

FISCAL NOTES

A Review of the Texas Economy from the Office of Susan Combs, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

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“We need to take a multi-pronged approach in making aging and elders a visible community priority.”

MICHAEL WILSON, Ph.D.
Program officer
for healthy aging,
St. David's Foundation

BY BRIAN WELLBORN AND MARIA MENDEZ-LEWIS

Texas is once again in the midst of a boom, but this one poses different challenges than the frenzy in our oil and gas markets.

Between 2010 and 2050, the state demographer says seniors — those aged 65 and older — will be the fastest-growing Texas age group, tripling in size from 2.6 million in 2010 to 7.8 million in 2050.

Texas cities and counties already feel the effects of this growth, which has stretched resources for seniors and caregivers, but some communities have begun laying the groundwork to better accommodate their senior residents.

And that's a wise course of course of action: a 2011 [AARP survey](#) indicated that 89 percent of persons aged 50 and above want to age in place, staying home as long as possible, or at least in the same community.

Austin, home to the nation's second-fastest growing senior population according to a [2011 Brookings Institution report](#), responded to demographic realities by creating the [Mayor's Task Force on Aging](#). The task force has made a number of [recommendations \(PDF\)](#) to city leadership, looking to “focus resources on prudent investments that result in social and economic benefits” for seniors in Austin.

“We need to take a multi-pronged approach in making aging and elders a visible community priority,” says Michael Wilson, Ph.D, a member of the task force and program officer for healthy aging at St. David's Foundation.

Join *Fiscal Notes* and Wilson as we discuss aging and caregiving, and how Texas communities can best respond to the challenges of a growing senior population.

Fiscal Notes: Can you tell us a bit about your work on the Austin Mayor's Task Force on Aging?

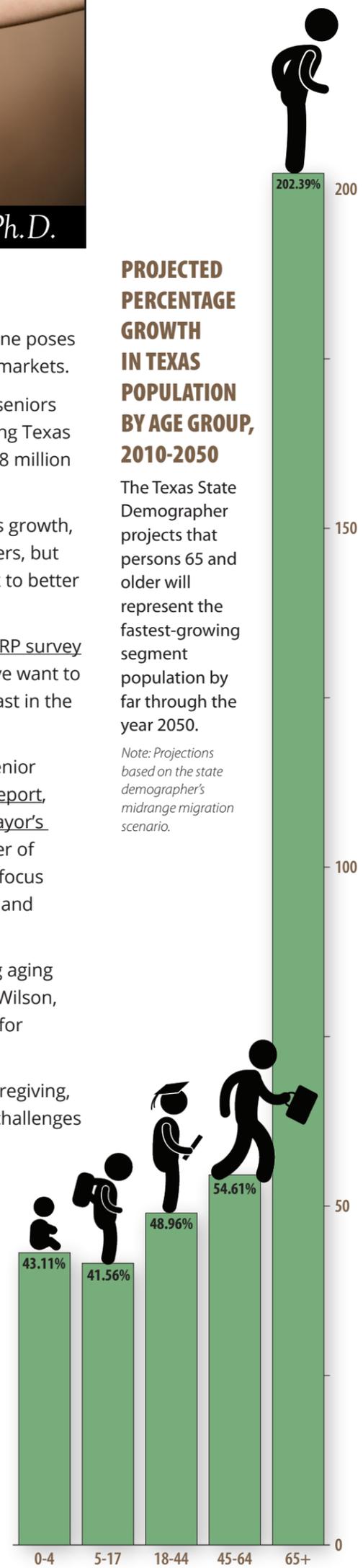
Michael Wilson, Ph.D.: About 14 months ago, the mayor's office in Austin created the task force, bringing together providers and concerned citizens. The task force is really trying to create a “best practice”: bringing organizations together that support aging populations and providing the services they need.

We aim to create a network of providers and to help organize local nonprofits. What we see coming out of the task force is a better coordination of services

PROJECTED PERCENTAGE GROWTH IN TEXAS POPULATION BY AGE GROUP, 2010-2050

The Texas State Demographer projects that persons 65 and older will represent the fastest-growing segment population by far through the year 2050.

Note: Projections based on the state demographer's midrange migration scenario.



SOURCE: Texas Office of the State Demographer

and a better understanding of who is providing the different pieces of the caregiving puzzle and the senior-support puzzle.

FN: What are the key areas any city government must address regarding caregiving and aging communities?

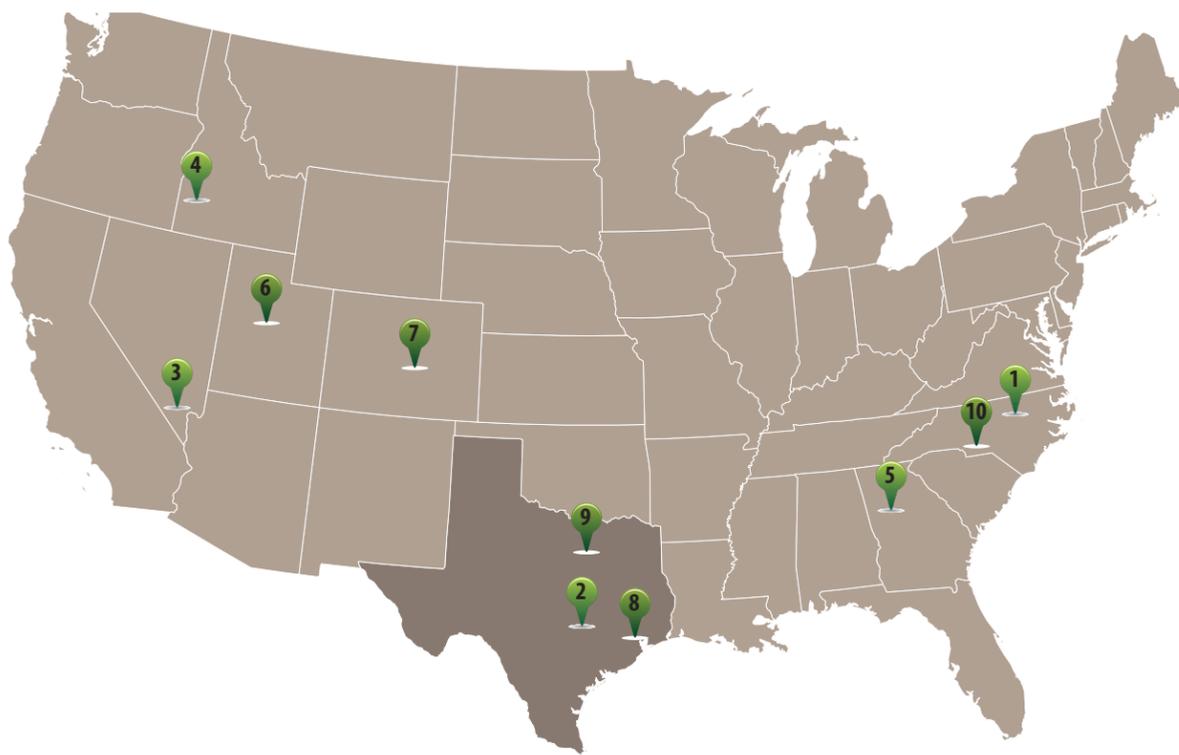
Wilson: There's a caregiving component. Most communities need programs somewhat like we have here in Austin: our Caregivers' University. It's a collaboration of 18-plus entities that have come together to deliver some specific kinds of programs — for example, fall prevention programs and tools for caregivers. This is a resource and education place for people who have questions.

Then governments will want to take a look at the senior nutrition component, like a Meals on Wheels program or something similar. Most communities already have a Meals on Wheels program or are located within a Meals on Wheels service delivery area.

And a medical/healthcare component must be addressed. We

ELDER CITIES

According to the Brookings Institution, some of the nation's fastest-growing older populations live in Texas metro areas.



RANK	FASTEST-GROWING SENIOR (65+) METRO AREA POPULATIONS, 2000-2010	% CHANGE
1.	Raleigh-Cary, North Carolina	60%
2.	Austin-Round Rock, Texas	53%
3.	Las Vegas, Nevada	50%
4.	Boise City-Nampa, Idaho	46%
5.	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, Georgia	44%
6.	Provo-Orem, Utah	42%
7.	Colorado Springs, Colorado	40%
8.	Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, Texas	39%
9.	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, Texas	38%
10.	Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, North Carolina/South Carolina	36%

RANK	FASTEST-GROWING 'PRE-SENIOR' (55-64) METRO AREA POPULATIONS	% CHANGE
1.	Austin-Round Rock, Texas	110%
2.	Raleigh-Cary, North Carolina	97%
3.	Boise City-Nampa, Idaho	92%
4.	Colorado Springs, Colorado	81%
5.	Provo-Orem, Utah	80%
6.	Madison, Wisconsin	79%
7.	Albuquerque, New Mexico	77%
8.	Riverside-San Bernadino-Ontario, California	77%
9.	Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, Texas	77%
10.	Portland, Vancouver-Beaverton, Oregon-Washington	77%

must make sure seniors have access to healthcare, maintenance and support to ensure they are getting their medications, managing their chronic disease and fulfilling all of what we generally think of as needs for older adults.

The last major area to address is housing and supportive services. Seniors need a place where they can live that is either geared to meet their changing needs or can be adapted to meet their changing needs. For example, as people age, it's always better to get them out of multi-story residences and into single-story buildings. You don't want seniors climbing stairs, and you want their residences to have home modifications: grab bars, good lighting, etc.

FN: Beyond those key areas, what should cities focus on next?

Wilson: The next most significant area is transportation. As people age, adults become more and more dependent upon outside transportation: somebody else, or some form of public transportation, because seniors [eventually] can no longer drive. That's something that most larger communities are focused upon developing.

In Austin, we have a poor public transportation network. So we begin looking at organizations such as the Faith in Action Caregivers or Drive a Senior, where volunteers give rides to older adults who can no longer drive themselves to doctor's appointments, grocery stores and other activities of daily living.

Yet with all the resources communities like Austin, Dallas or Houston have, think about rural communities like Bastrop, Luling or smaller places, where it is very difficult for seniors to access transportation resources.

FN: How does a social network come into play for seniors?

Wilson: In many cases, we know seniors don't live in close proximity to one another, to friends and neighbors or to family, so they deal with issues related to isolation. They may not talk to anyone face to face [more than] once a week. They may not have anyone checking on them.

A key component of well-being and aging in place is a social support network. How many people are you coming in contact with on a daily basis? How many people are you talking with, checking in with and engaging in a meaningful way?

This becomes a critical component to identify life satisfaction, and for analyzing for the risk of depression and other behavioral health issues.

FN: If you could give a key piece of advice to any mayor in Texas, what would be the first issue to address?

Wilson: Make aging a priority issue, a public issue.

We talk about children and the needs of children a lot. People readily identify with — and understand — the needs of kids. I think it's much more complicated for some to identify the needs of aging residents in a community. We have to ask some key questions:

- Are we going to train police and other first responders to understand how to effectively communicate with and assess older adults in our community?
- Are we going to encourage the churches to rally around causes like volunteer transportation or volunteer check-in, friendly neighbor programs?
- Are we going to encourage local healthcare providers to screen for depression every time they treat an older adult?
- Are we going to encourage pharmacies to engage with their clients to assess their medications and look for dangerous drug interactions?

One service Caregiver's University in Austin provides is ensuring that seniors take their medications.



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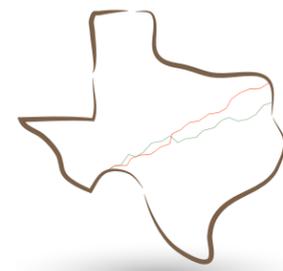
- Are we going to encourage our local emergency rooms to talk about fall prevention, and how we can reduce the risk of accidents at home?

- Are we going to encourage physical fitness across the total continuum of the life cycle?

FN: *Is there a Texas city in particular that has impressed you with its handling of aging/caregiving issues?*

Wilson: Some of the most important resources in the state are the Area Agencies on Aging. Across Texas, some of them that have done a fantastic job in supporting caregivers and older adults with a variety of programs. These programs include medication management, fall prevention, home safety evaluation and many others.

In San Antonio, the Bexar County Area Agency on Aging has been a phenomenal leader in this kind of work. The leadership there has brought nationally recognized, beneficial programs to the community. They have supported adult day programming. They have talked about falls and chronic disease management. These sorts of programs lay a great foundation for aging well in the San Antonio area.



For more information on demographic trends in Texas, visit the Office of the State Demographer, <http://osd.state.tx.us>.