

Age-Friendly Cities Focus Group Questions

The eight domains of an Age-Friendly City are evidence-based categories developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). To insure cross-city uniformity, the eight domains will form the core of the focus group questions.

A. In your experience, what are the greatest unmet needs in your community in the following areas?

- 1. Transportation**
- 2. Housing**
- 3. Social Participation**
- 4. Respect and Social Inclusion**
- 5. Civic Participation and Employment**
- 6. Communication and Information**
- 7. Community Support and Health Services**
- 8. Outdoor spaces and buildings**
- 9. Other...?**

B. In your view what project or program might meet one or more of the above eight unmet needs in your community?

C. Dementia care and services are becoming more important in our communities.

Where do you refer community members who may show early signs of dementia or are diagnosed with early stage dementia?

City of Monte Sereno Seniors

Age Friendly Focus Group

June 1, 2017

Monte Sereno City Hall – Council Chambers

18041 Saratoga-Los Gatos Road, Monte Sereno, CA 95030

Facilitated by Dr. Anabel Pelham, Executive Director, Center for Age-Friendly Excellence

Disclaimer: The following represents the opinions of focus group participants and are for informational purposes only.

Transportation

Focus group members observed one needs to be able to drive to get around; there is little to do in Monte Sereno so one must travel to Los Gatos at least for services and shops and restaurants. One focus group member reported that the walk from home to the closest bus stop is too far, and the area is hilly. She said it was too far to walk to Winchester bus stop.

A few elders in the group had heard about a pilot transportation project being organized in the area, but none knew any details. One elder asked for a senior discount with Uber and Lyft. Many in the group were worried about the future when they cannot drive. Some were fearful of taking Uber and Lyft.

The focus group members reported that decades ago there was a train to the coast and they loved the service. There also was a bus service along Highway 9, but no longer. They shared that people who live in the Hills are quite isolated because of a lack of public transport. About half of the members of the focus group either use Lyft and Uber or would be willing to learn. There seems to be an opportunity to teach seniors in the town to use Lyft and make a significant impact on a pressing need for transportation.

Housing

Focus group members say they are lucky to have purchased a house a long time ago when it was affordable, because it is no longer affordable. Many in the group were actively involved in searching for a retirement community. The major challenge was quality and cost.

There are no retirement communities in Monte Sereno so seniors are looking at surrounding communities. The lowest priced one was \$4,200 a month, but no one wished to live there because of the negative reputation. Higher quality communities are charging \$8 and \$10K a month for basic housing care.

Some in the focus group wished to remodel their homes in the hope of aging in place. But they don't know who to ask for remodeling assistance; that is, vetted contractors.

Social Participation

The focus group members mentioned the annual picnic, but other than that, they knew of no other activities for seniors. They noted the empty post office building as a possible venue for senior activities. They all mentioned the LGS Recreation's 55 Plus Club as a wonderful place and really enjoyed it. They must go to Saratoga and Los Gatos and Campbell to find social activities.

They say it is relatively easy to get to local activities if you drive. If you don't drive, the situation becomes very difficult. All the seniors expressed a wish for senior social activities in Monte Sereno.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Focus group members said that there are no shops or restaurants in Monte Sereno, it is only residential, but they feel welcome and respected in area locations. They said they are treated very well everywhere and people give them a seat in public places. The group expressed overall positive experiences in the commercial and social venues.

Civic Participation and Employment

If one is able, one can attend any and all city council meetings as the city is very inclusive. Focus group members reported that it is a challenge to get local seniors to run for office or serve in a civic capacity. Few seniors attend public meetings unless it directly impacts them.

Many seniors are able to find part time jobs in local businesses: Ace Hardware, Williams-Sonoma, Wooden Horse, and the Dollar Store. Many shops in Los Gatos employ seniors and there is a strong local tradition of older persons as volunteers in a variety of settings in the community.

Communication and Information

Focus group members reported no in-depth communication from the city regarding senior activities. They really liked the Los Gatos Weekly newspaper and depend upon it for information. One person who recently became widowed said that she was lost for a long time and could not find resources or support.

The group members said that if one does not have a computer, one is cut off from a great deal of information. They did know that the LGS Recreation's 55 Plus Club has a "Technology and Tea" and one can learn how to use computers there. Most did not express a strong interest in learning how to use high technology.

Community Support and Health Services

Focus group members all reported that medical care is exceptional in the area: "doctor heaven" and El Camino and Good "Sam" Hospitals enjoy a solid reputation. They reported that there are 5 urgent care centers within about 6 miles.

The opposite case exists regarding skilled nursing facilities. They are few and extremely expensive. Many residents are thinking of moving out of the area to Oregon, Texas, and Arizona for a lower cost of living.

Some seniors reported feeling like a prisoner with “beach traffic” where it is impossible to drive anywhere or park. Summer months are the worst and the general dramatic increase in traffic congestion is significantly diminishing the quality of life. They said high tech is both a blessing and a curse.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

The seniors had observed recent city efforts to improve city streets and sidewalks (where they exist, but mostly, sidewalks don’t exist). They all agreed that Vasona Park is wonderful and that one can purchase an economical senior pass. Overall, the group was pleased with the state of outdoor spaces and buildings.

Ideas about Programs and Services

The group wished for senior discounts with Uber and Lyft and a more organized way to use the service. Seniors wanted a fixed stop or on-demand shuttle service. Transportation is a major unmet need.

Seniors need more affordable housing, particularly long-term care. In the meanwhile, they need vetted handyman services. Developing a list would be a major help to local seniors.

The focus group asked for a local activities center (unused post office space) and more of an effort to reach out to seniors about local community activities (include Los Gatos, Saratoga, and Campbell). Perhaps a one-page newsletter would be a start.

They asked for an educational program on memory care and dementia services in the area. There is a great deal of fear and a lack of understanding of the disease process, services, and options.

Costs of long-term care are a major worry. Almost all were actively planning a move to a retirement community, but what happens if they need long-term care; like a nursing home? What if someone falls and breaks a bone? Or suffers memory loss?

Dementia Question Feedback

The first response was to go to one's physician. Next one might check with the Alzheimer's Association. There was a vague sense of a place near Lunardi's grocery store, but no one was sure. There was a great deal of fear about a State law that separates couples when one has memory loss and is admitted to a long-term care setting.

There is also the worry about costs, the group thought one has to pay out of pocket for all such services and feared it would be too expensive. There was a lot of fear in the group about memory loss care and services.