

Communities for Older Adult Health (COAH)

Communities for Older Adult Health's (COAH) mission is focused on:

- Identifying opportunities for Asheville-Buncombe County to facilitate healthy aging
- Encouraging communication among its citizens and leaders to determine how to use these opportunities to improve the health of the entire community.

As a non-profit, tax exempt organization under IRC Section 501(c)(3) COAH seeks to help create a community in which any significant future public and private community planning in Asheville and Buncombe County would include consideration of how to advance healthy aging as an integral part of improving the well-being of all its citizens, regardless of age, health or income status. COAH anticipates a time when our community will become a model for facilitating healthy aging and its reputation for this will attract new residents and organizations dedicated to contributing to its success.

Between now and 2030 the proportion of the Asheville-Buncombe County population that is over 65 will grow dramatically. At COHA's formation, that age group was about 18%; by 2030 its over 65 residents will be about 25%. The provisions now in place to accommodate the health needs of older adults will be severely stressed. If our residents and leadership use this time to thoughtfully respond to the changes already underway, this region could become a national model of a community that facilitates healthy aging and as a result of this enrich its resources for its citizens of all ages. If not, the Asheville-Buncombe County area will witness many older adults choosing other communities in which to retire and many of its current older adult residents will struggle to maintain their health and independent lifestyle. In short, they would become more of a liability than an asset for the growth of this community.

COAH seeks to contribute to identification of how the Asheville-Buncombe County region might cost-effectively improve the many services that must work together to facilitate healthy aging. There are U.S. communities that succeed in this because well-informed leaders advance their efforts; they offer experiences from which our community could benefit. Although the Asheville-Buncombe County region has undertaken limited efforts to plan for the health needs of its older adults, there is an opportunity to more fully explore the benefits that might accrue to this region by becoming a community more committed to healthy aging.