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☒ Opportunity

☒ Experience

☒ Ideas

## This issue:

- Aging Through Technology: Market Opportunities and Linkages
- Lessons Learned about Nonprofit Sector from Austin, Texas
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## The Dynamics of Aging and Our Communities

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## Mission Statement

CCQ is an electronic and print public policy quarterly dedicated to looking at the aging segment of our society and region as it redefines itself and intersects with a wide cross section of demographic, social, cultural and economic features of society. In this light, we will consider subjects such as city and town planning, environmental advocacy, economic development, housing, workforce, education, mobility, regionalism, governance, marketing, recreation, health care, social services, creativity, demographics, emerging technologies and the roles of nonprofit organizations. Our audience is public and private decision makers and all others seeking to understand a changing society. We will offer concise, thoughtful and interesting articles. Comments including letters to the editor and recommendations from our readers are welcome.

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### When did old become new?



Richard Iannello

Old certainly is in the news these days. Not long ago a friend told me about a recent segment on aging she saw on the evening news. She said seniors today are more vibrant, active and, basically, younger than in past generations. And she didn't hesitate to remind me that the so-called Boomers (I'm one) are going to change everything. Sure. Sure they are.

Well, actually they are, but that's not the point. So are the children and the middle-agers and every other age group you choose to define who reside in our communities. Besides, making the "going to change everything" prediction isn't exactly a big leap. It has always happened in the past and it will continue to occur for as long as we live in a society of age diversity with freedom to have change.

This is why I want to welcome you to our first edition of Capital Commons Quarterly (CCQ). Perhaps you noticed our subtitle: The Dynamics of Aging and Our Communities. Please note we didn't say "...in Our Communities" because the elderly shouldn't be thought of as some subset with characteristics, aspirations and economic impact different from the rest. Aging is integral to our communities and we have to think and act more honestly in recognition of this fact. CCQ will attempt to do its part to promote this kind of thinking. I hope you'll do your part in providing the action required to help bring together all members of the community, regardless of age.

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*"Aging is integral to our communities and we have to think and act more honestly  
in recognition of this fact."*

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### Why this publication? Why now?

This is, as the cover describes, a publication of Albany Guardian Society. We are an operating foundation created in 1852 to help people in need. In those days we provided warmth and shelter to the homeless, the friendless and the elderly. Since closing our residence in late 2000, we have learned that we can continue to do good by focusing on the elderly and how they integrate with their communities. Working in collaboration with community partners we conduct educational programming for nursing assistants, develop and promote a neighborhood advocacy program, co-produce television programming and work with local colleges and universities to encourage students to consider how they can make a difference in their worlds by working with older adults.

Perhaps we are best known for our community forums. Since 2001, we have produced, either alone or in partnership with other organizations, more than 40 public forums. Initially, we thought the educational nature of our forums was the draw, the reason so many people attended. But what we really do is convene. We bring people together to encourage discourse on topics we all recognize as vital and basic to life in our society today. It is our desire to expand the dialogue, to convene larger groups and to bring more diverse, yet so vitally linked groups together. CCQ is how we hope to achieve this goal.

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*"Old really is new."*

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Aging is more than old age, social security and healthcare. Read on, my friends, because old really is new. 

*Rick Iannello  
Executive Director  
Albany Guardian Society*



Paul M. Bray

Let me share a source of my inspiration when it comes to editing this new journal. Writing about "Quarters for an Aging Population," Louis Mumford declared in order to address the needs of the aging population in society "the human situation as a whole" must be examined. Not only was he holistic, but he believed, "We shall not, perhaps, be able to care for the aged, on the scale of their needs and our national wealth demand, until we are ready to put into the rebuilding of human communities something like the zeal, the energy, the skill, the dedication we give to the monomaniac production of motorcars and superhighways." Mumford took meeting the needs of the human condition seriously.

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*"An assumption behind CCQ is we all benefit from communities where members from the youngest to the oldest are constructively engaged in a common enterprise."*

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Mumford wrote in the post World War II years when the break up of the three generation family was a new reality and "progressive" communities used zoning to advance a theory of segregation. For example, he pointed out "in many suburban communities one cannot buy a loaf of bread or a tin of tobacco without going a mile or two by car or bus to shop." We continue to pay the price from having fragmented families and communities.

CCQ is conceived to be a journal with the aging population in mind from the context of the dynamics of the whole community. An assumption behind CCQ is we all benefit from communities where members from the youngest to the oldest are constructively engaged in a common enterprise. This doesn't mean we are necessarily living, learning, working, shopping or recreating together, but that doing any of these activities together in one form or another is at least possible and we each have an informed sense about all the members of our various communities regardless of their age.

It is idealistic and unrealistic for a quarterly journal to have a great effect on creating the social, economic and other infrastructure for a truly intergeneration community. Yet, publications as a vehicle for exchanging ideas and information have a role to play. A journal like CCQ should be able to foster a higher level of informed conversation within the community and to identify steps that bring us together and break new ground.

Lessons in how communities work from afar are important for informed conversation. The first issue presents lessons from Austin on the impact of growing a high tech economy on

nonprofit organizations and from MIT on directing tech research to be applied and serve the needs of those in our community.

It also offers lessons from changes taking place in our suburbs. The Town of Colonie is responding to its aging population by re-writing its land use laws to foster a built environment more suitable to the needs of its resident senior citizens. We are also looking at how local communities have the ability through their land use powers to address new and growing housing needs.

CCQ will be available on the web and in hard copy form from Albany Guardian Society. We are looking for readers who are curious about the dynamics of their own community including how we interact, what is changing and what isn't and how we create a better future. We hope to find readers open to considering perspectives from a wide variety of disciplines.

We look forward to your comments on what we publish and invite your ideas for new subject matter and recommendations on potential writers. 

 *Paul M. Bray is an Albany attorney who is a lecturer in planning at the University of Albany, a columnist and founding President of the Albany Roundtable civic lunch forum. His e-mail address is [pmbRAY@aol.com](mailto:pmbRAY@aol.com)*

## **Aging Through Technology: Market Opportunities and Linkages**

*By William J. Foley, Ph.D., P.E.*

The impact of technology on daily life is both visible and invisible. Wherever and whenever people gather, we see evidence of connection to someone elsewhere via phone either held in one's hand or attached to one's ear. What is not evident to us is without modern pharmaceuticals and human implanted devices some who we see would not be here.

Older citizens are the beneficiary of age targeted technology such as pharmaceuticals as well as beneficiaries of popular technologies. The presence of a phone that can be dialed or reached almost anywhere has changed society in many ways including providing new confidence for those who want or need rapid connection to others as part of their safety net. Car navigation systems have changed travel so that errors are quickly captured and corrective action made available without any acknowledgement of need for assistance.



*R.P.I. campus*

### **Technical Application Targeted to Aging**

The need and demand for technology applications targeted to aging was formally recognized in 2003 by the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging when they established the Center for Aging Services Technology (CAST). CAST's "mission is to unleash the potential of technology for innovative development across the continuum of health care, housing, and services for the aging..."<sup>1</sup> CAST currently is a coalition of more than 400 technology companies, aging service organizations, and research universities including locally the New York Association of Homes and Services for the Aging and Northeast Health, both with representatives on the CAST Commission.

Federal government support for addressing the need was formalized in 2004 when the

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1. Center for Aging Services Technology web page: <http://www.agingtech.org/about.aspx>

National Institute of Aging issued a Program Announcement seeking small business applications for translational research and technological development for moving research from the lab. A stated focus of the program was on “products and technologies that translate social and behavioral research on aging processes to interventions and products that take into account the adaptations that individuals and society need to make to address population aging.”<sup>2</sup> The program is ongoing with new program announcements in 2005 and 2006. The intent of this announcement is to foster business growth around technologies and aging where technology serves as a catalyst for identifying new needs and wants for a growing population of customers, a classic economics case of an emerging market.

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*“With growth of the aging market, investment in a technology focus on aging is very good economic and social policy with benefits in both the revenue and expenditure sides of government.”*

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In recognition of the vastness of the term ‘technology’, the National Academy of Sciences convened a workshop in 2004 which was designed to “identify high-payoff areas in the development of technological devices that assist people who are aging normally, as well as those with disabilities and impairments.”<sup>3</sup> In the workshop report titled Technology for Adaptive Aging, the conference organizers in reflection on the goal state that “what actually transpired was the identification of opportunities and the need for further focused multidisciplinary collaboration among three groups: (1) specialists in the disciplines related to aging, (2) specialists in user-centered design, and (3) technologists who wish to foster product development for the market provided by the growing population of older adults.”<sup>4</sup> The report presented a roadmap for defining and responding to the extremely diverse market encompassed by the term aging.

Preceding this roadmap report by five years was establishment of the MIT AgeLab. In 2004 testimony before the Senate Special Committee on Aging, AgeLab Director Joseph F. Coughlin, Ph.D. described the work in the lab as “use-inspired basic research” seeking “to be profoundly practical in improving everyday living....” “(R)esearch is motivated by a shared belief that the appropriate use of technology, along with innovation in its delivery, can have

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2. Technology and Aging: NIA SBIR/STTR Program Initiative PA Number PA-04-064, February 20, 2004.
  3. Page 4, Executive Summary, Technology for Adaptive Aging, National Academy of Sciences, 2004.  
<http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10857.html>.
  4. Page 4, Executive Summary, Technology for Adaptive Aging, National Academy of Sciences, 2004.  
<http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10857.html>.

significant impact on the quality of life for older adults, their families, and caregivers.”<sup>5</sup>  
 “The aging and health of today’s older adults and their adult children, the baby boomers, is an expectations game. Historically, the public definition and debate of aging and long term care was to craft a safety net. Today, it is about supporting the public’s expectation that we can live longer AND better.” “Older adults and baby boomers are now demanding solutions to help them age well, independently, and with dignity.”<sup>6</sup>

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*“...state government needs to be the force behind the formation of collaborative mechanisms in the Capital District and throughout the state of aging specialists, user centered designers, and technologists focused on addressing the needs and demands of aging through technology.”*

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### **New York State Resources**

Within New York State, a CAST coalition member, the Center for Future Health at the University of Rochester founded in 1998, seeks to define and establish a personalized proactive health care initiative through combining developments in “sensing technologies, ubiquitous computing, human-computer interaction, and information technology.”<sup>7</sup> By placing health care technologies into everyday lives, the role of formal institutions in the health of an individual is forever changed.

Both the MIT AgeLab and the U of R Center for Future Health are examples of the focused multidisciplinary collaboration among three principal players stated by the National Academy of Sciences. Within the Capital District, the three players and more are present. The Capital District is host to a medical school; more than a half dozen colleges conducting research and providing education in business, science, engineering, health care, and human services; a very strong research community in both academic and private industry; an integrated health care delivery system; an installed technology base in telehomecare; several business incubator centers; numerous aging and health advocacy groups; and state government. Absent is a formal collaborative mechanism with a focus on aging and technology.

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5. Page 2, Testimony of Joseph F. Coughlin, Director MIT AgeLab & New England University Transportation Center, Special Committee on Aging, April 27, 2004. [aging.senate.gov/public/\\_files/hr121jc.pdf](http://aging.senate.gov/public/_files/hr121jc.pdf)
  6. Page 3, 4, Testimony of Joseph F. Coughlin, Director MIT AgeLab & New England University Transportation Center, Special Committee on Aging, April 27, 2004. [aging.senate.gov/public/\\_files/hr121jc.pdf](http://aging.senate.gov/public/_files/hr121jc.pdf)
  7. Director’s Message, Center for Future Health Care, University of Rochester. [http://www.futurehealth.rochester.edu/about/directors\\_message.html](http://www.futurehealth.rochester.edu/about/directors_message.html)

Who should be the force behind a collaborative mechanism? The question's answer is somewhat complicated by the need for funding and an understanding of the beneficiaries of collaboration. The immediate financial beneficiaries from successes of collaboration are the individual organizations including local companies, as technologies make their way into products and systems for the national aging marketplace. The aging population is a beneficiary as the quality of life is improved by technology applications. Local and state government benefit from the economic development of invention and a reduction in the cost of aging services if technology's promise is fulfilled.

### **Collaborative Mechanism**

Of these beneficiaries, state government is the only collective beneficiary, the only beneficiary with a consolidated benefit. This would argue then that state government needs to be the force behind the formation of collaborative mechanisms in the Capital District and throughout the state of aging specialists, user centered designers, and technologists focused on addressing the needs and demands of the aging through technology. With growth of the aging market, investment in a technology focus on aging is very good economic and social policy with benefits in both the revenue and expenditure sides of government. 🦋

 *William J. Foley, Ph.D., P.E., is a Clinical Associate Professor of Decision Sciences and Engineering Systems at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. His research has included contributing roles in development of the Medicaid RUG-II and the Medicare RUG-III classification systems. He currently is a member of the Board at Northeast Health.*

## Lessons Learned about Nonprofit Sector from Austin, Texas

By Judith R. Sidel, Ph.D.

Why is a case study titled *High-Tech Growth and Community Well-Being: Lessons Learned from Austin, Texas* relevant to seniors and public, nonprofit, and business decision-makers who care about issues related to seniors? Consider the following major finding of the report, recently released by the Nonprofit Executive Roundtable at UAlbany's Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy: Austin's nonprofit leaders were largely uninvolved in economic and social development planning during Austin's tech boom period in the mid-1980s through the 1990s.

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*"Austin's nonprofit leaders were largely uninvolved in economic and social development planning during Austin's tech boom period in the mid-1980s through the 1990s."*

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As a result, their unique knowledge of unmet community needs and vulnerable populations did not inform planning processes. So, for instance, they were not present to catalyze a civic conversation about the consequences for low income and fixed income seniors of a booming Austin economy with many new high paying jobs and, as a consequence, skyrocketing increases in the cost of housing.

Voluntary sector leaders, including those responsive to concerns relevant to seniors, were not present among Austin's economic development movers and shakers to insert into regional planning deliberations the observation that, in addition to the dramatic benefits for many, the boom period was not positive for all residents of Austin. This was especially true for low income African Americans and Hispanics and other low wage workers. Racial disparities in economic well-being continued to widen and the seniors living in and/or receiving care from these families and communities experienced the effects of these conditions as well.

### Background on the Nonprofit Executive Roundtable

In 2002, a group of then 12 nonprofit CEOs from the human services, arts, health care, philanthropy, and recreation sub-sectors met together for the first time at the invitation of the University at Albany's Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy. They established the Nonprofit Executive Roundtable. The voluntary sector leaders jointly decided to "think like the powerful economic sector that we are!"

From this fundamental commitment, the Roundtable's two key goals emerged:

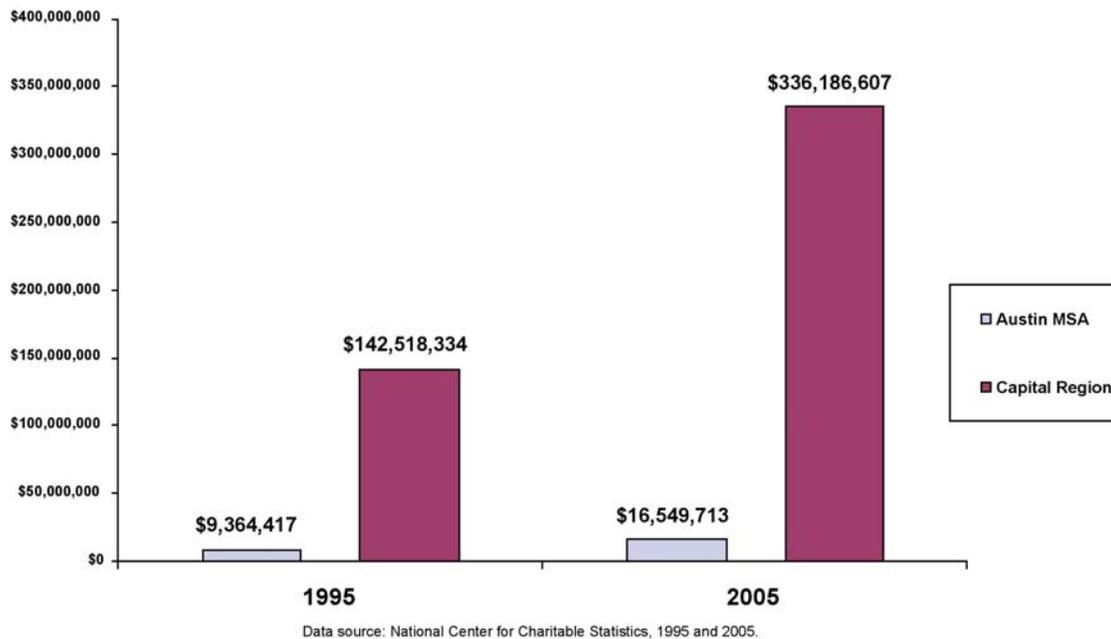
- to document awareness of the voluntary sector as a key contributor, along with

business and government, to the economy and quality of life of the Capital Region;

- to catalyze cross-sector conversations about the challenges and opportunities for Tech Valley of technology-based economic growth.

The first Roundtable project was a 2003 empirical economic and quality of life impact study titled *A \$4 Billion Growth Industry That Cares, The Impact of the Nonprofit Sector on the Capital Region of New York State*.<sup>1</sup> (A copy of the report can be downloaded from <http://www.cwig.albany.edu> and click on research.) The second major publication was the *High-Tech Growth and Community Well-Being case study*, available at the same website.

**Total Assets of the Senior Subsector, 1995 and 2005**



### Austin and Albany Senior Sub-Sectors Compared

Despite a substantial total population difference between the Capital Region and the Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area in the year 2000 (Austin’s population is 1.6 times larger than the Capital Region’s); the difference between the regions in the size of the senior population 65 and over was only 20,000 people.<sup>2</sup> As a percentage of total population, however, seniors were 14% of our region, and only 7% of the Austin area.

1. For this study, the Capital Region includes Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties.

2. Source: Census Bureau

Public benefit nonprofits in the senior sub-sector are categorized in the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities as senior citizens' housing/retirement communities, senior centers and services (P81), and seniors' rights organizations. Interestingly, in 2005, the Capital Region's senior (R25)<sup>3</sup> sub-sector was much larger than Austin's with respect to: the number of nonprofit organizations registered and filing Form 990s with the Internal Revenue Service; total revenue (five times higher); and total assets (20 times larger).<sup>4</sup>



*Page Hall, University at Albany  
Downtown Campus*

Clearly, the senior sub-sector in the Capital Region, compared to its counterpart in Austin, is a robust part of the larger nonprofit sector. Whatever influences the sector as a whole, therefore, exerts significant influence on the senior sub-sector as well. If voluntary sector leaders are missing from high tech economic development planning processes, then the concerns of seniors, along with those of many others whose voices are often not heard when key policy decisions are made, may also fail to be articulated in policy decision-making.

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*"Clearly, the senior sub-sector in the Capital Region, compared to its counterpart in Austin, is a robust part of the larger nonprofit sector."*

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### **A Sample of Lessons Learned**

Austinites from the business, nonprofit, and higher education communities generously shared their insights with me and Teri Bordenave, one of the Roundtable's Leadership Team members.<sup>5</sup> While understanding clearly that Albany's experience would be uniquely its own, the 15 interviewees offered many valuable recommendations. Here are two:

- Create opportunities for broad community learning, planning and visioning.

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3. Of course, federal, state, and local government agencies and proprietary firms also provide valuable services to seniors.

4. Source: National Center for Charitable Statistics

5. Teri Bordenave is President and CEO of Girls Incorporated of the Greater Capital Region. The other two members of the Roundtable Leadership Team are Alan Krafchin, President and CEO of the Center for Disability Services, and Ray Schimmer, Executive Director, Parsons Child and Family Center.

- Involve stakeholders from all sectors, business, government, nonprofit, Universities, in creating the vision for Tech Valley.

### A Call to Action

At the end of the report, the Roundtable invites a vigorous, community-wide conversation about how Tech Valley can maximize the positive consequences and mitigate potentially negative outcomes for the entire community of the high-tech driven period of economic growth unfolding in the Capital Region. To advance this process, the Roundtable will use a seed grant from the Bender Family Foundation to host a Tech Valley Civic Forum later this year. The Forum will promote collaborative economic and social development planning, provide opportunities for cross-sector conversations and identification of key “human side” issues related to high-tech driven economic expansion that require joint monitoring and potential action.

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*“Nonprofits are learning that the stakes in high tech economic growth for community well-being are enormous for all community members, including seniors.”*

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According to Roundtable Leadership Team member Ray Schimmer, “It is a radical proposition that there is a place for nonprofits in economic planning...As nonprofits, we’re entering into new territory. We shouldn’t be afraid or hesitant about this.” From the beginning of the case study project, he insisted that “As we learn about Austin, we learn about ourselves.” Nonprofits are learning that the stakes in high tech economic growth for community well-being are enormous for all community members, including seniors. The opportunities for creative thinking are infinite, and nonprofit leaders must step up to collaborative leadership at this critical moment in Tech Valley’s regional economic history.

*Author’s note: Xiaolei Chen, doctoral assistant at the Center for Women in Government & Civil Society, made important research contributions to this article. *

 *Judith R. Saidel, Ph.D. is Director, Center for Women in Government & Civil Society, and Associate Professor, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, University at Albany, State University of New York and cofounder and facilitator of the Nonprofit Executive Roundtable.*

**Act Now:**

**Accessory Dwelling Units Can Aid in Intergenerational Housing Crisis**

By Patricia E. Salkin

The so-called “sandwich generation” faces many challenges providing various supports for aging parents and for children who may be struggling to achieve economic independence.

One critical basic need of all three generations is housing. Moving away from our traditional notions of single-family housing, particularly in our Capital Region suburban and exurban towns, towards a recognition of, and welcome for, intergenerational housing options may be the most appropriate solution. Allowing the sandwich generation, who may be typical suburban homeowners, to add accessory dwelling units to their single family home for the purpose of providing support for family members makes sense.

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*“Allowing single-family homes to contain accessory dwelling units for aging family members makes sense from a health perspective and from an economic perspective.”*

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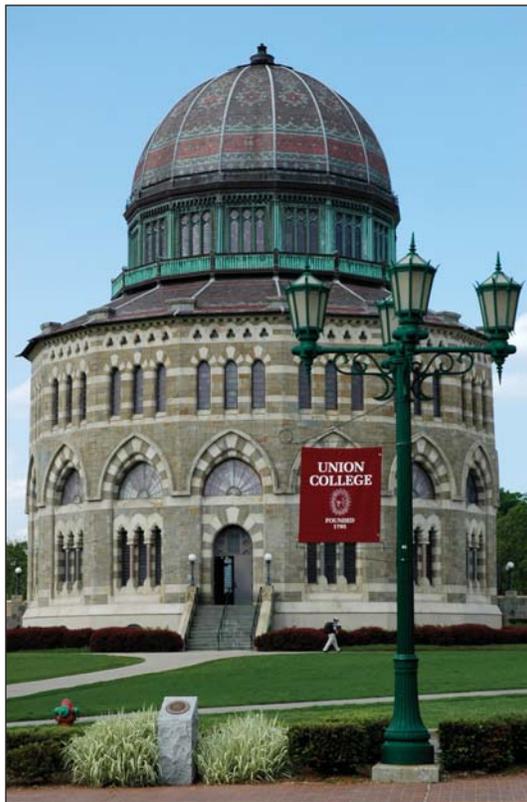
An “accessory use” is defined as a use that is incidental to, or related to the primary permitted use of the property. Accessory uses to residentially zoned lots might include a detached garage, a storage shed or a pool. Municipalities may list acceptable accessory uses in their zoning laws, or the zoning enforcement officer and/or zoning board of appeals might interpret whether a use is “accessory” to the principal use. Over the last decade, a number of municipalities across the State have begun to specifically authorize accessory dwelling units for seniors.

As parents age, children may realize that mom and/or dad may no longer be as independent as they once were, yet they still demand a level of independence as a matter of dignity. An aging parent may begin to exhibit health issues, memory loss, or decline of strength to do the things that they once could. Yet, these conditions do not necessitate moves to assisted living and nursing home environments, where the costs are great and the environment not necessarily welcoming to those who are not truly in need of such level of services.

Additionally, many seniors on fixed-incomes who own their homes struggle to find the funds to meet rising property tax bills and rising energy costs, as well as maintaining reserves for routine maintenance expenses. For seniors who rent, annual increases over time can lead to an affordability problem. Studies have repeatedly shown that New Yorkers prefer to age in place – meaning that individuals prefer to live in the community they are familiar with and with

people who they are familiar with. Allowing single-family homes to contain accessory dwelling units for aging family members makes sense from a health perspective and from an economic perspective.

Likewise, the younger generation is finding a housing crisis across the state. Affordable housing is now referred to as “workforce housing,” and young people leaving school and starting on their careers and families are faced with the reality of lack of housing options. Reports are rampant about college graduates moving back home and married children moving back in with parents (or in-laws) in an effort to save money for a home because the income, debt-load and housing costs are not in balance. The sandwich generation wants to help their children, but parents need their space and privacy and their children need the opportunity to become more independent. Allowing accessory dwelling units to homes in districts zoned for single-family use, for the purpose of providing housing for adult children for a period of time, offers one temporary solution to the workforce housing crisis.



*Nott Memorial on the campus of Union College*

Concerns about changes in the character of a community if every single-family home were to contain an accessory dwelling unit are legitimate. However, to avoid single-family homes simply becoming multiple dwelling units, local governments have developed creative accessory dwelling unit programs. Often, these accessory uses require special use permit review. For example, “granny flats” or accessory dwelling units for seniors might contain requirements that the occupant be a member of the immediate family; that one or more occupants be of a certain age; and that the permit must be renewed every three to five years with continuing offer of proof that all criteria continue to be satisfied. In some cases, local governments require that where the accessory dwelling unit is no longer occupied by individuals who meet the stated criteria, the accessory dwelling is to be removed. With respect to adult children occupying an accessory dwelling unit, other considerations may be appropriate including income level measured against the housing market in the municipality.

An intergenerational approach to housing through accessory dwelling units for family

members may enable any one generation to “host” another generation, enabling all to enjoy the independence of homeownership. For example, a young couple unable to afford their single-family home, could provide an accessory dwelling unit for their grandparents. The grandchildren would earn some income towards the mortgage and property expenses and provide a support network for aging grandparents. Likewise, the grandparents could provide the accessory dwelling unit on their property for their grandchildren, providing them with the extra income needed to meet expenses while enabling the younger generation to achieve greater independence. These two generations partnering would relieve the stress on the sandwich generation.

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*“An intergenerational approach to housing through accessory dwelling units for family members may enable any one generation to “host” another generation, enabling all to enjoy the independence of homeownership.”*

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It is time to put teeth into our comprehensive plans that discuss housing options for all, and that often mention the need for senior housing and for affordable housing. Building designated senior housing and requiring developers to provide a few units here and there of affordable housing will not alone address all of the social and economic challenges of our suburban and exurban housing crisis. Local laws authorizing accessory dwelling units with appropriate conditions to maintain community character and accomplish community goals are an avenue that Capital Region communities must pursue. We do not need the federal government or the state governments to solve this crisis – local towns, cities and villages have many of the tools needed, such as accessory dwelling units, to act now. 🦋

 Albany Law School Associate Dean and Government Law Center Director Patricia Salkin is Editor of Anderson’s AMERICAN LAW OF ZONING.

### Changes in Suburban Land Use Pattern

*By Mary Brizzell  
Supervisor, Town of Colonie*

As of the last census, one in four residents of the Town of Colonie is over the age of 55, and that percentage is only going to grow in the coming years. Colonie's senior population is extremely important to the Town, and we are actively working to make the Town a better place for our seniors to continue to live, work and play.

In 2003, The Town of Colonie began the process of creating a Comprehensive Plan – a process that took just over two years, 4,935 responses from a Town-wide survey, and over two dozen public meetings. One of the most active groups that participated in that process was our senior citizen population. Almost half the survey responses were from residents aged 60+, and the senior citizen community was very well represented at all the public meetings.

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*"The ultimate goal of the mixed use zoning and design standards is to transition our commercial corridors from auto-oriented strip malls to a more village like development, where people can walk from the pharmacy to the coffee shop."*

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Attitudes in the Town of Colonie about land use planning have changed in the last 50 years. We have an evolving awareness about how the decisions we make about land use and transportation affect our natural environment, our social environment and our physical health.

During the Comprehensive Planning process, one of the biggest issues we heard from Colonie Seniors was that they wanted to "age in place". There was a strong desire to first stay in their home as long as they wanted to, and to not be forced out by mobility issues. However, once they did have to give up the home they raised their families in, seniors wanted the housing options that would allow them to stay in their community.

Another issue that concerned seniors is transportation. According to a 2001 National Household Transportation Survey, 20% of Americans over the age of 60 do not drive. Additionally, as Colonie is an older suburban community, public transportation is not as available or as convenient as it is in perhaps the more densely populated urban areas. Just over 60% of the seniors that responded to our Town-wide survey felt that not having enough sidewalks in the town was a problem.

Using information and suggestions shared by our residents, Senior Clubs and Senior

Resources, the Comprehensive Plan made a series of specific recommendations to address the “aging in place” and transportation issues. They were designed to increase housing options, create a more bicycle and pedestrian friendly transportation network, and help keep Colonie’s seniors in Colonie. After the Plan was adopted in 2005, the Town immediately began work to update our Zoning Code to bring it into conformance with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. On January 4th, 2007, the new Land Use Law was adopted by the Colonie Town Board.

The new Land Use Law implements many of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan that will directly benefit senior citizens. Mixed use zones have replaced the traditional commercial zones in our major commercial corridors, allowing for a mix of office, residential and commercial uses that would allow apartments (perhaps for empty-nesters) over shops. Design Standards require that new buildings be located near the road, and that where practical, sidewalks be installed –



*The Tang Museum at Skidmore College*

to improve accessibility for pedestrians, public transit riders and the mobility impaired. The ultimate goal of the mixed use zoning and design standards is to transition our commercial corridors from auto-oriented strip malls to a more village like development, where people can walk from the pharmacy to the coffee shop.

Additionally, the Town has made provisions for incentive zoning – allowing developers to increase density in parts of the Town where there is the infrastructure to support that increased density. In return for the density bonus, the developer must pay into a dedicated fund for open space acquisition. Not only does this allow the Town to preserve meaningful tracts of open space for passive recreation and wildlife habitat, but areas such as Wolf Road, Central Avenue and parts of Route 9 are able to more densely develop. This supports not only public transportation, but also facilitates pedestrian traffic. Both of which greatly benefit our senior population.

To facilitate the development of innovative Senior Citizen housing projects, the new Land Use Regulations streamline the process for Conservation Subdivision Design – a process that requires developers to conserve a significant amount of open space and cluster the site’s density on 40% of the developable land. This type of development is likely to result in subdivisions that consist of smaller houses on smaller lots with a homeowner’s association

maintaining the open spaces, snow plowing and yard work – a very popular housing option among some seniors. We’ve also eliminated the acreage requirements for Planned Development Districts, allowing for innovative projects – including senior housing projects – of any size.

Changes in the Land Use Law also facilitate traffic safety – another issue that is important to senior citizens. Senior drivers have a significantly higher traffic accident fatality rate despite the fact that they drive fewer miles. The Town’s new regulations have stricter site design standards to improve highway access management and promote traffic calming. Cul-de-sacs are also strongly discouraged in order to promote neighborhood interconnectedness, and to reduce the amount of traffic on collector streets.

As you can see, our aging population is helping to lead a suburban community mature to become a more environmental, social and health conscious community. We found what is good for seniors is good for all our residents regardless of their age. 



*Mary Brizzell’s career in public service began in March of 1983 when she was appointed to the Town of Colonie Zoning Board of Appeals. Mary was elected as the first woman Supervisor of the Town of Colonie in the Town’s history. She was elected to her sixth term as Town Supervisor in November 2005.*

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IMAGES. Each issue of CCQ will use images of people, architecture and natural features that make the Capital Region special. The cover, for example, has images of features of the Empire State Plaza, the Cohoes Falls and the 18th century Johnson Map. This issue highlights architecture from some of the region’s many distinguished institutions of higher education.

Credits: cover photographs of the Egg and Tower by Jill Malouf and of the Cohoes Falls by Sarah F. Cappelletti. Photographs of the R.P.I. campus, Rockefeller College at UAlbany and Nott Memorial on the campus of Union College were contributed by the respective colleges. Tang Museum at Skidmore College by Paul Chessare.

CCQ is available in pdf format on [Http://www.albanyguardiansociety.org](http://www.albanyguardiansociety.org)

## Organizations and their web sites that may be of interest to CCQ readers

**Albany County Department of Aging**

<http://www.albanycounty.com/departments/aging>

**Albany Roundtable**

<http://www.albanyroundtable.com>

**American Library Council**

<http://www.lff.org/about>

**Capital District Regional Planning Commission**

<http://www.cdrpc.org>

**Civic Ventures**

<http://www.civicventures.org>

**Community Foundation for the Capital Region**

<http://www.cfcrr.org>

**Elder Network of the Capital Region**

<http://www.albany.edu/aging/ENCR>

**Federal Reserve Bank of NY, Buffalo Branch**

[http://www.newyorkfed.org/aboutthefed/buffalo\\_branch.html](http://www.newyorkfed.org/aboutthefed/buffalo_branch.html)

**Fulton County Office for the Aging**

<http://www.fcfa.org>

**Generations United**

<http://www.gu.org>

**Global Action on Aging**

<http://www.globalaging.org>

**Government Law Center at Albany Law School**

[http://www.albanylaw.edu/sub.php?navigation\\_id=668](http://www.albanylaw.edu/sub.php?navigation_id=668)

**Grantmakers in Aging**

<http://www.giaging.org>

**Green County Office for the Aging**

<http://www.greenegovernment.com/departments/aging/index.htm>

**New York State Office for the Aging**

<http://www.aging.state.ny.us>

**Osher Lifelong Learning Institute**

<http://www.usm.maine.edu/olli/national>

**Rensselaer County Department for the Aging**

[http://www.rensco.com/departments\\_familyservices.asp](http://www.rensco.com/departments_familyservices.asp)

**Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**

<http://www.rpi.edu>

**Rockefeller Institute**

<http://www.rockinst.org>

**Sage Colleges**

<http://www.sage.edu>

**Saratoga County Office for the Aging**

<http://www.co.saratoga.ny.us/aindex.html>

**Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services**

[www.schenectadycounty.com](http://www.schenectadycounty.com)

**Schoharie County Office for the Aging**

<http://www.schohariecounty-ny.gov/CountyWebSite/OfficefortheAging/ofaservices.jsp>

**Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy**

<http://www.scaany.org>

**Town of Colonie**

<http://www.colonie.org>

**U Albany School of Public Health**

<http://www.albany.edu/sph>

**U Albany School of Social Welfare**

<http://www.albany.edu/ssw>

**United Way of Northeastern NY**

<http://www.unitedwayofnyny.org>

**United Way of Schenectady**

<http://www.uwschdy.org>

**Warren County Office for the Aging**

<http://www.co.warren.ny.us/ofa>

**Washington County Office for the Aging**

<http://www.co.washington.ny.us/Departments/Ofa/ofa1.htm>

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## § Our Mission §

**Albany Guardian Society continues to seek opportunities to improve the quality of life for seniors as we carry out our Mission.**

- The mission of Albany Guardian Society is to engage in a broad spectrum of endeavors that will improve the quality of life for seniors.
- We will devote funding to develop and support services for seniors.
- We will create an environment that will maintain the growth of creative and innovative ideas.
- We will fund the exchange of information to enable interested parties to learn how to create a better standard of living for our elders.
- We will attract additional resources to increase the impact we can make as we remain mindful of our mission to serve the elderly.