to identify and promote a network for people to help each other within their own communities. Gather and develop a volunteerism database to be used for outreach programs and to inform seniors of opportunities and service available to them.

Use this data to:

- Identify areas of consolidated older adult users of recreation, transportation and other city services
- Identify and help promote a network for people to help each other within their own communities
- Gather and develop a “retirees” volunteerism database
- Develop an outreach program to inform older adults of opportunities and services available to them

***“Now that I’m 83, I have plenty of time to get involved and help in my community, I need a resource to lean about my options.”***

Amy Truby, Retired Senior Resident

# *Recommendation* **Healthy Aging / Aging in Place**

**Primary Participating Agencies:**

**Community Planning & Development (Zoning)**

**Denver District Attorney's Office**

**Denver Human Services**

**Denver Office on Aging**

**Denver Office of Strategic Partnerships**

**Denver Public Library**

**Department of Environmental Health**

**Mayor's Bicycle Advisory Committee**

**Office of Emergency Management**

**Parks & Recreation (Wellness)**

**Supporting Agencies:**

Denver Health

DRCOG – Senior Resources



## **Recommendation:**

**Develop outreach programs, including educational services to promote healthy aging, with a key emphasis on preventive health, education, and safety. These programs should:**

- **Promote affordable activity options**
- **Incorporate strong emotional/ spiritual support**
- **Educate older adults on stable financial options**
- **Innovative recreational activities such as city wide senior golf tournament, tennis senior cup, etc.**

**“I want more options for healthy programs for active seniors in my community.”**

Virginia Mejia  
Senior resident and  
Recreation Center  
Supporter

**Agencies should also look for opportunities to support the choice to “age in place.”**

- **Promote zoning options that allow for multiple non-related seniors to reside in one residence**
- **Provide transportation and full connectivity to “naturally occurring retirement communities” NORC**
- **Provide information options to promote community outreach to senior neighbors**

# Recommendation **SAFETY**

**Primary  
Participating  
Agencies:**

**Denver City Council**

**Denver Commission on  
Aging**

**Denver District  
Attorney’s Office**

**Denver Fire  
Department**

**Denver Human  
Services**

**Denver Office on Aging**

**Denver Police  
Department**

**Living Streets**

**Initiative/Community  
Planning &  
Development**

**Mayor’s Office on  
Safety**

**Mayor’s Youth  
Commission**

**Parks & Recreation  
(Fall  
Prevention)**

**Public Works**

**Office of Emergency  
Management**

**Risk Management/  
Facilities**



## **Recommendation:**

- **Incorporate agency best practices for older adults in the following areas:**
- **Safe streets and sidewalk routes**
- **Well lit streets, and bus and transportation stops**
- **Accessible and affordable, fully connected transportation options**
- **Outdoor recreation or entertainment activities,**
- **Emergency preparedness policies**
- **Basic human rights policies**
- **Elder abuse outreach and resources**
- **Language interpretation for deaf, bilingual and non-English speaking seniors**

“I need to know who and where I can call for options when I need help.”

Muriel Arvay

“If I have a situation that does not require 911 emergency services, I would like an easy resource to call for help...”

Jack Truby

# Recommendation Workforce Development

**Primary  
Participating  
Agencies:**

**311**

**Career Service  
Authority**

**Career Service  
Authority Board**

**Denver Employees  
Retirement Plan**

**Office on Finance  
(BMO)**

**Office of Workforce  
Development**

**Parks & Recreation**

“I have friends who have recently retired or are about to. They have a lifetime in business and are looking for an opportunity to use those experiences and skills and maybe have a small business of their own, but they need to know where to get good information.”

Mike Farley  
Retired Resident  
Future Business  
Owner



## Recommendation:

**Retain the knowledge base of older adults as they retire from careers either within the city or in private sector companies.**

- **Review Denver’s current policies, and explore developing alternative structures to retain knowledge and talent**
- **Develop ways to continue to engage older adults in the workforce**
- **Develop strong mentorship program**
- **Senior entrepreneurship programs and grants**



# Recommendation Universal Design Principles

**Primary Participating Agencies:**

Career Service Authority

Community Planning & Development

Denver City Council

Denver International Airport

Design Services

Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations

Living Streets Initiative

Mayor’s Bicycle Advisory Committee

Office of Economic Development

Parks & Recreation

Public Works–Policy, Implementation and Engineering

Technology Services

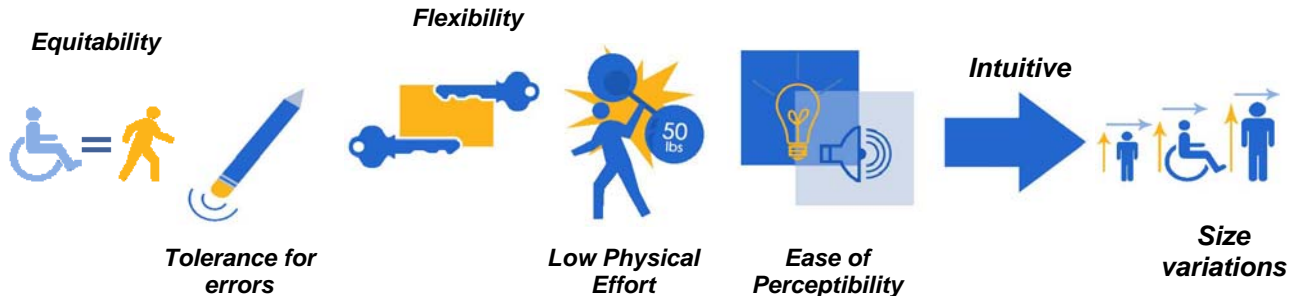


## Recommendation:

Establish policies that will support the development of environments and systems, resulting in Denver being the most “livable” city, functioning at the highest level for people of all ages, cultures, educational abilities, and physical challenges.

- Emphasize the seven principles of Universal Design as a policy guide to all decisions by all agencies. These policies should fully encompass the built environment, technology, communications, services, new policies, transportation, equipment and devices to create a dynamic and fully integrated city.
- Establish and implement a Universal Design Advisory Board with Mayor appointed members to serve the city and its agencies on best practices, design guidelines, and sustainable solutions.
- Develop an educational resource to keep all agencies aware of new “best practices” regarding the implementation of Universal Design

### The Seven Principles of Consideration for Universal Design



## From Recommendations to Implementation

*Task force members have developed the following steps to ensure the recommendations developed and outlined in this report are embedded in the daily work of all Denver's city government agencies:*

- *Present the "Age Matters" video and the summary report to the Mayor's cabinet to inform them of the final findings.*
- *Do a series of presentations to city agencies featuring the report findings along with the Age Matters video.*
- *With the support of the Mayor's Office, request all agencies appoint a department liaison to become an advocate for senior issues and to work with the director of the Office on Aging.*
  - *Define outcomes sought in each recommendation area and create a tool for measuring progress and success.*
- *Identify and map strategic opportunities through which these recommendations can be implemented.*
- *Hold quarterly meetings of the task force to monitor progress toward objectives and to continue to generate ideas for city agency collaboration.*
- *Ask city agencies to present at the next Summit on Aging acknowledging those with the best ideas generated and/or implemented throughout the year.*



*Joann Salzmann 80, Manny Salzmann 90, and Mayor Hickenlooper honoring senior bicycle advocates*

# Resources

This report is a starting point of what we hope will be ongoing actions, decisions and policies that move Denver toward being the best city in the world in which to grow older. To keep up with our progress, and to connect to other resources directed at this goal, please consider the following resources:

## **Age Matters Initiative Web site**

To keep up with the Age Matters Initiative and Denver's progress toward its goal of making Denver the best city in the world to live and to grow older, bookmark the Age Matters Web site. We will be posting updates of our work and what city agencies and their partners are doing!

<http://www.denvergov.org/Aging/AgeMattersInitiative/tabid/432447/Default.asp>

## **311**

Dial these three digits, or go online, to get one-stop information about non-emergency city services.

[www.denvergov.org/Denver311](http://www.denvergov.org/Denver311)

## **Denver Commission on Aging**

The commission is composed of Mayor-appointed Commissioners who advise the director of the Denver Office on Aging about current senior issues. Its mission is to promote and ensure equal rights and opportunity for the aging community in Denver.

<http://www.denvergov.org/Aging/CommissiononAging/tabid/432443/Default.aspx>

## **Denver Office on Aging**

The mission of the Denver Office on Aging is to enhance the quality of life for Denver's aging population. Go to its Web site for updated information, Web site links and reports, and to download helpful resource guides and handbooks.

[www.denvergov.org/Aging](http://www.denvergov.org/Aging)

## **Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)**

DRCOG serves as the region's Area Agency on Aging, planning and coordinating a continuum of services available to older adults living in the Denver metro area.

<http://www.drcog.org/AgingServices>

# Credits

## Thank you:

***The Age Matters Initiative would like to thank the Task Force members who met throughout the year and developed these recommendations:***

*Lucía Guzmán, Agency for Human Rights and Community  
Guillermo “Bill” Vidal, Deputy Mayor  
Carol Boigon, Councilwoman at-Large  
Doug Linkhart, Councilman at-Large*

*Anthony Aragon, Denver Office on Aging  
Jan Brennan, Denver Office of Cultural Affairs  
Valerie Brooks, Denver Department of Human Services  
Amber Callender, Denver Mayor’s Office  
Jeff Dolan, Career Service Authority  
Brian Elms, Denver International Airport  
Laureen Ferris, Human Rights and Community Relations  
Susan Gallo, Mayors Office of Economic Development  
Paula Gomez Farrell, OED’s Division of Workforce Development Relations  
Phyllis Hirschfield, Denver Health and Human Services  
Tom Hoaglund, Community Planning and Development  
Connie Larscheidt, Denver Department of Parks and Recreation  
Mike Major, 311  
Yvette Martinez, Career Services Authority  
Dolores Martinez Hernandez, Denver Office on Aging  
Sandra Ramirez, Agency for Human Rights and Community Relations  
Molly Urbina, Denver Department of Community Planning and Development  
Robin Valdez, Denver Department of Environmental Health*

*JVA Consulting, for assisting in preparing this report.*

## Citations:

Data on pages 4 and 5 from the State Demographer’s Office, the American Community Survey, and Boomers Leading Change Community Assessment (Rose Community Foundation, 2007). Information on universal design from: Mace, R.L., Hardie, G.J., and Place, J.P. Toward Universal Design. In: Preiser, W.F.E., Vischer, J.C. and White, E.T. (eds.) *Design Intervention: Toward a More Humane Architecture*.

## Photo credits:

Most photos provided by the Denver Office on Aging. Photo on pages 5 and 16 by JVA Consulting, and photo on page 12 by Aphelios. Photo on page 14 a stock photo from Istockphoto.com.