

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE August 16, 2024

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **Report on Funding Priorities from the Senior Affairs Commission**

On May 20, 2024, the Senior Affairs Commission (SAC) approved its Funding Priorities Recommendations report. This report was developed by an Ad-Hoc SAC Committee appointed by the Chair to review senior programming in the City of Dallas and to draft a report outlining recommendations to the Mayor and City Council for consideration during the upcoming budget cycle.

The Funding Priorities Recommendations report is attached to this memo in three parts: Attachment A is a transmittal memo drafted by the Chair of the Senior Affairs Commission. Attachment B is the Funding Priorities Recommendations report drafted by the Ad Hoc Committee on Funding Priorities.

Attachment C is a Minority Viewpoint drafted by a member of the Commission. If you have any questions, please contact me or Office of Community Care Director, Jessica Galleshaw, at Jessica.galleshaw@dallas.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Cedillo-Pereira'.

M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira
Assistant City Manager

Kimberly Bizer Tolbert, City Manager (I)
Tammy Palomino, City Attorney
Mark Swann, City Auditor
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Dominique Artis, Chief of Public Safety (I)
Dev Rastogi, Assistant City Manager

Alina Ciocan, Assistant City Manager
Donzell Gipson, Assistant City Manager (I)
Robin Bentley, Assistant City Manager (I)
Jack Ireland, Chief Financial Officer
Elizabeth Saab, Chief of Strategy, Engagement, and Alignment (I)
Directors and Assistant Directors

[Attachment]

Attachment A

**SENIOR AFFAIRS COMMISSION
CITY OF DALLAS**

May 31, 2024

FROM: J. Peter Kline, Chairman

TO: Mayor Eric Johnson, all City Council Members and the City Manager

SUBJECT: Recommended Funding Priorities for Senior Citizens

Attached is a copy of the Senior Affairs Commission's Recommended Funding Priorities that we believe should be incorporated into the City's budget process for fiscal year 2024- 2025.

The current fiscal year budget included significant funding for consulting assistance in the development of a new strategic plan on how to best serve Dallas senior citizens and the recruitment of a new Age Friendly Officer in the OCC Senior Services. Since neither of these initiatives have been completed, the SAC's funding priority recommendations for fiscal year 2024-25 closely resemble those that were included in last year's memo. One new recommendation is to establish a new position for a full-time outreach specialist. Our work this year has clearly demonstrated that the vast majority of seniors have little or no awareness of the city's senior programming and senior assistance programs, which explains the minimal participation in existing programs. The new position would target the pockets of senior poverty throughout the city and create new outreach efforts to reach seniors who have the greatest needs.

This report was prepared by an Ad Hoc Committee on Funding Priorities which included Commissioners Mitchell D-3, Jarvis D-5, Kline D-13, Roberts D-14 and the Mayor's citywide appointment, Mike Nurre. The report was reviewed and approved by the full Senior Affairs Commission at our May 20, 2024 regular meeting. We hope these priorities are included in the final adopted budget by the Mayor and Council.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity you have given us to serve the City.



J. Peter Kline, Chair

Dallas Senior Affairs Commission

Copy - All Senior Affairs Commissioners

Attachment - Senior Affairs Commission Recommended Funding Priorities FY 2024-25

Attachment B

CITY OF DALLAS SENIOR AFFAIRS COMMISSION RECOMMENDED FUNDING PRIORITIES FISCAL YEARS 2024-25

(Approved at the June 20, 2024 Meeting of the Senior Affairs Commission)

The Senior Affairs Commission (SAC) has prepared this report to advise the Dallas Mayor, City Council, and City Manager regarding funding priorities to properly serve the needs of Dallas' senior population.

There are now over 140,000 Dallas residents aged 65 and older and approximately 13,500 Dallas residents will turn 65 in each of the next five years. The elderly population is growing at five times the rate of the rest of the Dallas population and it is the only segment which has an increasing poverty rate. There are at least 30,000 residents age 60 and older who are living on incomes of \$1,000 per month or less.

In spite of their significance relative to the total Dallas population, the growing needs of elderly residents have not been included in the goals and performance measures for senior city management. This must change if the city wants to make meaningful improvements in the quality of life for our elderly population. Any meaningful improvements require goals and measurement of results in order to accomplish real change.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE DALLAS SENIOR POPULATION

For the past two years the Senior Affairs Commission has worked with City's Office of Data Analytics & Business Intelligence and the Office of Community Care to build a demographic profile of Dallas' Senior Population for the city as a whole, and for each City Council District.

The current demographic profile has been updated to reflect the data from the Census Bureau's 2021 American Community Survey and the new City Council District boundaries. When the U.S Census Bureau releases the 2023 American Community Survey, the senior profile will be updated to reflect the most recent available data. Please refer to the ***Senior Affairs Commission's 2023 Annual Report*** to review the full demographic profile of the senior population in each Council District and for the city as a whole. Highlights of this analysis are as follows:

- The senior population is widely dispersed among every City Council District. D-2, D-5, D-6 and D-14 have the lowest density of seniors and D-4, D-11, D-12 and D-13 have the highest density of seniors.
- Record numbers of people are turning 65 each year and seniors are living longer. 12% of Dallas seniors are age 85 and older; 27% are between the ages of 75 and 84; and 61% are between 65 and 74.
- 20% of Dallas seniors report having two or more disabilities. Both the incidence and the severity of disabilities among the older age groups are the greatest, and these people require more assistance with basic necessities.
- 30% of Dallas seniors live alone and have a much higher propensity for social isolation and mobility issues.
- Approximately 45% of seniors own their homes, and this ratio is quite consistent across all Council Districts. Senior home values average \$441,000 citywide, but they vary significantly between Council Districts. Home values in six districts average less than \$250,000 and exceed \$500,000 in five districts.
- While almost all seniors have age-related issues that adversely impact their quality of life, most of these issues can be mitigated if they have sufficient economic resources. Unfortunately, there are about 30,000 seniors over 60 years of age who are living at or below the federal poverty level of approximately \$1,000 per month. One out of every seven seniors (age 75+) are living below the poverty line.
- It would be a serious mistake to assume that all senior poverty is concentrated in the less affluent City Council Districts. There are pockets of senior poverty in every district; 57% of the age 75+ seniors with incomes below the poverty level live in the seven least affluent Council Districts and 43% live in the seven most affluent districts.

MAJOR ISSUES CONFRONTING DALLAS SENIORS

Elderly Dallas residents are impacted by all of the urban issues that impact all residents, and they benefit from all broad-based city services and programs that address these issues.

However, almost all urban problems are exacerbated by the effects of aging and senior citizens need more assistance to cope with the daily challenges of life. The following issues are of particular significance:

- **Declining Health** – The aging process takes its toll on the health of all senior citizens and requires more interaction with the healthcare systems. About 1 in 9 people aged 65 or

older have Alzheimer's Dementia and one-third of seniors 85 and older suffer from the disease. Many seniors are forced to become caregivers for relatives and friends and need special support even if they are healthy.

- **Financial Insecurity-** Median senior household income for seniors is only 60% of that for the city as a whole and most seniors live on a fixed income that may or may not be supplemented by part-time employment. 42,482 Dallas seniors live alone and do not benefit from multiple incomes in their households. And about 30,000 seniors over the age of 60 are living at or below the federal poverty line of about \$1,000 per month. Dallas seniors have been hard hit by the 40-year high inflation rates that have occurred over the past two years. Dallas-Fort Worth has been ranked as having either the 1st or 2nd highest inflation problem among the 23 top metro areas in the United States.
- **Social Isolation** - Older adults are particularly susceptible to social isolation, adversely impacting their quality of life and their physical and mental health. Most isolated seniors are unaware of socialization opportunities and do not take advantage of existing programs.
- **Affordable Housing** – Approximately 30% of all single-family homes in Dallas are owned by senior citizens. Even for seniors who no longer have a mortgage, large increases in property insurance, utilities and maintenance costs have been very difficult to absorb. The seniors who rent apartments or homes have even more difficulty since rental rates have escalated dramatically. New apartment buildings have targeted the more affluent sector of the market. And the supply of older less expensive apartments has declined as investors have bought and renovated them to charge significantly higher rents. There are virtually no affordable housing options for seniors who are forced out of their existing accommodations.
- **Food Insecurity** - Food insecurity is still a significant issue for Dallas residents of all ages and the dramatic escalation in grocery store prices has compounded the problem, particularly for seniors living on a fixed income. The North Texas Food Bank and VNA's Meals on Wheels programs are seeing all-time record demand for their assistance. The lack of grocery stores in proximity to seniors living in low-income neighborhoods is also a major problem. According to USDA Economic Resource Service, and supported by local data, those areas in Southern Dallas with the lowest incomes also have low access to food.
- **Mobility Issues and Transportation** - Access to medical care, grocery stores and socialization opportunities is a very common issue for senior citizens. Nearly 10% of all Dallas households do not have a motor vehicle and must rely on family, friends or public transportation. Over 27,000 Dallas seniors report having two or more disabilities, and as

people age, almost everyone has some sort of mobility issue, making it difficult to get to DART bus stops. There are about 54,000 Dallas seniors aged 75 and older who are particularly vulnerable to these difficulties.

- **Safety, Crime and Scams** – While the overall rate of crimes against senior citizens is lower than that for the city as a whole, personal safety and fear of frauds and scams are of great concern to the elderly. While younger people are most frequently the victims of scams, seniors suffer the highest dollar losses from these crimes.
- **Lack of Awareness of Available Resources** – Most seniors do not take advantage of available community resources, often because they are unaware that they even exist. The outreach programs to the elderly have not been effective and need to be reinvented to communicate more effectively with people who desperately need these services.

MOVEMENT TOWARD MAKING DALLAS SENIOR CITIZENS A PRIORITY

In response to last year's funding priorities recommendations, the City Manager proposed several enhancements to the Fiscal 2024 city budget which were approved by Dallas City Council:

- A new management position was authorized for the Office of Community Care. This Age Friendly Officer position has been designed to oversee the operation of the Senior Services work within the Office of Community Care and to work cross departmentally with every city department that provides programming and services that are targeted toward senior citizens. The hiring process for this new position is underway and the new Age Friendly Officer is expected to be in place on or before June 30, 2024.
- A \$250,000 budget allocation for the development of a strategic plan on how the city can best serve the special needs of the Dallas senior population. The selection process for retaining a consultant to assist with needs research, analysis of existing senior programs and development of recommended strategies is now underway. Work is expected to commence during fourth quarter of the 2024 fiscal year and be completed by March 31, 2025.
- The City Housing department budget was increased by \$500,000 to add staff and by \$1.7 million to expand the senior home repair program. In the current fiscal year, the department undertook a major restructuring process to improve and simplify the application process for residents and the actual execution of home repair projects. This work will have a meaningful impact on the number of people who can be served by this initiative.

- The Dallas Public Library System received \$50,000 to enhance senior programming across the city.

These enhancements may not have an immediate impact on the quality of life for Dallas seniors. But these investments send a clear signal that city management and the City Council are concerned about the vulnerability of Dallas seniors and are looking for strategic initiatives that can have a measurable impact on the most critical problems.

CURRENT CITY-FUNDED SENIOR PROGRAMS

The City's senior services and programming has evolved as a response to the anecdotal identification of problems and needs, rather than a data driven definition of the size and scope of issues confronting seniors. Over the years the City of Dallas has allocated some funding to respond to specific problems and needs of the senior community. Currently funded senior programming occurs across several city departments and outside contractors including:

- Office of Community Care (OCC)
 - Senior Services / Information and Referral Services
 - Senior Dental Health Program
 - Senior Workforce Programs
 - DART Rides Program
 - Senior Ombudsman Program
- Dallas Public Library System
- Parks and Recreation Department
- Housing Department - Home Repair Programs
- Targeted activities to seniors within the Police and Fire Departments

The seniors who take advantage of these programs and services benefit greatly from them. Unfortunately, the collective participation in all of the city-sponsored senior programs represents significantly less than 5% of the 140,000 seniors over the age of 65 who live in Dallas. The Senior Services Information and Referral Services program is on track to serve about 1,800 unduplicated clients in FY 2022-23, each of whom will require between 6 and 10 rounds of communications in order to respond to their needs. The various programmatic resources that are under the Senior Services umbrella are generally serving fewer than 500 individual seniors in a typical year. Given that at least 15% of all Dallas seniors are living at or below the federal poverty line and many more are struggling to make ends meet, it is clear that the City's efforts to serve our elderly residents are not having a material impact on the problems being faced.

Some programs are constrained by inadequate funding, but virtually all senior programming is constrained by a lack of awareness that these services and programs even exist. The City of

Dallas does not have a comprehensive strategy on how to best reach out to the senior population. Many of the programmatic efforts seem to operate in a silo, and each has their own communications effort that is based largely on people who have utilized services in the past. There is no centralized source of information on all senior programming and available services. The city must make it a priority to address this problem.

Finally, the City should compile a comprehensive report on the number of seniors served by all of these initiatives. This data is essential for a fact-based evaluation of the effectiveness of senior programming.

THE AGE-FRIENDLY DALLAS PLAN

The City of Dallas adopted as a guide the Age Friendly Dallas Plan in May of 2019 which set forth goals for community accessibility by all age groups, with a particular focus on seniors. The areas of focus of this Plan included seven domains:

- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social Participation & Inclusion
- Civic Participation & Employment
- Communications & Information
- Community Support & Health Services

Once the new Age Friendly Officer has been hired and launches this new role, this five-year old plan needs to be reassessed for progress and appropriateness for the current conditions. The Covid-19 pandemic had a crippling impact on many of elements of the plan and it exacerbated the problems facing senior citizens living in Dallas. With the significant growth in the senior population and the disruptions that have occurred, it seems clear that this plan needs to be updated.

FUNDING PRIORITIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-25 AND BEYOND

Based on our work to develop a fact-based demographic profile of the senior population in Dallas, the SAC believes that the historical budget process has underestimated the critical needs of the fastest growing segment of the City's population. Funding has not kept up with population growth. The Covid-19 pandemic protocols have had a disproportionate adverse impact on seniors, both directly and indirectly. Resources, access to facilities and senior programming have been curtailed over the past few years due to the Covid 19 pandemic. As the City senior population continues to grow and age, additional resources will be required to help our seniors attain a suitable quality of life.

The funds for services provided by the City for our Seniors should be comprehensively measured against the number of seniors served. Currently, participation by seniors in some programs are not measured. The dollars spent compared to numbers served do not appear to be considered. This data would make future funding decisions more informed and outcomes more certain.

The SAC recommends the following funding priorities be incorporated into the FY 2024-25 budget process. The list is presented in rank of importance to the seniors in our community.

- **Outreach/Communications Strategy and Staffing.** It is clear from the limited participation in existing senior programs and services that the community is generally unaware of the available resources, and that various city departments do not have an effective system to alert seniors of events and programming as they occur. Current collateral material needs to be revised and expanded to present all city resources that are available.

Currently, outreach efforts are conducted by Senior Services Staff members who in addition to their primary responsibilities, attend senior oriented events around the city. **The SAC recommends the creation of a new full-time position to work exclusively on community outreach.** Using heat maps which show the locations in the city where there are high concentrations of seniors living in poverty, this new staff member would be responsible for creating outreach opportunities designed to increase awareness in those areas. In addition, the outreach position should be responsible for improving awareness of the special needs in the LGBTQ+ senior community and promoting inclusivity and acceptance of this group.

The current OCC Senior Services help line is simply listed as a contact number to reach the Senior Services staff. The SAC recommends that this number be rebranded as the City's Senior Help Line and prominently feature it on all give-aways and collateral material. If this number is better publicized, it is likely that additional Senior Services Case Workers will be required to handle call volumes.

The State of Texas has a 2-1-1 hotline for community social services. Some Dallas County senior services are currently listed, but it does not reflect the scope of offerings by the City or local non-profits. This platform could be a starting point as it is both web based and phone supported. Additionally, service providers can add to the data base, thus providing the potential for a comprehensive information source. While this source may not be the best solution, funding for this type of resource should be considered rather than the fragmented/siloed approach on the City web site.

- **Senior Services Case Worker Staffing.** The current caseworker staffing in the Senior Services department is based on the current activity levels. These volumes will almost certainly increase significantly if a more effective communications strategy increases

community awareness of available programs. Additional staffing will be required to serve higher volumes and to increase outreach initiatives to underserved segments of the senior community.

- **Food Insecurity Strategies.** The current economic climate has stressed the capacity of non-profits that are addressing food insecurity in Dallas. The VNA's Meals-On-Wheels program is a highly utilized resource by the Senior community and is near capacity due to lack of sufficient funds. The City should explore ways that additional funding could improve services to Dallas senior citizens in future years.

The Dallas County Health and Human Services offer congregate lunch meals for Seniors in various locations throughout the City. Some meals are offered within Dallas Recreation Centers or Senior Centers and even in free standing Churches. However, some Districts are not served by this important program. Federal funding for these programs is at risk of cutbacks and these programs will be in serious jeopardy if that happens. The City needs to closely monitor this issue since these centers must continue to be a priority because they are critical to fighting food insecurity, social isolation and overall health for seniors. The City should explore ways to create additional sites in high-need neighborhoods that are not presently served.

The City should pursue additional opportunities to grant incentives for the development of new grocery stores in food desert areas. Since the effort to attract new grocery stores will take several years to become reality, the City should work closely with the North Texas Food Bank to find ways to create new and expanded food pantries to serve these areas of high need.

- **Affordable Housing and Minor Home Repair Program (CDBG).** With the dramatic increase in both overall population growth and rent rates, the city must address the lack of affordable housing, particularly within the Senior Community. Seniors on fixed income are particularly vulnerable in this environment. Since there are limited housing alternatives, finding ways to keep seniors in their existing homes is especially important. Pillar III of the Dallas Comprehensive Housing Policy is focused on preserving existing housing. Older homes need repairs. Currently, resources for making repairs are less available and supplies have significantly increased in cost.

The \$1.7 million which was allocated to the Senior Home Repair program in the 2023-24 budget is the most significant new commitment toward serving the city's elderly population in many years. With the reorganization of the Home Repair Program application process and the new allocation for repair work, significant progress will be made reducing the backlog. However, new applications are not being accepted and need for services still outstrips the city's ability to keep up. As the department becomes

more efficient, additional annual funding will be needed at or above this year's budget levels.

- **Senior DART Rides Program.** The City currently offers the DART Rides program, offering on demand ride service to both Seniors as well as qualified individuals with disabilities. In 2024, the volume of rides from this service has nearly doubled as awareness of the program has grown. City funding for this program will need to be increased in 2024-25 if the current trends continue.

There are numerous transportation services offered for Seniors by health providers, Dallas County HHS, religious entities and various other non-profits. My Rides, which has transitioned to a private provider, has attempted to create a centralized information source for these transportation sources but the listings provided are not comprehensive and adequate funding will be required. A service that is comprehensive, accurate, up to date and contains complete information about the various services is needed.

- **Senior Dental Program.** The Texas A&M Dental Clinic usage has surged post-pandemic, with procedures provided to senior patients averaging 500/mo. The centrally located site near Fair Park is well located to attract patients from many Districts. Current year volumes are expected to consume full funding in the current budget. The SAC recommends continuation of this program, an increase of over the current year budget, as well as consideration of opening an additional center in Southern Sector of Dallas.
- **The Dallas Library System.** Since the City does not operate dedicated senior centers, the Dallas Library System has long served as social gathering places for senior citizens. During the Covid-19 pandemic this important senior resource was taken away and staffing and hours of operation have not been fully restored to pre-pandemic levels. Historically, this important function of the library system has not been given enough consideration in the budget process. Dedicated senior programming and staff to support it should be expanded significantly in the upcoming budget cycle.
- **Park and Recreation Programs.** Given the lack of dedicated senior centers, the City's Rec Centers have also played an important role as social gathering places and sites for targeted senior programming. The return of the ASAP program has been greeted with good participation but there is a need for more dedicated senior programming. Programming should consider the specific demographics of the District to ensure programs resonate with the community needs and will be utilized by the community. The continuation of both in-person and online programs should be funded. In addition, the City should explore the potential for creating new dedicated space for Senior Centers across the Park & Recreation system.

- **Senior Ombudsman Supplement.** The City contracts with the Senior Source to provide supplemental funding to enhance ombudsman services to residents in Dallas nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The Ombudsman program did a remarkable job of maintaining contact with residents and their families during the ban on personal visitation during the pandemic. This is an exemplary program and they serve a very high percentage of the people living in senior living facilities. Volumes have returned to normal this fiscal year and may well increase as a result of post-pandemic regulations. The amount of this contract was increased last year to reflect inflation, and the SAC recommends that current funding levels be increased again to reflect the current inflationary environment and increased workloads.
- **Senior Training and Employment.** The current economic environment is causing many seniors to find part-time employment to supplement their fixed income retirement plans. Based on very low participation in the program, the SAC recommends the continuation of funding through the term of the current contract, but a concerted effort should be made to find more effective ways to facilitate senior employment matches. It is also recommended that the city explore an internal program to fill open city positions with senior citizens who already possess the needed skills and are seeking part-time and/or full-time employment.
- **Sidewalk Plan.** The SAC supports continued funding for the implementation of the Master Sidewalk Plan to support sidewalk replacement throughout the city. The upcoming bond program should make sidewalk improvements in areas of the city that are heavily populated by seniors.

****Budget Priority Minority Report to Dallas City Council****

Subject: Strategic Initiatives for Comprehensive Support of LGBT Seniors in Dallas

Dear Mayor Eric Johnson, Esteemed Members of the Dallas City Council, and the City Manager:

This minority report is submitted to advocate for the urgent implementation of two key initiatives: the hiring of an LGBTQ Senior Liaison within the Dallas Office of Community Care and the establishment of a city-funded LGBTQ Senior Center. These actions are not merely symbolic but essential strategies to address the unprecedented and unique challenges faced by LGBTQ seniors. Implementing these initiatives will significantly enhance Dallas's commitment to inclusivity, dignity, and comprehensive support for all its citizens.

****1. The Crucial Role of an LGBTQ Senior Liaison****

LGBTQ seniors in Dallas constitute a distinctive demographic that faces unique challenges, necessitating specialized advocacy and support. The rationales for hiring an LGBTQ Senior Liaison are as follows:

Tailored Advocacy and Support:

Rationale: The LGBTQ Senior Liaison would ensure that the specific needs and challenges of LGBTQ seniors are met with a dedicated focus, tailored resources, and expert navigation of complex services. This role is crucial for bridging gaps in service provision that are often overlooked for this demographic.

Example: The liaison could provide personalized assistance in accessing healthcare, housing, and social services, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for LGBTQ seniors.

Mitigating Social Isolation:

Rationale: Many LGBTQ seniors experience heightened social isolation as friends and chosen family members pass away. This demographic often lacks traditional family support structures, making social connections and community ties critical for their mental and emotional well-being.

Example: The liaison can organize social events, support groups, and community activities tailored to LGBTQ seniors, fostering a sense of belonging and combating loneliness.

Direct Representation and Advocacy:

Rationale: A dedicated liaison ensures that the voices of LGBTQ seniors are amplified within city governance, directly addressing their specific needs and concerns.

Example: The liaison can represent LGBTQ seniors in policy discussions, advocating for inclusive policies and practices that protect and promote their rights.

****2. The Importance of a City-Funded LGBTQ Senior Center****

Creating a city-funded LGBTQ Senior Center is imperative for providing a centralized, safe, and inclusive environment where LGBTQ seniors can access essential resources and support. The rationales include:

Creating a Safe and Welcoming Environment:

Rationale: A dedicated center offers LGBTQ seniors a sanctuary where they can engage in social, cultural, and educational activities within an environment that respects and celebrates their identities.

Example: Programs can include health workshops, legal clinics, and recreational activities tailored to the interests and needs of LGBTQ seniors, fostering community connection and support.

Addressing Service Gaps:

Rationale: LGBTQ seniors often face significant barriers in accessing services that are knowledgeable and respectful of their unique needs. A centralized LGBTQ Senior Center would address these disparities by providing specialized resources.

Example: The center can offer tailored services such as mental health counseling, financial planning, and legal advice aimed at addressing the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ seniors.

****3. Historical Context and Dire Need****

The urgency for these initiatives is underscored by the historical context of stigma and discrimination faced by the LGBTQ boomer generation:

****Legacy of Discrimination: **** LGBTQ seniors grew up in an era marked by intense societal stigma, discrimination, and punitive beliefs. This history has profoundly affected their interactions and trust in mainstream services.

****Social Isolation: **** As friends and chosen family members pass away or move into nursing homes, LGBTQ seniors are left with few social structures. They often lack children, a common source of support for their heterosexual counterparts, heightening their vulnerability and need for dedicated community spaces.

****Diverse Integration: **** LGBTQ seniors in Dallas span across every neighborhood and council district, representing a range of income levels, ethnicities, religions, and immigration status. Their varied contributions enrich our community, making it essential to prioritize their well-being.

****4. Challenges in Resource Accessibility****

Navigating resources is especially challenging for LGBTQ seniors due to:

****Lack of Inclusive Services: **** Many existing services fail to adequately address or understand the specific needs of LGBTQ individuals.

****Fear of Discrimination: **** Historical and ongoing discrimination leads many LGBTQ seniors to avoid services for fear of negative experiences.

****Overlooked Demographic: **** LGBTQ seniors often remain invisible in broader discussions about senior care, leading to a significant gap in tailored support.

****5. Business and Community Impact****

As businesses relocate to Dallas, they will also be relocating their LGBTQ employees as well. By providing comprehensive support for LGBTQ seniors, Dallas can:

****Showcase Inclusivity: **** Demonstrate that Dallas prioritizes inclusivity, making it an attractive location for businesses and prospective residents.

****Support Employee Well-being: **** Ensure that resources are available for LGBTQ employees as they establish their lives and eventually retire in Dallas, reinforcing a supportive and inclusive community culture.

****6. A Human Rights Imperative****

Addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ seniors is fundamentally a human rights issue:

****Equitable Access: **** Ensuring that every senior, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, has access to safe, respectful, and competent care and support.

****Dignity and Respect: **** Upholding the dignity and respect of all seniors by recognizing and addressing their unique challenges and contributions.

****Conclusion****

Prioritizing the appointment of an LGBTQ Senior Liaison and establishing a city-funded LGBTQ Senior Center are strategic actions that underscore Dallas's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and comprehensive support. These initiatives will significantly improve the lives of LGBTQ seniors and demonstrate Dallas's dedication to being a city that values and supports all its residents.

We strongly urge the council to consider and adopt these recommendations, recognizing the profound and lasting impact they will have on the well-being and quality of life of LGBTQ seniors in Dallas.

Respectfully submitted,

Portia M. Cantrell, RN

Senior Affairs Commissioner, District 2

SAC Minority Member