

Shaping an Age-Friendly CNY

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



A community-wide study by:

F.O.C.U.S.

Greater Syracuse

A Citizen-Centered Research,
Planning and Engagement Organization

OUR COMMUNITY IS AGING

Why are we concerned?

- Boomers make up **31.5%** of Onondaga County
- For the next 15 years, nationwide **8,000 Boomers** will be turning 65 each day
- Other communities are actively pursuing our Boomers to relocate in their area

Who are the boomers?

The Revolutionary
Generation!



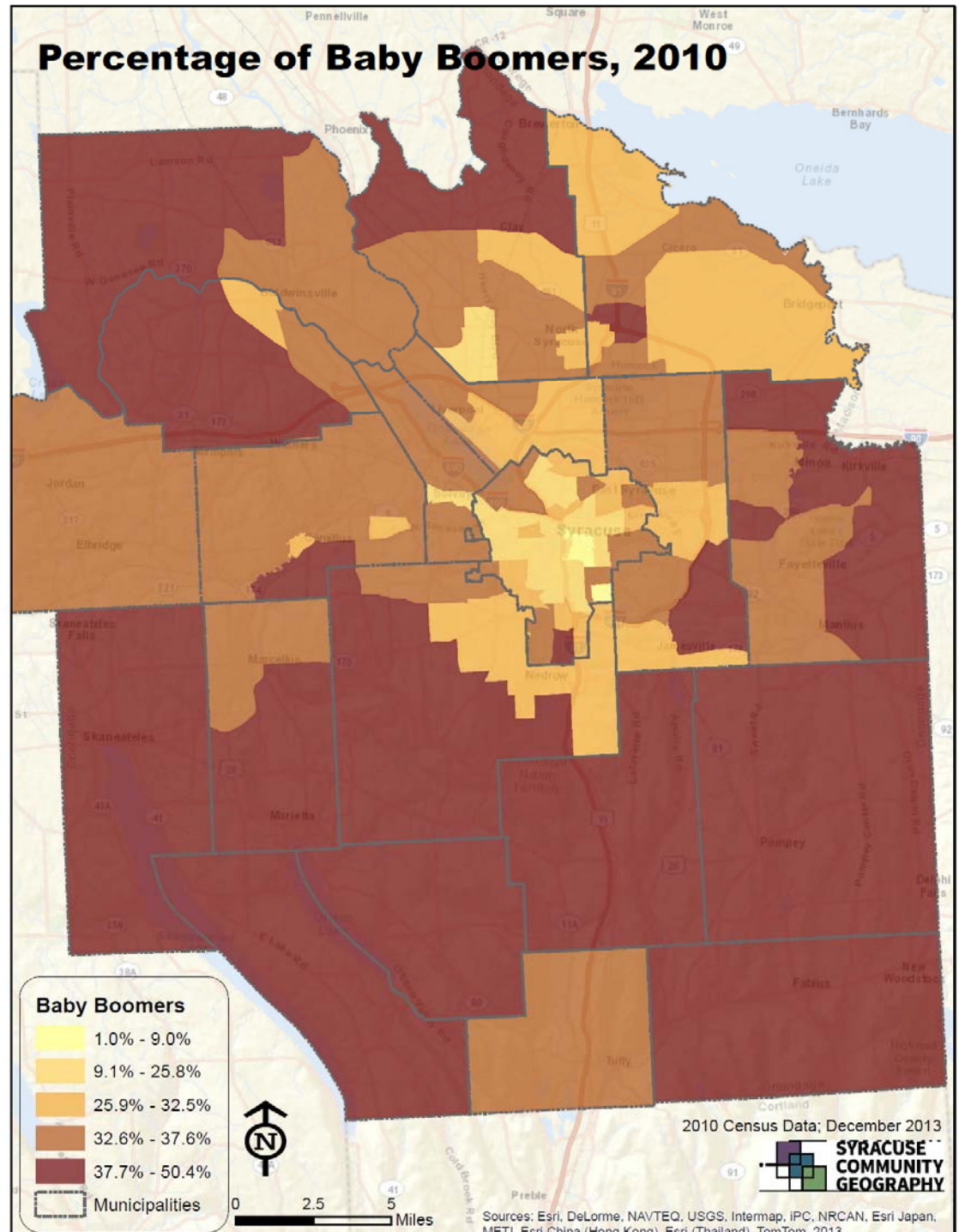
Boomer: A person born during the demographic Post–World War II baby boom between the years 1946 and 1964.

The **Wealthiest, Most Active, Most Diverse** and **Most Educated** Generation.

146,712 Boomers in Onondaga County

Most live in the suburban
towns and villages and
rural communities

Dark red:
37.7 - 50.4% are Boomers



WHY DO WE CARE?

Boomers **Spend** Money

Retirees **Create** Jobs

Boomers **Own, Buy and Remodel** Homes

Boomers **Serve** Their Community

Boomers **Give** to Their Community

Boomers **STRENGTHEN** Community

AGE-FRIENDLY CNY IS AN ECONOMIC ISSUE

All sectors have a stake!

✓ **Business/Homebuilders/Developers**



✓ **Public/Citizens**

✓ **Government**



Are CNY Boomers planning on moving?

- F.O.C.U.S. found that **48%** of survey respondents are planning a move (not always out of state)
- **57%** of those are planning on moving to another state.



Three STAGES OF MIGRATION

- **First move**
 - following retirement
 - tend to be healthier and wealthier
 - attracted by amenities of retirement communities
- **Second move**
 - based on an individual's inability to carry out tasks
 - to be closer to children who can provide caregiving
 - after death of a spouse
- **Third move**
 - move is often to long-term care facility

**WHAT WILL KEEP
BOOMERS LIVING
AND THRIVING IN
OUR COMMUNITY?**

EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

**RIGOROUS METHODOLOGY & LITERATURE
RESEARCH WITH UNIVERSITY FACULTY &
STUDENTS**

**PARTNERSHIP WITH BUSINESS, EDUCATION,
NONPROFIT & PUBLIC SECTORS**

**LED BY LOCAL ORGANIZATION THAT KNOWS THE
COMMUNITY**

Steering Committee

- **40 Business & Community Leaders**
- **4 Meetings**
- **Cross-sector perspective and critical thinking**
- **Provided direction for staff and project committees**
- **Approved final recommendations**

Survey

- **1,990 Surveys Completed**
- **36% Men / 64% Women**
 - **48% were Boomers**
- **Analyzed by Maxwell Capstone students**
- **Full survey demographics & responses available in Appendix online**

Focus Groups

- 32 Participants

- Discussion Topics

Housing

Transportation

Retirement

Networks (Family, Friends)

Recreational, Cultural and Physical Activities

Key-Informant Interviews

- 38 Key Informant Interviews
- Asked: “How the Aging Boomer Population will affect your Sector and what would keep them living in CNY”
- Sectors Represented:
 - Business/Financial
 - Education
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Economic Development/Planning
 - Nonprofit/Community Organizations
 - Government
 - Health Care
 - Housing
 - Leisure/Recreation

Community Meetings

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

Findings and Recommendations



Housing and Neighborhoods

- **Most boomers live in suburbs and prefer to remain there but looking for smaller homes with universal design, walkable neighborhoods (in or near town center), and public transportation.**
- **Overwhelming desire to age in place.**
- **59% of those surveyed believe local housing options are very good; 24% fair; 11% poor**
- **High rise apartments appeal to urbanites**



FINDINGS

- **Housing is affordable, but doesn't offer age-friendly features.**
- **Housing is old and needs retro-fitting to be age-friendly.**
- **Boomers are looking for smaller, single-family, single-story homes with universal design.**
- **Our community is sprawling making public transportation inaccessible.**

Housing and Neighborhoods

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Retrofit neighborhoods and town centers
- Update zoning laws to accommodate, affordable age-friendly development, & residences.
 - Walkable
 - Business development
 - Attractive landscaping
 - Green spaces



MORE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Offer property tax incentives.
- Provide housing safety checks.
- Encourage home maintenance businesses.
- Create a directory of maintenance services.

TRANSPORTATION



FINDINGS

- Resources are being cut, while demand is increasing.
- Car-dependent residents are very concerned about loss of independence and inaccessible public transportation.
- New business ventures are providing limited private transportation services.
- Services limited in suburban and rural communities

TRANSPORTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advocate for funding public transportation
- Provide convenient and accessible routes, include suburbs
- Support affordable transportation options
- Ensure that public transportation and housing developments are collaborating
- Provide safe, sheltered bus-stops with seating and lighting
- Provide a directory of age-friendly transportation services
- Designate parking spaces for older adults



Community and Health Services



FINDINGS

- An aging Boomer population is increasing demand on our health care system.
- Lacking is a general awareness of the variety of NYS services and programs.
- Boomers currently provide caregiving to aging parents, to spouses and possibly grandchildren.
- Long-term health care options are limited with waiting lists and especially limited capacity and services for behavioral and mental health patients.

COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recruit, train and cross train health care providers, create awareness for citizens like MOW servers, postal carriers etc.
- Support community- and health-based business ventures
- Invest in technology to enable in-home care
- Provide affordable and accessible long-term health care options
- Create a directory of age-friendly community and health services, programs and products

Recreation Culture Education



FINDINGS

- Boomers are active & want to remain active
- Central New York offers plenty of year-round physical and recreational activities
- Boomers want to continue to learn and are drawn to University-based opportunities
- Boomers want access to a variety of affordable entertainment and cultural events

Recreation Culture Education

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create an interactive digital forum to share activities and events
- Colleges and universities to engage Boomers
- Support endeavors that provide age-friendly recreational, cultural and educational opportunities
- Hold events in suburban communities
- Create a network of trails to connect neighborhoods, shopping and entertainment





Taxes

FINDINGS

- New York state taxes are a significant concern
- NYS taxes provide for many publicly supported aging services

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Launch a community-wide campaign to educate citizens about the services and programs their taxes support
- Educate citizens about where their taxes go by providing itemized tax bills
- Provide comparative state statistics

Work Opportunities



FINDINGS

- Boomers plan to postpone retirement
- Boomers want flexible work schedules, opportunities to work from home and part-time positions
- Boomers who retire from the workforce take with them a lifetime of experiences, connections and knowledge
- Boomers are the largest growing cohort launching new business ventures
- Boomers feel a general lack of retirement preparedness



WORK OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage work policies to offer flexible work schedules, work from home, and livable wage
- Support Boomer-launched businesses, providing accessible and adequate funding and training
- Launch community-wide pre-retirement counseling service
- Create a digital forum about age-friendly job opportunities and employers

Civic Engagement

FINDINGS

- Boomers want to feel valued by their community
- Boomers need to have a purpose
- A connection to community plays a significant role in Boomers' decisions to move or stay



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Organize groups of volunteer retirees to support and promote meaningful civic engagement opportunities, where Boomers can combine skills and interests
- Create special civic engagement opportunities to engage older adults at risk of social isolation
- Create a digital forum to disseminate information regarding civic engagement opportunities



Philanthropy

FINDINGS

- Boomers are the largest charitable donors
- Boomers tend to take their charitable donations to their new community

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create connections between Boomers and funding opportunities - engage them through service or employment.
- Create a digital forum to inform Boomers of funding opportunities, how their contributions impact on the community.



Family and Social Networks

FINDINGS

- Boomers want to live near family and social networks
- Technology is changing communication with family and friends



- » Travel is important to maintaining connections to distanced family and social networks.
- » Air travel in Central New York is perceived as being expensive with inconvenient flight schedules

Family and Social Networks

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide housing options for Boomers that choose to live with their parents, children and/or grandchildren
- Ensure job opportunities and career growth for all ages to keep young families and their parents living in the area
- Provide training on how to use social media for social engagement
- Promote opportunities for multi-generational socialization



Safety

FINDINGS

- Safety was the No. 1 factor important to Boomers when deciding where to live
- Safety is not just about crime. Prevention of falls and personal injury, public safety, community preparedness from natural disasters are vital.
- Perception that downtown is unsafe: citizens want visible, accessible parking, lit walkways, visible police protection.



SAFETY



RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Marketing, Communications and Information

FINDINGS

- Age-friendly services and programs are largely are undermarketed and under-promoted
- Information about aging services and programs is scattered and hard to navigate

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create and launch a public outreach, education, and branding campaign to identify Central New York's as the Age-Friendly community of choice
- Create a community-wide, accessible database of age-friendly services, programs, activities, events and organizations like "Angie's List"
- Provide broad community internet and communications access
- Encourage new businesses to provide age-friendly communications and information services for example 211

What's Next: Phase

II

- Conduct surveys, evaluations, and checklists for our villages and towns to hear what would keep Boomers living there – encourage age-friendly housing and thriving town centers
- Create an age-friendly checklist for businesses on how to meet the brain drain and keep retirees involved
- Host “*Too Young to Retire*” pre-retirement planning workshops

What's Next: Phase

II

- Organize a community coalition of government, businesses, and citizens to sustain Age-Friendly CNY
- Create online directory of age-friendly services, products, events, activities and organizations and how to get involved
- Create a fact sheet on local and state taxes to educate the public

CHALLENGE TO CITIZENS AND THE COMMUNITY:

- Attend zoning and planning board meetings to encourage age-friendly policies and codes
- Focus development in town and village centers to create walkable communities
- Invest in housing, renovation, transportation and technology to enable aging-in-place
- Advocate for the implementation of the recommendations

INNOVATIVE HOUSING IDEAS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Little Houses

Green Houses – Loretto Village

House Sharing – “Boomer Ladies”

ADU “Accessory-dwelling Unit” - In-law apt.

Mobile homes – RV’s fast growing industry

Cluster Housing – outer Comstock Ave.

CCRC – The Nottingham

PLANNING CHALLENGES

- Rising labor costs/construction cost and need to innovate and increase productivity with fewer people
- Local and state regulations that prevent innovation i.e. more than one structure on lot (preventing in-law units)
- Local and state regulations defining “household” and/or “family”

WE CAN MAKE CNY AGE-FRIENDLY

OPEN AND WELCOMING

INCLUSIVE OF:

ALL GROUPS

ALL ETHNICITIES

ALL CULTURES

ALL PEOPLE



AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY IS A GOOD FOR EVERYONE

GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY - GOOD FOR THE CITIZENS

RETAINS TAX BASE

INCREASES CONSUMERISM

PRESERVES CHARITABLE GIVING

UPHOLDS WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

RETAINS SKILLED WORKERS

ENGAGES CITIZENS AS CITIZEN TRUSTEES

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A True Public-Private Partnership!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

READ THE FULL REPORT AND APPENDIX
“Shaping an Age-Friendly CNY”

www.focussyracuse.org

JOIN THE AGE-FRIENDLY CITIZENS STRATEGIC
ACTION PLANNING WORK GROUP

Call 448-8732 for more information

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