

SERVICE NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

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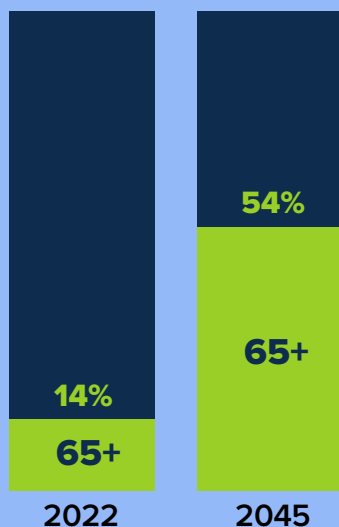
SAY
Yes
TO
SENIORS

Overall, Washtenaw is one of the most healthy and vibrant communities in Michigan.

But our residents are getting older and our services need to evolve to meet these changing demographics.

Of the county's roughly 368,000 residents, more than 51,000 (14%) are over the age of 65 ⁽¹⁾

Washtenaw County 65+ Population



By 2045, the senior population is projected to increase by 40% ⁽²⁾

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was commissioned by the *Say Yes to Seniors* Coalition. Its purpose is to summarize the potential impacts of a senior millage in Washtenaw County. More specifically, this report aims to identify unmet services needs of older adults that could be positively impacted by the revenue from a 0.5 mil proposal.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like much of the state and the nation, Washtenaw County has an aging population. As the number of older adults increases, the subset of that population needing support from senior services agencies will increase as well. While our community is home to many exceptional service providers, current funding mechanisms are not sufficient to meet the needs of this growing population.

This report synthesizes information from a variety of sources to identify the unmet needs of older adults in Washtenaw County. Some of this research represents academic literature and best practices from other communities that can be applied to Washtenaw County. Wherever possible, the data and figures are specific to our community – including surveys and focus groups with local seniors, expert opinions from senior services professionals, and public opinion polls of Washtenaw County voters.

The purpose of this report is to explore the potential impacts of a senior millage in Washtenaw County. More specifically, this report aims to identify service gaps that could be materially impacted by the revenue from a 0.5 mil proposal.

Through this research, several key themes emerged:

- **Our current network of services is not sufficient to meet the needs of an aging population.** Washtenaw County is home to a variety of exceptional senior service agencies, but their efforts are limited by the funding that is available – a situation that will only worsen as our senior population increases. Waitlists and care rationing are not consistent with the values of our community.

- The majority of seniors use few, if any, senior services ... until they do. Health and care needs can change quickly due to an acute health event, loss of a spouse, or progressive age-related decline. When their needs do change, most senior services clients need more than one type of assistance and navigating the system can be a challenge. **Seniors need a centralized place to obtain resource referrals and case management.**
- COVID-19 exacerbated social isolation and loneliness for older adults. In addition to mental health, social isolation is detrimental to physical health and overall mortality as well. **Seniors need places to connect and maintain social relationships.**
- **Senior services benefit caregivers and families too.** Providing adequate and supportive senior services, as well as resource referrals and case management, eases caregiver burden. In addition to the direct benefits to clients, a senior millage will provide caregivers with peace of mind, reduced stress and occasional respite.
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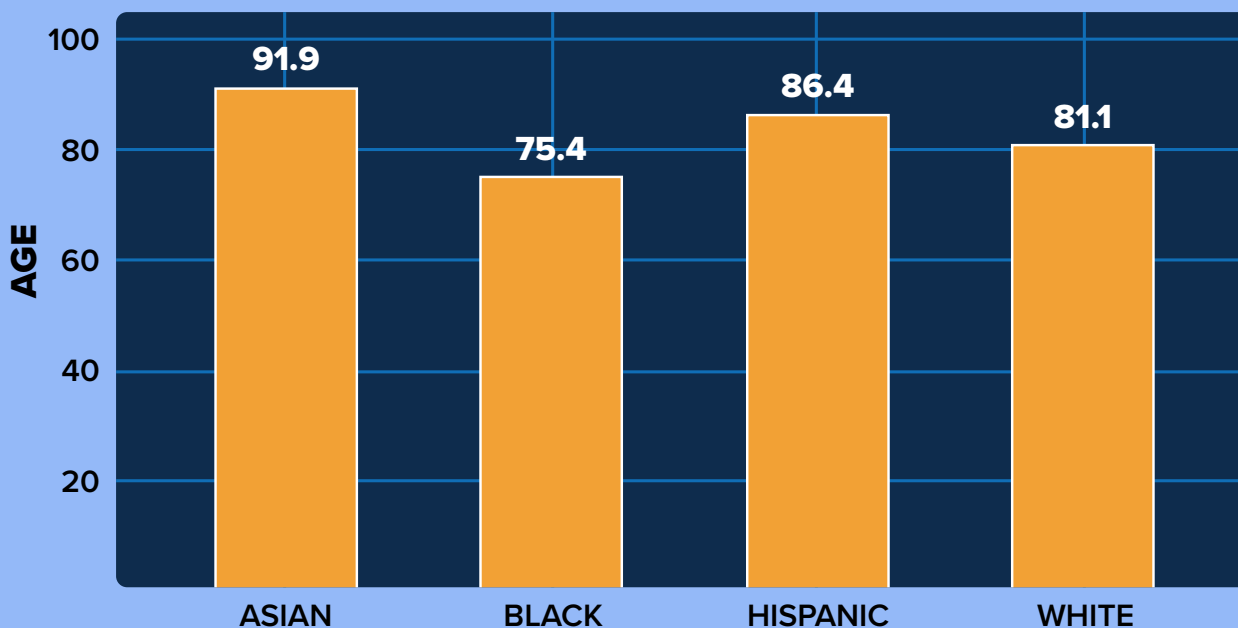
There is significant variation in economic opportunities and outcomes across the county.

Among current senior services clients, finances were again listed as the top concern:

41% of current clients consider the inability to make ends meet financially the top hardship for Washtenaw County seniors (3).

Systemic racism leads to disparate outcomes in nearly all aspects of aging, up to and including overall life expectancy.

Average Life Expectancy in Washtenaw County 2018 - 2020



Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (4)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- The lack of a senior millage puts Washtenaw County out of step with the majority of the state, but voters are ready to invest in senior services. **The majority of Washtenaw County voters are receptive to a senior millage.** For a typical household in our community, the costs of a 0.5 mil proposal are modest, but the potential rewards are great.

REFERENCES

1. U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: S0103: POPULATION 65 YEARS AND OVER IN THE UNITED STATES [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2022 May 18]. Available from: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=05000000US26161&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S0103>
2. Leach A, Tarver A, Guthrie E. Michigan Population Projections by County through 2045. Lansing, MI: State of Michigan, Department of Technology, Management and Budget, Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives; 2019.
3. Say Yes to Seniors Coalition. Senior Services Snapshot Survey. 2022.
4. Washtenaw County, Michigan [Internet]. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. [cited 2022 Apr 28]. Available from: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/michigan/2022/rankings/washtenaw/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>



SERVICE NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS

IN WASHTENAW COUNTY:

HOUSING SUPPORT



NUTRITION



CARE MANAGEMENT



CAREGIVING



SENIOR CENTERS



Yes SAY
TO
SENIORS