Serving an Older Peninsula: A SUMMARY

This report examines the evolving needs and challenges of the growing older adult population in the Virginia Peninsula region.

Peninsula's Aging Population: New Report Explores - Are We Ready?

The Virginia Peninsula faces a dramatic demographic shift as the number of residents aged 80 and older is projected to more than double by 2050, growing by 122%, according to a new report, "Serving an Older Peninsula." Released by the Peninsula Community Foundation of Virginia (PCF) as the inaugural initiative of its Center for Community Research, the report highlights both the challenges and opportunities presented by this rapid growth.

Currently, older adults comprise 25% of the Peninsula's population. The report, produced in partnership with the Peninsula Agency on Aging and with support from all six Peninsula municipalities, explores strategies to leverage the experience and contributions of older residents while addressing their evolving needs in healthcare, housing, caregiving, transportation, safety, and quality of life.

"This study consolidates critical data from across the Peninsula, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead," said Adelia Thompson, CEO of the Peninsula Community Foundation. "Now, the crucial question is: What's next? We will collaborate with partners across the region to identify existing initiatives, incentivize new efforts, and position our community to proactively address the coming changes."

KEY FINDINGS:

- By 2050, nearly 43,000 Peninsula residents will be 80 or older, making this the fastest-growing demographic.
- **Healthcare:** The Peninsula will see a 15% increase in healthcare jobs over the next decade, due in large part to the increased physical health needs and challenges that will face a greater population advancing in age.
- **Housing:** Across the Peninsula, most older adults live in homes that do not accommodate aging-in-place, and making structural changes can be cost prohibitive. Transportation and walkability of their neighborhoods present challenges that will simply increase.
- **Caregivers:** Already, the demand for paid, skilled caregivers exceeds the number in our workforce, and that imbalance will deepen quickly. This hits families from two directions – the cost, and the limited number often means family members must fill the gap. But that in turn means those family members cannot work, which has further economic impact across the board.
- **Emergency Support:** Currently, older adults are by far the largest consumers of EMS services. With calls from this group expected to grow 12% over the next few years, expanding emergency resources become a very real pressure for the community

- **Workforce:**
  - Over the next 25 years the population of 30-60 year olds increases 20% while the population of 60-80 year olds is expected to increase 133%. In 2021, 46 percent of the individuals who left the region were aged 25-59, compared to 37 percent of those who moved to the region. This trend further shifts the composition of residents who remain behind.
  - An estimated 13,000 older and 5,500 working-age Peninsula residents likely require formal caregiving, a collective need for 18,500 home health aides (1:1). As of 2024, there were 3,800 aides, about 1 caregiver for every 5 vulnerable residents who need a caregiver. By 2034, collective need is expected to increase to 21,500 aides, compared to a supply of 5,100 home health aides.

CALL TO ACTION:

Create a more age-friendly Peninsula, through creative regional collaboration, and leaning into the work already underway by private business, governments, education, and nonprofits. Specific recommendations from the report include:

- Recruiting and retaining healthcare workers
- Expanding housing accessibility options and support, and transportation opportunities
- Supporting family caregivers with resources and training, but also building the available, affordable workforce of professional caregivers
- Fostering intergenerational connections, and quality of life opportunities including intentional interactions between younger and older generations, programs and services that afford social connections and cultural experiences
- Strengthening emergency response systems and staffing
- Addressing the necessary strategies to ensure ongoing economic strength as the financial capacities of older neighbors decline, even as that population increases
- Identifying the strategies that exist and developing new ones to help the region proactively build its workforce to meet the demand for increased services in support of older residents

The full report is available at **www.pcfvirginia.org/agingreport** with more details on how community leaders, businesses, and residents can engage in crafting a successful future for the Peninsula, embracing our older neighbors who have much to teach us all.

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