**Morgan Hill**

**Focus Groups (Seniors and Professionals)**

**Transportation**

**Seniors**

Transportation and mobility are major unmet needs in Morgan Hill. Specifically, seniors reported that connections to downtown and shopping areas are extremely limited and the only potential help is represented by startups like Uber and Lyft. Seniors report that bus service is minimal and very limited. They shared, that the bus schedules are very inconvenient and that service needs to be personalized. Seniors reported that buses do not take them where they want to go; for example, the bus goes to the library but not to the Centennial Recreation Center or to the Senior Center. Seniors reported that they would be willing to invest in some kind of Uber system designed for seniors or a volunteer transportation system. Seniors reported that the bus lines that ran up the hill to Anderson Lake and Jackson Oaks no longer exist. No one knew why bus services had ended. Seniors reported that those who live outside of the “hub” area, are charged more for any existing transportation service. Seniors shared that they would be satisfied with a bus that ran every hour or even twice a day.

**Professionals**

The professionals recommended that in any future senior housing development, there needs to be increased and improved planning related to transportation. They explained that when a recent affordable 55-plus housing complex of 120 units called The Lodge was constructed, no transportation plan was in place. There is the potential for a van service in phase II. They also emphasized the importance of considering location before any future affordable senior housing is constructed; that is, the housing needs to be closer to downtown. Professionals pointed out the lack of para-transit services which only will increase.

**Housing**

**Seniors**

Morgan Hill seniors report an overall challenge to age-in-community when so few options are available to them. They report a need for more single story housing close to downtown. They also are in need of a financing system to retrofit existing housing in need of repairs. Seniors report a need for subsidized “senior” housing including rentals. Seniors shared that there is very little in the way of long-term care facilities including assisted-living and memory care. For example, Westmont of Morgan Hill is a relatively small facility and it is too expensive for most. A major social problem is homelessness among seniors, many of whom live in their cars. No homeless shelters exist in Morgan Hill and the one in Gilroy has limited hours and space. Seniors report that the south part of Santa Clara County – Morgan Hill and Gilroy - is very underserved. They report that a monthly rent of $300 a month for low-income housing is more feasible than the current $950 a month charged for low-rent housing.

**Professionals**

Professionals estimate that 80% of seniors are looking for affordable housing, but cannot qualify for housing programs**.** This includes the homeless. They report that seniors living in cars is a “huge problem” in the area. They estimate that there is a two-year wait to qualify for affordable housing. Professionals know of many seniors who self admit into skilled nursing homes (SNF) because of a lack of housing options. Others stay longer in SNFs because they cannot find housing post discharge.

**Social Participation and Social Inclusion**

**Seniors**

Morgan Hill seniors lack educational classes to audit for a reasonable fee in the surrounding area. They expressed a wish for increased learning opportunities and more affordable higher education. Gavilan College, with campuses in Morgan Hill and Gilroy offer classes. Many seniors praised the existing programming at the senior center; however, although the tour and trips program, for example, is excellent but the prices are too high for most seniors. Seniors expressed a wish for the Senior Center space to be expanded.

**Professionals**

The overarching sense of the professionals is that there are few “active” options and activities for seniors in Morgan Hill.

**Respect and Social Inclusion**

**Seniors**

No feedback in this area

**Professionals**

Professionals had no comments specific to this area

**Civic Participation and Employment**

**Seniors**

Seniors noted that Morgan Hill is a very active volunteer community. They observed that Walmart and Home Depot provide the most opportunities for part time employment for seniors. Seniors reported that most are happily retired with little interest in employment. None of the seniors reported having knowledge of anyone seeking even part time employment.

**Professionals**

The professional focus group felt that it is difficult to get a job if you are 55 or older in Morgan Hill. They also thought that it was double jeopardy for those who are 55 plus and especially, if they have any disability. They observed that seniors need flex time and part time jobs. Professionals thought that age discrimination was a real issue when applying for a job as an older person.

**Communication and Information**

**Seniors**

Seniors reported that while newsletters were available on line, printed newsletters still were valuable. They suggested a welcome package be provided when new seniors (50-55 plus) move into the community. Seniors expressed a wish for computer classes; for example, at the Library. They would like to find a way to get email set up for seniors who were yet to be on line. They expressed the sense that the “digital divide” continues to plague communication in the area. Seniors expressed that transportation to computer classes would be needed for many participants.

**Professionals**

Professionals recognized that vast amounts of information are available via social media, but many seniors are unable to access it. They assume that elders receiving case management are being included; however, what about those whose first language is not English? They also observed that outreach is important to other diverse communities. Professionals point out that when conducting outreach, trust is vital; i.e., information coming from someone trusted such as peer group members or perhaps faith communities.

**Community Support and Health Services**

**Seniors**

Caregiving is a major overarching concern among Morgan Hill seniors. They expressed a need for an accessible acute hospital (with emergency services; not just urgent care) and for a day care with memory care services. The only memory care is at Live Oak Adult Day Services in Gilroy; none exists in Morgan Hill. De Paul Health Medical Center in Morgan Hill is described as inadequate to meet comprehensive health care needs; for example, it is only open limited hours. Seniors expressed a wish for expanded vaccinations such as for flu, pneumonia and shingles. Seniors noted that homelessness is a significant problem and that the closest shelter is in Gilroy. An outreach project in emergency preparedness would be a good idea. Hospice of the Valley is a good service but few seniors know about it.

**Professionals**

The overarching concern of professionals in this area, is the need for comprehensive case management. Their sense is that everything depends on this; without case management, any problems are like dominos; that is, one negative outcome leads to another. They note that there are case management wait lists of over 40 persons and it can take four to five months to open a new case. They recommend a paradigm change wherein case management is the norm and needy seniors are automatically connected to case managers. They point out that there are only four case managers for the entire South County. Also the 8 to 5 schedule does not fit the reality of seniors’ needs, particularly with mental health and transportation issues. They think that the South County is particularly underserved. Professionals strongly endorse a Community-Based Adult Services (CBAS) Program. They say the closest one is in Sunnyvale. The professionals also expressed an interest in bringing On Lok to the community. Professionals noted that every type of service has a waiting list, including Board and Care homes.

**Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

**Seniors**

Seniors expressed a wish for more benches in neighborhoods and in downtown shopping areas. Downtown lighting and street lighting are chronic problems and seniors point out that entire neighborhoods are without adequate street lighting. (There are light pollution issues and policies in the area). Many expressed a wish for social activities for “solo” seniors; i.e., things to do after dark. Many desired a fixed stop shuttle that makes a downtown loop. Many seniors thought that Morgan Hill was bicycle friendly and that a few spots offer opportunities for “placemaking” to socialize and have coffee or wine, such as Bubbles, a wine bar. They appreciated the Friday afternoon movies at the Senior Center as well as the dances and music series in downtown on Friday nights. Seniors are looking forward to the opening of a new parking garage being built downtown. Downtown events are spread out and thought that a shuttle to/from the Library, the Community and Cultural Center and the Centennial Recreation Center would give seniors greater access to these activities. Although downtown is vibrant with many restaurants and coffee shops, no places cater to the solo person where a senior comfortably can go to socialize.

**Professionals**

Sidewalks in Morgan Hill are hazardous for wheelchairs according to many professionals. They have observed wheelchairs tipping at intersections and while going over driveways. In addition, sidewalks with a lack of curb cuts make wheel chair travel difficult and hazardous.

**Ideas about Programs and Services**

**Seniors**

Seniors recommended downtown fixed stop shuttles and an Uber special rides program for seniors. Also needed is an additional assisted living facility and a independent living retirement community development in Morgan Hill. They recommended caregiver relief programs and a City policy to promote affordable housing for seniors. Seniors also wished to find ways to introduce intergenerational programming into ongoing community activities**.**

**Professionals**

Professionals recommend new programs to protect seniors from fraud and scams. They are concerned about how to locate and support isolated seniors. They think handyman and legal services are needed and that, during the summer, “cooling centers” are essential. Professionals think an emergency preparedness program is past due and the implementation of a reverse 911 program where the operator can locate a senior who is calling. Professionals also recommend more resources to bring services to undocumented seniors and their families.

**Dementia Question Feedback**

**Seniors**

Morgan Hill seniors recommended a closer relationship to the Alzheimer’s Association for a support group. Pacific Hills and Hillview Convalescent Home are the only nursing homes in Morgan Hill. Westmont and Valley Pines are the two assisted living facilities.

Overall, the focus group seniors had very little knowledge of the extent of the problem of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias and where to go for help.

**Professionals**

Professionals had a relatively good sense of where to refer seniors with memory issues. These included physicians, the Alzheimer’s Association, the Senior Center and Westmont. On the other hand, services for severe cases is extremely limited. Also, scholarships for seniors who cannot afford memory care services are non-existent.