

RECEIVED

2022 JAN 28 AM 10:34

## Memorandum

CITY SECRETARY  
DALLAS, TEXAS

CITY OF DALLAS

Date: January 27, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **2021 Senior Affairs Commission Annual Report**

Attached is the Annual Report for calendar year 2021 for the Senior Affairs Commission, as required by Chapter 8 of the Dallas City Code.

-The members of the Senior Affairs Commission have been pleased to be of service to the City for the past year. Thank you for providing each of us with the opportunity to serve.

Regards,

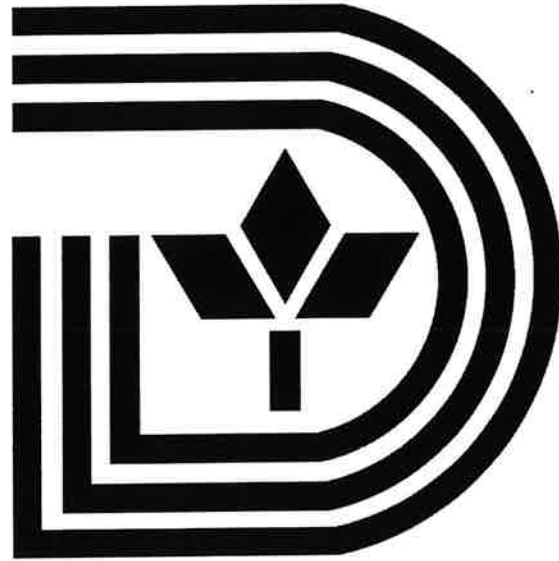
A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "J. Peter Kline".

J. Peter Kline (Jan 27, 2022 06:03 CST)

J. Peter Kline, Chair  
Senior Affairs Commission

Attachment – Senior Affairs Commission 2021 Annual Report

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary  
Jessica Galleshaw, Director, Office of Community Care  
Candy Coblyn, Program Administrator, Office of Community Care  
Ana Y. Camacho, Supervisor, OCC Senior Services  
Jon Fortune, Assistant City Manager  
Irwin "Bill" Gart, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC) Vice Chair; SAC Commissioner, District 11  
Carmen Arana, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 1  
Portia Cantrell, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 2  
Verna G. Mitchell, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 3  
Feliz Jarvis, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 5  
Marilyn Daniels, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 6  
Marian Alfeia Williams, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 7  
Debbie Diann Austin, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 8  
Beverly Parson White, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 9  
Jeri Baker, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 10  
Karen Roberts, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 14  
John A. Welsh, Senior Affairs Commission (SAC), District 15



# **City of Dallas**

## **Boards and Commissions Annual Report**

### **Senior Affairs Commission**

#### **2021 Annual Report**

**January through December 2021**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|   | <u>Page</u> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Mission and Purpose .....</b>                          | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>Current Members of the Commission.....</b>             | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>The Senior Population .....</b>                        | <b>5</b>    |
| <b>Resources for Dallas Seniors .....</b>                 | <b>6</b>    |
| <b>Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic.....</b>               | <b>7</b>    |
| <b>Commission Work During 2021.....</b>                   | <b>8</b>    |
| <b>Commission Goals and Plan for 2022.....</b>            | <b>9</b>    |
| <b>Observations and Recommendations.....</b>              | <b>10</b>   |
| <br><b>Appendices:</b>                                    |             |
| <b>APPENDIX 1 - Commission Subcommittees .....</b>        | <b>11</b>   |
| <b>APPENDIX II - SAC 2021-22 Funding Priorities .....</b> | <b>12</b>   |

## **SENIOR AFFAIRS COMMISSION 2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **MISSION**

The mission and purpose of the Senior Affairs Commission is set forth in the Dallas City Code. The Commission is an advisory body to the Mayor, City Council and City Manager and is authorized to:

- Recommend the role of the City of Dallas and the Commission in ensuring the provision of services to the elderly
- Advise the City Council, as requested, on elderly issues
- Provide access for citizen comment on elderly issues
- Assist the city in the identification of programs for the elderly that are needed in the community
- Perform other duties assigned by the City Council

### **CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION**

|                    |                                       |                   |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>District 01</b> | <b>Carmen Arana</b>                   |                   |
| <b>District 02</b> | <b>Portia Cantrell</b>                |                   |
| <b>District 03</b> | <b>Verna Mitchell</b>                 |                   |
| <b>District 04</b> | <b>VACANT</b>                         |                   |
| <b>District 05</b> | <b>Feliz Jarvis</b>                   |                   |
| <b>District 06</b> | <b>Marilyn Daniels</b>                |                   |
| <b>District 07</b> | <b>Marion Williams</b>                |                   |
| <b>District 08</b> | <b>Debbie Austin</b>                  |                   |
| <b>District 09</b> | <b>Beverly White</b>                  |                   |
| <b>District 10</b> | <b>Jeri Baker</b>                     |                   |
| <b>District 11</b> | <b>Irwin "Bill" Gart</b>              | <b>VICE CHAIR</b> |
| <b>District 12</b> | <b>VACANT</b>                         |                   |
| <b>District 13</b> | <b>Peter Kline</b>                    | <b>CHAIR</b>      |
| <b>District 14</b> | <b>Karen Roberts</b>                  |                   |
| <b>District 15</b> | <b>Fred Welsh (Mayor's Appointee)</b> |                   |

**THE SENIOR POPULATION**

The current population of the City of Dallas is estimated to be 1.38 million people, of which 159,637 are senior citizens aged 65 and older, about 12 percent of the total. In the past ten years, the City’s senior population has grown by more than 50 percent, as compared to total population growth of 15 percent. Senior citizens are the fastest growing segment of the City of Dallas population, and account for 30 percent of the city-wide population increase since 2010.

**CITY OF DALLAS  
2019 SENIOR POPULATION (Age 65 & Older) BY CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT**

| <b><u>Council District</u></b> | <b>Total Population</b> | <b>Senior Population</b> | <b>% District Population</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 01                             | 90,478                  | 8,449                    | 9%                           |
| 02                             | 117,539                 | 8,918                    | 8%                           |
| 03                             | 99,923                  | 10,974                   | 11%                          |
| 04                             | 89,066                  | 13,171                   | 15%                          |
| 05                             | 88,041                  | 7,127                    | 8%                           |
| 06                             | 102,319                 | 7,179                    | 7%                           |
| 07                             | 90,058                  | 10,508                   | 12%                          |
| 08                             | 95,597                  | 10,241                   | 11%                          |
| 09                             | 94,751                  | 13,104                   | 14%                          |
| 10                             | 100,160                 | 12,251                   | 12%                          |
| 11                             | 98,707                  | 14,432                   | 15%                          |
| 12                             | 96,012                  | 12,037                   | 13%                          |
| 13                             | 103,495                 | 17,514                   | 17%                          |
| 14                             | 112,365                 | 11,263                   | 10%                          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                   | <b>1,378,651</b>        | <b>159,637</b>           | <b>12%</b>                   |

*Note: The sum of the individual districts may not add to totals because of rounding  
Source: City of Dallas Website*

The age breakdown of our city-wide senior population is as follows: 19,101 (12 %) are age 85 or older; 44,067 (28%) are between the ages 75 to 84; and 96,469 (60%) are between the ages 65 to 74. Women outnumber men in every age group, and represent 65% of those 85 and older. This is particularly significant since average incomes for women is lower than for men, indicating a higher probable need for social services as they age.

## **RESOURCES FOR DALLAS SENIORS**

Dallas senior citizens benefit from a variety of targeted programs that are funded and administered through the federal, state, county and city levels of government and the generosity of private citizens through Dallas non-profit and volunteer organizations. It must be noted that nationally only one percent of philanthropic contributions go toward aging-related initiatives (according to the Silver Century Foundation) and seniors depend primarily on government funded programs for assistance.

The primary programs at the federal level are Social Security and Medicare, and funding provided to states to implement federal Older Americans legislation. In Dallas, the Texas Department of Health and Human Services channels state and federal funding for seniors primarily to the Greater Dallas Community Council's Dallas Area Agency on Aging (DAAA) to serve seniors throughout Dallas County. Services range from benefits counselling, minor home repair, medical transportation, food and other needs. The DAAA contracts with local non-profits and Dallas County to execute the delivery of some of these services. For example, they contract with Dallas County to execute the delivery of congregate meal services to seniors, which the county supplements with additional funding. The City of Dallas provides critical municipal services which benefit the senior population, as well as providing targeted programs for senior citizens.

The City's targeted programs are provided by City staff or by contract with other parties include:

- Office of Community Care / Senior Services Program
- DART Rider Assistance Program (RAP) / Senior Medical Transportation Program
- Senior Dental Health Care Program
- Senior Ombudsman Program
- Dallas Public Library Adult Services
- Park and Recreation Department / Active Senior Adult Programs (ASAP)
- Senior Training and Employment Program

In addition, in 2019, the Dallas City Council approved the Age Friendly Dallas Plan, which set forth several domains of importance to our aging population, including:

- Outdoor Spaces and buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Communications and Information
- Social Participation and Inclusion
- Civic Participation and employment
- Community Support and Health Services

The Senior Affairs Commission organized its committee structure around the domains that were set forth in Age Friendly Dallas Plan.

### **IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic adverse impact on the health and welfare of our senior population. According to Dallas County Health and Human Services Statistics through December 2021, seniors over the age of 65 have accounted for about 9 percent of the reported cases, 35 percent of the hospitalizations and 62 percent of reported deaths from Covid-19. The increased health risks for seniors, coupled with restrictions imposed by state and local governments have exacerbated the problems with isolation and lack of socialization opportunities for most seniors.

Almost all governmental and non-profit organizations that provide services for seniors have been forced to suspend or cut back their normal operations for most of 2021. Staff cuts and furloughs have been widespread, and most remaining staff have been working remotely. Almost all service providers have embraced technology and tried to continue serving their client base virtually using Zoom or other virtual meeting sites, and by calling seniors on the telephone to help mitigate their isolation. The closure of Dallas churches, libraries and rec centers impacted seniors significantly, taking away the most commonly used gathering places. Even as they reopened, there have been capacity limitations on most activities.

The number of seniors served through virtually all City programs remains significantly below the pre-pandemic service levels. Thus, even without considering the growth in the senior population, the backlog created by the pandemic will likely exceed the capacity of service providers for the foreseeable future.

As COVID-19 cases declined in the spring, there was optimism that normal operations could be expected by the fall. Then the resurgence of cases caused by the Delta Variant put things on hold again and now the Omicron Variant is running rampant. The exact timing of when life can return to normal is still not determinable. However, it seems reasonable to expect that the Senior Affairs Commission will be able to resume in-person meetings at some point in 2022 and that most City services to seniors will get reinstated to pre-pandemic levels. According to Dallas County Health and Human Services, 96 percent of Dallas County seniors have had at least one dose of the vaccine and 62 percent of all County residents age 18 or older are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The recent approval to vaccinate children age five and older is expected to significantly improve the percentage of fully vaccinated residents, and helping to achieve herd immunity.

**COMMISSION WORK DURING 2021**

The Senior Affairs Commission conducted 11 monthly meetings (no meeting in July) in 2021. In accordance with City and State policies and regulations, Commission meetings were conducted as REMOTE WEBEX MEETINGS from January through August, and as HYBRID MEETINGS from September through December. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the Senior Affairs Commission has not had an in-person meeting since February 2020.

Over the past eighteen months, everyone's personal and work lives have been anything but normal. Working remotely and conducting meetings by Zoom or WEBEX has changed the dynamics of the Senior Affairs Commission and has made it more difficult to assess community needs and program effectiveness. Throughout 2021, the Commission's primary focus has been on monitoring the City's efforts to serve seniors in the midst of the pandemic.

Early in the year we were briefed by the Department of Public Works (DPW) on the City's accessibility initiative and the development of the Sidewalk Master Plan. The Senior Affairs Commission encouraged DPW to reach out to older individuals regarding the plan and its priorities. We were invited to fill a seat on the Sidewalk Advisory Group and Commissioner White agreed to fill the seat.

At the height of the pandemic, the City of Dallas Office of Emergency Management (OEM) provided the SAC with a virtual presentation on special plans for COVID-19 vaccinations for senior citizens. At the time, demand for the vaccine outweighed available supply and efforts were underway to facilitate distribution of the vaccine to vulnerable seniors. Updates were also provided on the establishment of vaccination centers at Fair Park and at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center.

We were briefed by the Dallas Police Department on the incidence of crime against senior citizens in Dallas. Based on crime statistics presented, it appears that senior citizens are at no greater risk of crime victimization than the broader Dallas population.

Dallas Fire Rescue (DFR) representatives briefed the SAC on all of the department's senior programming. Their focus is on education and risk prevention, and their programs can be accessed in person or virtually.

A representative of the Community Council of Greater Dallas (CCGD) updated the SAC on Access and Assistance Services for Senior Citizens that are provided through their agency. While many of their programs had to be suspended or modified because of the pandemic, they have worked to develop alternative methods to deliver services. It was clear that the Senior Affairs Commission should be briefed regularly by this important agency.



In addition to the monthly briefings regarding activity levels and program status by the OCC/Senior Services staff, the SAC has begun to receive regular updates from the Housing Department, Dallas Public Library System and Parks and Recreation Departments. All of these departments provide vital services to seniors and they have found ways to continue to reach out to older citizens even as traditional services were suspended.

The Senior Affairs Commission Committees have continued to meet periodically throughout the year. All committees have an opportunity to report to the full Commission at our monthly meetings. See Appendix I for the committee structure and membership.

The Commission's ad hoc committee on program funding priorities conducted research and reviewed information received throughout the year. Based on this, the committee prepared a report (See Appendix II) regarding funding priorities for the city's FY 21/22 budget, which was presented to, discussed and adopted by the Senior Affairs Commission. The adopted recommendations were forwarded to the Mayor, City Council and City Manager prior to the City Manager's budget submission to Council.

### **COMMISSION GOALS AND WORK FOR 2022**

Based on the assumed return to normalcy, the Senior Affairs Commission has set forth the following goals and work plan for 2022:

- Set in motion an initiative to profile the senior population in Dallas. The release of new 2020 census data should provide substantial new information concerning the size and demographics of the senior population in each City Council District and for the City as a whole.
- Attempt to procure some pro bono research assistance to identify the most common problems and issues that confront our senior population. We hope to be able to identify and quantify the biggest issues and determine if there are significant differences between Council Districts.
- Review the legislation passed and signed into law during the 2021 legislative session to assess the anticipated impact on the senior population.
- Continue to monitor existing City services and programs for seniors. Begin to assess the gaps between service volumes and the overall needs in the community.
- Challenge City staff to find ways to increase participation in the current programs being offered to seniors.

- Request briefings from a variety of non-city agencies and non-profits that focus on senior services. The goal is to have knowledge and an understanding of the range of senior services available in our community.
- Organize a briefing from representatives of the LGBTQ community to explore new ways to publicize senior programs to this constituency and to identify whether there is a need for special activities and/or programs for LGBTQ seniors.
- Identify other community needs that are not being met through existing programs.

### **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the past ten years, the number of Dallas senior citizens has grown by approximately 55,000 people, more than 50 percent increase, making it the fastest growing segment of the city's population. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for targeted senior resources has outstripped the growth in governmental and non-profit budgets for these services. The pandemic has exacerbated the resource deficit by severely cutting back on available services for seniors because it was unsafe to operate the programs.

Seniors benefit from many of the routine services provided by numerous City departments in the ordinary course of business. In addition, there are targeted senior programs and resources not only through the Office of Community Care, but through numerous city departments including Dallas Public Library System, Parks and Recreation, Housing, Police and Fire Departments and others. There is no doubt that the various services and programs that the City of Dallas provides are very valuable to the seniors who get served.

Over the past two years the Senior Affairs Commission has devoted much of its agenda to identify and learn about senior programming offered through the Office of Community Care and numerous other departments. It became clear that there is inadequate coordination between various City departments, and that both internal and external communications about senior programming are fragmented and inefficient.

One in every six adults in the city of Dallas is a senior citizen. Given the significance of the senior constituency, it is surprising that no single City executive has responsibility for assessing needs, coordinating the City's response to those needs, communicating available resources to senior citizens, and evaluating the efficacy of the programs offered.

The City needs a comprehensive communications strategy to develop effective ways to alert the senior community to the resources that are available. While digital communications are the least expensive ways to alert senior citizens to activities, programs and resources, the senior population is frequently less proficient in using it. Those who need help the most are least likely to know about available resources and how to access them.

## APPENDIX I

### SENIOR AFFAIRS COMMISSION COMMITTEES

#### Transportation and Outdoor Spaces Subcommittee

- City of Dallas OCC Staff: James Ramirez, Caseworker II
- Members:
  - Cannon Flowers (D2) (Resigned February 26, 2021)
  - Ja’net Huling (D7) Chair (Resigned Sept 30, 2021)
  - J. Peter Kline (D13)
  - Beverly White (D9)
  - Bill Gart (D11)
  - Jan Hart Black (ex-officio) (Resigned Sept. 30, 2021)
- Meeting dates:
  - May 20, 2021
  - Sept. 21, 2021
- Goals of the Subcommittee:
  - Align the Transportation goals with the “Age Friendly Plan” as much as possible.
  - Monitor Progress of the City of Dallas Sidewalk Plan and its inclusion of safety and accessibility for Senior residents of the city.
  - Explore ways to align the current and various available transportation programs for seniors needing transportation.
- Summary of speakers & discussions:
  - Discussed memos regarding the SMTP (Senior Medical Transportation Program) within the City of Dallas Age Friendly Plan and the goals within the plan. Also discussed plan to review the status report pulled by the Office of Community Care as it relates to Transportation and Outdoor Spaces.
  - Discussed monitoring the Sidewalk Master Plan by the City. Commissioner Beverly White is on that advisory board and would be keep the Subcommittee abreast of suggestions and decisions made during the next subcommittee meeting after Sept. 2021.
  - Commissioner Kline discussed exploring ways on how to communicate the various available transportation programs to the senior community needing transportation services. Commissioner Kline also asked “how” DART plays a role in the SMTP and the funding within the current contract with DART, with the goal to minimize costs to the COD.

- Clifton Cravens from MY RIDE: Presented their program and the qualifications for seniors to qualify for the program. Discussed the door-to-door vs. curb-to-curb service part of their program and how Lyft is used to transport the seniors for their requested rides. Shared the MY RIDE guidebook via email and hardcopy.
- Noah Berlin from DART: Presented the DART RAP Program and how seniors qualify for their program. Discussed the current SMTP and the number of participants, qualifications, and how seniors “accounts” work regarding balances from month to month.
- SAC Chair Black discussed looking at how the City of Dallas is coordinating with other agencies to bridge gaps in meeting the transportation needs of city seniors.
- Discussed inviting DART representative to update the Transportation committee on the status of the SMTP contract.
- Covid impact discussion: Discussed the COVID shutdown effects to the City and its impact on the senior population.

### **Social, Civic Engagement, Isolation Subcommittee**

- City of Dallas OCC Staff: Margaret “Lynn” Jenkinson, Caseworker II
- Members:
  - Debbie Austin (D8), Chair
  - Jeri Baker (D10)
  - Verna Mitchell (D13)
  - Sara Wick D14 (Resigned 7/30/21)
  - Jan Hart Black (ex-officio) (Resigned 9/30/21)
- Meeting Dates
  - May 18, 2021
  - August 17, 2021
  - October 19, 2021
- Goals of Social, Civic Engagement, Isolation Subcommittee did not change in 2021:
  - To advocate for city programs that minimize barriers to senior isolation
  - To promote senior Inclusion and reduce isolation through information-gathering and advocacy for increased senior programming and participation
  - To compile an inventory of existing programs and events offered to seniors in the City of Dallas and quantify participation
  - Invite speakers from various city departments whose programs impact seniors
  - Explore avenues to disseminate information to all seniors and encourage increased participation in programs
  - To identify gaps in senior services and to develop strategies and partnerships
- Summary of Discussions:
  - May 18, 2021 - Guest Speaker: Almas Muscatwalla, Executive Director, Faith Forward Dallas at Thanks-Giving Square
    - Discussed programs and initiatives targeting senior hunger and isolation

- Purpose of Program: to bridge gap between city and community by getting engaged in public issues and advocating for justice and compassion
- Civic Engagement: Multi-task force created: Members stand together despite their differences.
- Thanks-Giving Square became moral voice of the community for the marginalized, for seniors, a beacon of hope for the community.
- Chair Austin partnered with Faith Forward and City of Dallas Parks and Recreation to email letters and mail cards of hope and gratitude to isolated seniors.
- Focus of Social, Civic Engagement, Isolation Subcommittee in 2021: to reach out, connect and communicate with isolated seniors during the pandemic
- August 17, 2021 - Guest Speakers: Jasmine Kelley, Senior Program Coordinator, City of Dallas Park and Recreation Department; Heather Lowe, Adult Services Administrator, Dallas Public Library; Alexandria McLemore, Volunteer Coordinator, Dallas Public Library
  - Alexandria McLemore and Heather Lowe presented an overview of the Senior Phone Pals Program designed to train volunteers to connect to and communicate with isolated seniors.
  - Jasmine Kelley was invited to speak about the senior programs at Singing Hills Recreation Center which opened in December 2020, the Senior Program Division, primary goals and objectives, Senior Activity Centers, special events, special interest classes, wellness activities, and senior services.
  - Purpose: To partner with city departments to provide helpful information to seniors at the recreation centers
- October 19, 2021 - Guest Speaker: Jerri Locke, M.S., Director of Healthy Aging, Methodist Health System, Dallas was invited to speak about Methodist Generations, Senior Services.
  - Ms. Locke differentiated between social isolation versus social distancing, loneliness versus being alone, health risks and causes of isolation, social and physical distancing, and quarantine.
  - Purpose: Speaker provided informational research on programs and services that help seniors become socially connected, exercises and meditation to improve mental and physical health.
  - Methodist Generations offers special events, educational opportunities, and exercise programs for seniors.

**Safety, Health, Community Support**

- City of Dallas OCC Staff: Myckycle Hart, Caseworker II
- Members:
  - Verna Mitchell (D3) - Chair
  - Jeri Baker (D10)
  - Marilyn Daniels (D6)
  - Zelene Lovitt (D12)
  - Jan Hart Black (ex-officio) (Resigned 9/30/21)
- Meeting Dates:
  - 10/27/20
  - 1/11/21
  - 3/20/21
  - 6/24/21
  - 9/20/21
- Goals: Looks into health, public safety, and nursing home programs
- Summary: The committee had several speakers:
  - Lynda Ender, Age Director-Senior Source – COVID awareness discussion.
  - Janecia Holley, Public Health Educator- Dallas County Health & Humans Services (COVID In Dallas)
  - Chair Verna Mitchell - Texas Update on COVID -19
  - Chief Eddie García, Dallas Police Department - Provided data of criminal activity in the City of Dallas.
  - Renae Perry, Chief Operating Office-Senior Source – Discussed how COVID-19 has affected seniors

**Housing, Communication Subcommittee**

- City of Dallas OCC Staff: Myckycle Hart, Caseworker II
- Members:
  - Irwin “Bill” Gart (D11) - Chair
  - Carmen Arana (D1)
  - Portia Cantrell (D2)
  - Beverly White (D9)
  - Zelene Lovitt (D12)
  - Jan Hart Black (ex-officio) (Resigned 9/30/21)
- Meeting Dates:
  - 1/19/21
  - 2/16/21
  - 3/16/21
  - 5/18/21

- 9/21/21
- **Goals:** Monitors the city's senior housing programs, particularly home repair programs and their availability to seniors.
- **Summary:** The committee had the Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Department update on their programs each meeting by Thor Erickson and Aqwana Long.

## APPENDIX II

### CITY OF DALLAS SENIOR AFFAIRS COMMISSION RECOMMENDED FUNDING PRIORITIES FISCAL YEARS 2021-22 AND 2022-23

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

In 2021 the City of Dallas population is estimated at 1.34 million people, of which 10.2% are senior citizens (according to [www.worldpopulationreview.com](http://www.worldpopulationreview.com) ). While the official 2020 census data is not yet available, recent census estimates indicated that 14.2% of Dallas residents aged 65 or older live below the poverty level.

Seniors are an important part of our community and the City has historically recognized that through funding specific senior programming through the years, including:

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

In addition, 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



### Covid-19 Impact of the Senior Community

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the Senior population and on the City of Dallas programming that is targeted toward this vulnerable group. Based on Covid-19 statistics compiled by Dallas County (City of Dallas residents account for 48% of total cases in Dallas County), the infection rate for Seniors was about the same as their percentage of the population. However, the severity of the disease was much worse among Seniors who contracted the disease.

- There have been almost 30,000 confirmed cases among the 65+ population.
- 37% of all people who were hospitalized were 65 or older.
- 67% of all people who died from Covid-19 were 65 or older.
- Residents and staff of senior living facilities account for about 2.3% of all Covid-19 cases and 20% of all Covid-19 deaths.

One of the most dramatic pandemic impacts on Seniors has been isolation and lack of socialization caused by government-mandated regulations as well as self-imposed limitations on interactions with family and friends in an effort to keep seniors safe.

As more and more citizens have been vaccinated, the Covid-19 case count, hospitalizations and deaths have declined and governmental restrictions have been relaxed. It is reasonable to expect that in fiscal year 2021-22 life for Dallas' senior population will begin to return to normal and that in-person activities will be made available.

### Covid-19 Impact on City Services to Seniors

No one could have imagined the scope and duration of the Covid-19 pandemic on the local, state, national and global communities. In Dallas, only essential in-person services were maintained for most of the past twelve months. State and County mandates severely restricted the use of City facilities and the scope of services that could be provided. Normal activities for everyone, and these restrictions were particularly hard on our senior citizens.

The SAC commends the City staff and contractors on how they adapted to the "new normal" and continued to serve senior citizens with innovative virtual in spite of facility closures and staffing reductions. Some examples of new approaches include:

- **The OCC Senior Services Division** has traditionally engaged in numerous events that targeted the senior population to help build awareness of City services and assistance to seniors. The call volume at the Senior Help Line (214) 670-5227 usually increases immediately after these events. As virtual events and Zoom calls replaced in-person events, the OCC staff, working from home, kept the help line active by partnering with the non-profit agencies to reach senior citizens in new and different ways.

- **The Dallas Public Libraries** not only provide access to reading materials, information and traditional services, they have also served as a socialization resource and location for group activities. Over 7,000 seniors over the age of 70 typically use their library cards each year. When the pandemic caused the library system to close and many library employees were furloughed, managers and the remaining staff accessed the contact information for the senior citizens who actively use the system and initiated telephone calls to check on them and ask if they need help with anything. The initial goal was to provide relief from isolation, but as the year progressed, they also found new ways to provide library services to the senior population virtually, including e-books, videos and book clubs.
- **The Parks and Recreation Department** has 43 recreation centers located throughout the city. When the pandemic forced the closure of all of these facilities, and a significant portion of the staff was furloughed, managers made phone calls to seniors who were regular users, to check in and to provide information on how to engage in exercise programs virtually. They also introduced outdoor small-group exercise activities. They also worked with the County and other providers to utilize some of the facilities for drive-thru pick-up of meals and other supplies.
- **The Senior Ombudsman Program** was impacted significantly when visitor access to nursing homes and senior living facilities was prohibited for several months. The City's contractor, The Senior Source, responded by maintaining frequent communications with facility managers, calling residents who have cell phones to check in and to respond to complaints, and by communicating with family members to identify problems and concerns. In addition, they asked for donations of used smart phones and tablets in order to provide devices to residents who did not have a way to communicate with their ombudsman or with family members. Fortunately, restrictions on in-person visitation have been lifted and the program is functioning more normally.

While many of the initiatives during the Covid-19 crisis were created as stop-gap measures to provide minimum service levels to the community, the SAC recommends that every department evaluate whether they should be continued as city functions return to normal operations. It is very possible that many of these practices can contribute to both reach and efficiency in the delivery of services to our senior population.

#### **Funding Priorities for Fiscal Year 2021-22**

The SAC is aware of the City's budgetary pressures that have resulted from unforeseen expenses and disruptions in revenues during the pandemic. However, the SAC believes that Dallas' senior population has been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 and that funding priorities for fiscal year 2021-22 should place special emphasis on helping the senior population recover from the damage done by the pandemic.

- **Continued Covid Vaccination Support.** We hope that the County and City will be responsive in a timely and convenient manner to needs for vaccination boosters for the senior population.
- **OCC Outreach, Information and Referral.** Continue full staffing and program support at pre-pandemic levels. Continue to look for innovative ways to publicize the Senior Help Line as an important resource for seniors who need assistance. Maintain the new relationships and joint initiatives with other agencies that are focused on serving the senior communities.
- **Library and Park and Recreation Programs.** One of the more significant impacts of the pandemic has been isolation and lack of socialization opportunities for seniors. The importance of our libraries and recreation centers as gathering places and sites for targeted senior programming has never been more apparent. A return to full staffing and a continuation of both in person and online programs should be a top priority for the City.
- **Senior DART Rides Program.** During the pandemic, many seniors postponed routine medical appointments and did not venture out to shop. The limited use of the Dart Senior Rides Program reflected this. As life returns to normal, demand for transportation is expected to increase and this program should be maintained to accommodate these needs.
- **Minor Home Repair Program (CDBG).** The Housing Department has been working to simplify and standardize the application process for minor home repair assistance. After being shut down at the height of the pandemic, the Home Repair Program has been restarted and a significant number of projects are now underway. A new Minor Home Repair Program is being initiated and we are fully supportive of it.
- **Senior Dental Program.** This important service, provided by the City through a contract with Texas A&M, was disrupted during the pandemic and only emergency dental work was provided for several months. In the past, the service volume was limited by available facilities and a third site was recently added to serve South Dallas more effectively. The contract relationship with Texas A&M has been problematic, but has improved with new contractor personnel assigned. The SAC recommends continuation of this program at all 3 facilities, but the contract needs to be monitored closely.
- **Senior Ombudsman Supplement.** The fact that 20% of Covid-19 deaths were among senior living facility residents highlights the importance of oversight. The Ombudsman program did a remarkable job of maintaining contact with residents and their families during the ban on personal visitation during the pandemic. Volumes are expected to be back to normal in fiscal year 2021-22 and could increase as a result of post-pandemic

regulations. The SAC recommends that current funding levels be maintained and that future needs be evaluated.

- **Senior Training and Employment.** This program was suspended as a result of the pandemic. However, the need for supplemental income opportunities for senior citizens continues to exist. A new contract for training and employment is under development by the City and we look forward to its implementation and evaluation. We also suggest that effort be supplemented by job fair efforts. The SAC recommends evaluating these efforts and adjusting programming accordingly.
- **Sidewalk Plan.** The City has been supporting sidewalk replacement over the past several years. A Master Sidewalk Plan has been under development this year, and we support its funding and implementation in future years.

### **Funding Priorities for Fiscal Year 2023 and Beyond**

It now seems clear that as vaccination rates continue to increase, the Covid-19 pandemic will be brought under control during the upcoming fiscal year. Over the next twelve months, the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on Dallas' senior population will become apparent and it is likely that funding needs may be greater in fiscal year 2023 and beyond.

It will be very important to pay close attention to the responses from the over 65 population in the 2022 Dallas Citizen Survey. The senior population is the fastest growing population segment in Dallas. The SAC recommends that budget planning incorporate the goals and objectives of the Age-Friendly Dallas Plan and the new needs that arose from the pandemic.

We continue to encourage the City to partner and coordinate with the myriad of agencies serving city and county senior residents so that the maximum impact from public and private dollars may be achieved.