

Contacts:

Lisa Cohen, n4a, lisa.cohen32@verizon.net, (310) 395-2544
Ted Mitchell, MetLife, tjmitchell@metlife.com, (978) 509-3337

BLUEPRINT HELPS AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES PREPARE FOR AN AGING POPULATION

A Blueprint for Action Based on Findings of "The Maturing of America" Study, the Most Comprehensive Report Ever on Aging Readiness

May 17, 2007 —Washington, D.C. – How prepared are America's communities to handle the needs of the burgeoning aging population? With the rapid rise in the number of aging Baby Boomers - by 2030 one in every five Americans will be over the age of 65 - localities are now challenged to provide accessible transportation, appropriate affordable housing options and other supportive services for their aging citizens. "*A Blueprint for Action: Developing a Livable Community for All Ages*," which was released today, provides cities and counties with detailed strategies, practical tools and proven solutions they can use to prepare for the large Baby Boomer population.

Funded by MetLife Foundation and produced in collaboration with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) and Partners for Livable Communities, the Blueprint was unveiled at a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.,

and is being made available to localities across the country. A copy of the Blueprint is available at www.n4a.org. The Blueprint is a response to the findings of a survey released last year that found that a majority of America's cities and counties are not yet prepared for the age wave that will soon hit them.

"The purpose of this Blueprint is to provide local leaders with the tools they need to meet the needs of a maturing population," said Sandy Markwood, CEO, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). "Early recognition of the impact that the aging boom will have upon communities of all shapes and sizes will enable government agencies to better plan for the future and identify new opportunities that will meet these needs. Given the magnitude of this demographic shift, partnerships across agencies and among various sectors within communities will be required."

	Housing	Transportation	Health and Supportive Services	Public Safety	Civic Engagement and Volunteer Opportunities
Challenge	Making homes and buildings handicapped accessible	Older drivers face challenges	Poor diets and physical inactivity	Older adults and neighborhood safety	Older adults need more options for civic engagement
Solution	Institute home modification and repair programs	Improve road design and signage	Support farmers' markets	Encourage Neighborhood Watch programs & involve mail carriers	Support intergenerational learning programs
Innovation	Atlanta requires "zero-step" entrances for all single family homes built with a subsidy.	Michigan decreased injury-related crashes for 65+ drivers by 35% through brighter stop lights and larger street-signs.	Reno gives vouchers to low-income seniors for accredited farmers' markets.	In Allegheny County, letter carriers watch for signs of distress among older people who enroll.	San Diego County employs seniors as mentors for families transitioning from welfare to work.

SOURCE: *A Blueprint for Action — Developing Livable Communities for All Ages*
Funded by MetLife Foundation

The comprehensive Blueprint provides communities with detailed procedures and practical solutions in the areas of housing, planning and zoning, transportation, health and supportive services, public safety, civic engagement, culture and lifelong learning. It suggests that every area of local government has a role to play in creating livable communities for people of all ages, and draws on the most innovative and effective practices of communities throughout the country to illustrate what can be done. In addition, the Blueprint recommends that local leaders should

advance “aging in place” priorities by adding a perspective on aging to all plans, programs, and policies that exist or are under development.

“Many people want to age in place,” said Sibyl Jacobson, president, MetLife Foundation. “The Blueprint provides a resource for communities as they plan to meet the needs of an unprecedented older population. The goal is to create livable communities for all ages, young and old alike.”

The Blueprint encourages communities to assemble teams of public and private leaders to assess a community’s aging readiness and then take focused action. Through a six-step strategy, it helps public policymakers develop goals, pull resources together, and find ways to promote success as a means to further improvement. It also includes “leading innovations” in communities throughout the country and helpful resources to secure additional information.

“The vast majority of Americans want to remain in their communities as they age,” said Robert H. McNulty, president and CEO, Partners for Livable Communities. “Contrary to popular belief, only a fraction move to warmer climates when they retire. Most Americans choose to age in place in the same communities where they have long lived. Every community, from fast growing suburbs to more stable rural areas, will need to adapt to a maturing population. This Blueprint helps people to do exactly that.”

During the conference, a panel of experts discussed the urgent need for communities to act, as well as specific programs in communities that are actually working. The discussion featured: Peter Harkness, editor and publisher of *Governing* magazine; John Wren, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); and syndicated columnist Neal Peirce.

The Blueprint for Action was developed by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) and Partners for Livable Communities in partnership with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), www.icma.org, National Association of Counties (NACo), www.naco.org and National League of Cities (NLC), www.nlc.org. The Maturing of America survey was conducted by ICMA and n4a in collaboration with the same partnering organizations. The survey involved the responses of thousands of communities from across the country on the subject of “aging readiness,” and a more in-depth survey to 500 communities whose initial responses indicated a high degree of preparedness.

About the Funder

MetLife Foundation - Established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its long-standing tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation has been involved in a variety of aging-related initiatives addressing issues of caregiving, intergenerational activities, mental fitness, health and wellness programs and civic involvement. Since 1986, the Foundation has supported research on Alzheimer’s disease through its Awards for Medical Research program and has contributed more than \$10 million to efforts to find a cure. More information about the Foundation is available at www.metlife.org.

About the Participating Organizations

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) – A leading voice on aging issues for Area Agencies on Aging across the country and a champion for Title VI-Native American aging programs in our nation’s capital. Through its presence in Washington, D.C., n4a advocates on behalf of local aging agencies to ensure that needed resources and support services are available to older Americans and their caregivers. For more information, go to www.n4a.org.

Partners for Livable Communities (Partners) – A national, non-profit organization working to renew communities for all ages. Partners has over twenty-five years of experience in solving community problems by providing information, leadership and guidance that help communities help themselves. www.livable.com.

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