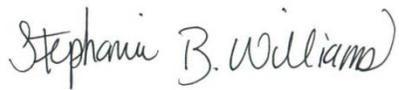


*Report on the Response of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to the Impact of the
Aging of Virginia's Population*

November 10, 2014

Pursuant to Code of Virginia §§ 2.2-5510 and 51.5-136, the Department of Historic Resources submits this report of its progress in addressing the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.

Submitted by:



Stephanie B. Williams, Deputy Director

Date 11/10/14

Designated agency official: Stephanie B. Williams
Deputy Director
Stephanie.williams@dhr.virginia.gov
804-482-6802

Executive Summary

The Department of Historic Resources serves as the State Historic Preservation Office with both state and federal mandates to guide public and private agencies, organizations and individuals in ways to identify, preserve, and use historic places as economic, educational and cultural assets.

The agency mission, programs and services target aging buildings and other historic places, not an aging population. Therefore, none of the agency's programs and services specifically target an aging population and the agency does not capture age and other demographic information about its customer base.

However, it is clear that many of the agency's customers are over 60 years old and many of its programs benefit an aging population. For example, almost 21% of the respondents to a recent preservation planning survey gave their age as over 65, and another 55.5% fell into the 40 to 64 year category. Many owners of historic properties are older as are the tourists who visit historic sites or become members of local historical societies and advocates for the preservation and active use of historic places in their communities.

These people are served by the agency on a regular basis as it helps them to learn more about the historic assets they own, to research and apply for registration of historic places or recognition of historic places, people, and events through historical highway markers, to learn about the history of the state or community and means of taking care of historic places (such as old family cemeteries), or to plan for the future of their historic homes and personal estate planning through donation of historic preservation easements. All of these are among the services that are important to the agency's broad customer base—and to members of our aging population in particular.

Perhaps the greatest issue is not the agency's impact on, or its ability to serve, an aging population but the impact of an aging population on the historic assets that are a fundamental aspect of Virginia's character, quality of life, and economy. As the older generation steps back from positions of decision-making power and younger family members inherit historic properties, those historic assets can be lost to short-term thinking. This issue was a major concern coming from recent public participation efforts. It is clear that, while the agency work to identify, preserve, and encourage reuse of historic assets is of great importance to its aging customer base, that same age group believes it is equally or more important for the Department of Historic Resources and its preservation partners to develop strategies that will inform and engage younger generations a well.

Agency Description

The mission of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources is to foster, encourage, and support the stewardship and use of Virginia's significant architectural, archaeological, and historic resources as valuable assets for the economic, educational, social, and cultural benefit of citizens and communities. The agency's role is primarily to provide accurate information and professional guidance to both the public and private sectors on the full range of historic preservation issues.

It accomplishes this mission through a series of programs that:

- Identify historic resources,
- Evaluate and list significant resources on the Virginia Landmarks Register and nominate them to the National Register of Historic Places,
- Accept and manage preservation easements on significant resources,
- Provide technical assistance and certification to projects that rehabilitate historic buildings in accordance with state and national standards and thus qualify for either (or both) state and federal income tax credits,
- Provide technical review and guidance to thousands of projects on federal lands or that use federal funds, permits or licenses for their effect on significant historic resources and how to mitigate those effects where needed, (This includes highway projects, cell towers, major power lines, gas pipelines, community development projects and more.)
- Research, review, edit, and approve for placement historic highway markers,
- Provide funding and assistance to localities and non-profits for a wide range of preservation projects including survey, register, bricks-and-mortar restoration and rehabilitation, and battlefield preservation, and
- Develop, distribute and conduct a wide range of training and educational efforts that help public agencies, private organizations, owners of historic properties and private citizens understand what is historic, why it is important, and how to care for these fragile and irreplaceable assets.

Demand for these services is high for an agency with fewer than 40 administrative and professional staff. The Department of Historic Resources manages nearly 600 historic preservation easements (and growing), completes over 4,000 review actions on public projects, and assists in 150 to 200 rehabilitation projects that in turn leverage between \$200 and \$500 million dollars into Virginia's economy each year. With no dedicated education staff, agency sponsored and cosponsored training and educational programs still reach between 15,000 and 20,000 people each year – and hundreds of thousands are reached through exhibits displaying artifacts from agency archaeological collections. These figures represent only a part of the agency's role in helping Virginia's citizens and communities put their historic resources to work.

Information Requested

1. Agency actions to respond to the current and future impact of an aging population,

As a small agency, the department's planning efforts generally involve close listening to any and all customers without preference to age or other demographic factors. As a part of its ongoing statewide comprehensive planning/strategic planning efforts, the agency has recently conducted a statewide survey that for the first time captured data that could be readily analyzed by age groups. This survey can serve as a starting point for more systematic analysis of the historic preservation needs of an aging population.

Attendees at six regional planning forums held during August and September of 2014 indicated that, for the sake of continuing interest and understanding of what is at stake for Virginia as a whole, the agency and its preservation partners should focus on serving younger generations—particularly K-12 and young adults—rather than older generations.

Assistance from DARS could include a simple meeting or series of meetings to help both agencies understand whether or not and how the agency could serve Virginia's aging population better.

2. Agency services that are used primarily by older Virginians and the funding streams (types and amounts) that support those services.

None of the Department of Historic Resources services are used primarily by older Virginians. That said, several programs are more likely to attract a higher proportion of older Virginians among participants of all ages. These include lectures and educational programs conducted by the department or offered by department staff at events organized by other organizations. Older Virginians are particularly interested in programs such as the Virginia Landmarks Register, preservation easements, Historical Highway Markers, and agency cemetery workshops.

In the recent statewide survey, respondents over 65 generally represented caring citizens and history enthusiasts, members of historic societies, historic property owners and both active and retired preservation professionals. Just over 98% considered historic preservation to be a vital part of Virginia's future (compared to an overall 97.5%). This group cited the most important benefit for historic preservation as leaving a legacy for future generations. It had the greatest concern for the protection of older cemeteries (55%). While the responses generally paralleled the overall averages, the over-65 group was the only one in which "historic preservation" beat out "education" as the most important issue for their communities and in which significantly more men (61.9%) responded than women (36.6%).

There are no funding streams targeting an older audience.

3. Current agency programs specifically designed to serve older Virginians.

None of the Department of Historic Resources services are specifically designed to serve older Virginians. Several department programs do, however, serve the needs of an aging population.

Education: While the agency does not maintain statistics on the age of people using such services, older Virginians represent an important segment of private researchers using the department's archives on over 200,000 historic properties around the state and of the audience for department sponsored or cosponsored educational programs and exhibits.

Housing: The department manages a program offering income tax credits for rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings. Such projects are conducted by private sector developers with guidance from the department preservation professionals. Among the kinds of projects that this program supports is the reuse of older buildings – including former schools, offices, and industrial buildings – as affordable housing and/or housing for the elderly.

Accessibility: Standards and guidelines used by the department specifically address issues such as accessibility as a part of projects eligible to receive rehabilitation tax credits, in agency review and guidance to housing, commercial, and other projects using federal funds, permits, or licenses, and for changes requested by owners to properties under historic preservation easements held by the Commonwealth. The agency makes every effort to ensure that venues for educational programs or business meetings are accessible as needed.

4. Agency ability to meet service demands of older Virginians. for the services listed above? If there are any instances where the demand for services exceeds your agency's ability to meet the demand, please indicate the service and the extent of the unmet demand. Also, if your agency maintains waiting lists for services, please provide this information, including the waiting list numbers for each service.

The agency has no data to distinguish service demands from older Virginians as distinct from those of other segments of the population.

5. Number of persons who received services from the agency in each of the past five state fiscal years (FY 2010 through FY2014) who fell into the following age ranges: 60-64; 65-74; 75-84; and 85 and older. If your agency lacks specific information about the numbers of older Virginians it serves but has other evidence indicating that it is serving more or fewer older Virginians than it has in the past, please describe the basis for that estimation.

The Department does not maintain age-based information on persons who receive services from the agency. In a recent survey to assess the highest issues and priorities affecting preservation and use of historic places in Virginia, 20.9% of the 1019 respondents to date were age 65 or older and 55.5% were between 40 and 64 years old.

6. Regional variation in services or funding.

Simply due to size of the agency and distance from Richmond and/or regional offices in Newport News, Stephens City, and Salem, all agency services are less available in Southwest Virginia, Southside communities, Eastern Shore, and Northern Neck for communities and citizens of all ages. There is no difference in services to older Virginians.

7. Anticipated changing impact to agency services, funding streams or policies over the next five to 10 years due to an aging population.

As both Virginia's population and building stock age over the next 5 to 10 years, the Department of Historic Resources envisions an ever increasing demand on its programs and services—such as the need for more affordable and senior-friendly accessible housing and demand for retrofitting residential structures to allow seniors to remain at home. Further, the understanding that as people age, they often develop an awareness of the value of older buildings, streetscapes, community landmarks, battlefields and other such resources and distress at what is being lost. This awareness will increase demand for identifying and registering historic places, and educational programs in general and training in how to take care of older buildings, cemeteries, and similar resources in particular. This trend is borne out in both statistical responses and comments in a recent survey, observations of the proliferations of and membership of social media groups focused on genealogy and “hometown” reminiscences.

Retired seniors seek out opportunities to visit historical places—and to introduce their grandchildren to the places that were part of their own growing up years. With more time on their hands, seniors place more demands on an agency such as the Department of Historic Resources to ensure that historic places are protected and well-maintained (often in ways that are outside of the agency's authority and resources), but are also sometimes more available to provide on-the-ground assistance as volunteers.

At this point we see fewer changes needed as to the type of services, manner of delivery or changes to policy than simply increased demand on staff and resources. It is hoped that as more and more of the aging population already has some familiarity with computer and web-based communication, that more and more of the agency's programs and information can be accessed digitally for all age groups—including seniors.

While the increase in an aging population results in more people who care about the historic places and landscape so essential to Virginia's future, it also means that decisions about those resources are falling to younger generations who have not yet necessarily gained the perspective needed to value those historic assets. This trend is perhaps of greater significance to the historic places which are the primary focus of the agency's programs and services. Participants in both the recent on-line survey and in six regional planning forums repeatedly emphasized the need for the agency and all preservation partners to refocus programs and services (particularly educational programs) to inform and engage younger generations.

8. Primary steps that should be taken at the federal, state, or local levels to meet the future demands of older Virginians and to make services delivery more effective and efficient.

This question is outside of the mission and expertise of the Department of Historic Resources.

9. Extent to which the Department of Historic Resources provides “customer-oriented” publications and websites that are designed to be “senior-friendly.”

Within the available resources, the agency makes a continuous good faith effort to ensure that its information is readily accessible to all Virginians. Given the older generation's preference for print media, it is unfortunate that most agency print publications have been discontinued as cost-savings measures over the past two decades. Currently, the agency website provides a wealth of information. Print publications-on-demand are available on a variety of topics. Further information on programs, services, and about historic places is readily accessible in person at the agency's Richmond office.

10. Other services or programs planned in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.

No services or programs are planned at present that will specifically address the impact of aging of Virginia's population. The department is currently in the process of developing the statewide Virginia Comprehensive Preservation Plan for 2016 through 2021. Among the issues addressed briefly in that plan are changing demographics across the state (including an aging population) and the impact this will have on historic preservation rather than the other way around.

Public participation (from a largely middle-aged to elderly sample) has emphasized the need to refocus efforts not on the aging segment of the population, but on the younger generations for whom an awareness of what is historic and why preservation is important has not yet developed. Thus, while we anticipate demand from the aging segment of the population will increase over the next decade, the greater need will be for programs that target K-12 education and the 20-40 age groups.

11. Please indicate if your agency is experiencing an increase in employees retiring later and describe any actions your agency is taking or plans to take to accommodate its aging workforce with innovative practices.

The agency accommodates its aging workforce by providing access and information on the Virginia Retirement System. The Department of Historic Resources has begun to hold more CommonHealth activities and is providing more information to staff about employee services that are provided by the Commonwealth.

At this point the agency is not seeing a measurable trend for employees to delay retirement significantly. On the contrary, in a small agency such as the Department of Historic Resources each retirement represents a huge loss of agency history and expertise. The agency has countered this trend, in part, by rehiring recently retired staff on a part time or consultant basis to provide a post-retirement transition and training period that helps the former employee (who can focus on his or her particular skills at a reduced work load) and the agency (which can use this time to finish key projects, and use the experience of seasoned professionals to train staff taking on new responsibilities).