

# City of Gilroy Seniors

## Age Friendly Focus Group

December 5, 2016

Gilroy Senior Center

7371 Hanna Street, Gilroy, CA 95020

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

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

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### 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?**

## **Focus Group Responses**

### **Transportation**

Seniors in Gilroy echo the professionals in their concern regarding the pressing need for transportation, particularly for trips for groceries, doctor visits, and hospital visits. Seniors have few options if they wish to leave the area and they particularly need assistance with getting to the Gilroy Senior Center. Many seniors wish to go out at night, but they cannot see well and have no transportation.

Seniors expressed the hazards of walking to the Senior Center. Crossing streets represent a risk. They like the ideas of flags for crossing, such as those they have in Morgan Hill. While few seniors ride bikes, many are dodging bikes that are silent and not marked. When driving, seniors are often unable to see bikes.

Seniors are afraid to walk from 10<sup>th</sup> Street to the mobile home park. The area around the fire station is unsafe for walking and seniors report that the City charges residents at least part of the cost of sidewalk repairs, so few are done. Broke concrete is a major concern for seniors attempting to walk in Gilroy.

Seniors are unhappy with the “Outreach” transportation service. They say that it takes too long and is undependable. They also say that customer service is unresponsive.

### **Housing**

Seniors appreciate the senior housing called Sunset Gardens. On the other hand, Wheeler Manor is described as not well kept (for example, with frequent water leaks) and seniors are afraid to complain, lest they get evicted. They also shared that they don’t feel secure in Wheeler Manor. Another problem they shared regarding living at Wheeler Manor was outsiders pounding on the doors and then running away. They report that strangers don’t sign in and many people smoke in the halls. They explained that Sunset Gardens is relatively expensive compared to Wheeler Manor.

One of the major issues for senior housing is the need for a down payment. Many seniors live month-to-month on benefit checks and don’t have the funds for a down

payment available. The senior focus group knew of new apartments being built on the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Alexander.

Seniors also expressed a need for a trusted and economical home repair service.

### **Social Participation**

Seniors thought that many activities existed of interest. They mentioned downtown movies and the bowling alley. They enjoyed the Senior Center computers and pool table. They mentioned Michael's craft store which offers craft and sewing classes. Seniors shared that most churches offer many activities for seniors. In addition, Gilroy Gardens hosts lots of events and many would like to attend the Senior Ball, but there is a fee.

Seniors mentioned the Library as a point of community gathering.

While much is possible, some seniors say that in their view there is not enough being offered. They wish for more options to participate in events, particularly at night.

### **Respect and Social Inclusion**

Seniors had mixed responses in this area. They report that bus drivers ignore the elderly and routinely pass elders waiting at bus stops with bags. If they do stop, many drivers are in a hurry and don't slow down.

Elders feel badly because Walmart checks their receipts when they exit. While everyone's receipts are checked, they feel it is disrespectful of seniors.

Some seniors report a bullying problem among seniors themselves. They report that some seniors bully each other in the Senior Center.

### **Civic Participation and Employment**

Overall seniors report that they feel free to participate in public life. At the same time, seniors also report that they have relatively little civic engagement. Seniors feel welcome to work with the Gilroy city government. However, one senior reported that they had applied to be a crossing guard but got no response. He later learned that he was considered "too old" to be a crossing guard.

Another senior applied for a dishwasher job but was rejected because the job was for low-income persons only. However, the job remains unfilled and the need still exists.

## **Communication and Information**

Seniors share that there is a lot of free information at the library. Seniors also use newspapers, Senior Center newsletters, and the internet. Many seniors rely on the internet site Nextdoor to get community news.

Seniors report that the Gilroy Senior Center is an informational hub.

## **Community Support and Health Services**

Seniors are happy with Kaiser but seniors think Emergency Room staff need to be better qualified. They believed that some patients are being overcharged. Seniors don't wish to use St. Louise hospital as it has very bad ratings along with reports of misdiagnoses and wrong medications being provided. Seniors would rather go to El Camino, Los Gatos, and O'Connor hospitals. Seniors reported the use of Visiting Angels in-home nursing service. They also reported using CareMore for medical help.

## **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

Seniors share that they need restrooms in parks and few or none exist. Seniors also say they need lighting outside of the Senior Center. Seniors expressed a need for cooling centers during hot summer months. They would like an opportunity for walking at night. Seniors reported that they are distressed that a new jail was built in Gilroy rather than services for seniors. Seniors especially wanted a public pool. They also reported that they have evidence that homeless persons are bussed into the Gilroy area and they fear this may contribute to crime.

## **Ideas About Programs and Services**

Seniors wish for a shuttle service in the downtown area and bus services for the region. Seniors particularly need a shuttle or bus to the Senior Center.

Seniors wish for safer ways to cross streets, even at the Senior Center. They explain that the area around the mobile home park at 10<sup>th</sup> Street is especially dangerous. Seniors shared that they would love to go to the beach and see the ocean but they have no way of getting there.

The focus group members expressed a wish for exercise equipment at the Senior Center. Seniors also asked for first run movies at the Senior Center. They reported that they would attend night events if they could get there and the fees were modest.

Seniors observed that they needed quality leaders to teach classes. Many teachers are poorly qualified and seniors want class leaders and teachers who are experts in their field.

The focus group shared that some seniors are guilty of bullying and that there should be a course to teach people how to manage such behavior and teach bullies better coping mechanisms.

They observed that many stairwells need handrails.

Their greatest wish seemed to be for a heated pool.

### **Dementia Question Feedback**

Most seniors don't know where to go for dementia services. They think there might be something in San Jose. Some seniors don't know about Live Oak Adult Day Services and Valley Medical as starting points for resources. Overall, seniors have little information about where to go for help for memory issues.

# **City of Gilroy Monolingual Spanish Speaking Seniors**

## **Age Friendly Focus Group**

February 21, 2017

Gilroy Senior Center

7371 Hanna Street, Gilroy, CA 95020

Facilitated by Vanessa Merlano, Healthy Aging Coordinator, Community Health Assessment, Planning, and Evaluation Branch, Santa Clara County Public Health Department.

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**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?**

## **Focus Group Responses**

### **Transportation**

Focus group seniors reported that not all older persons know about the discount passes available at the Senior Center. They believe there should be a way to better communicate that passes are available.

Group members reported that there are many transportation options available and seniors pay \$.50 for the bus. If one does not have the money, a senior can ride for free.

At least one elder reported that they need a ride to the doctor or hospital and cannot find one.

### **Housing**

Focus group members shared that there is not enough affordable housing or rental housing. They said that housing is very expensive in the Gilroy area. One elder asked that some community organization offer financial help with senior housing costs.

They reported that oftentimes seniors need four times the cost of the housing to qualify to obtain it, while few elders have that kind of income. Seniors are being charged \$600 to \$1,000 a month for a room in a house and they simply do not have that kind of money.

There is a shelter called The Armory for seniors in emergencies, but they must leave at 6 a.m. The Ochoa Center offers housing for migrant workers but they must pay a fee.

### **Social Participation**

The main locale for social participation is the Gilroy Senior Center and the focus group reported that it offers a lot of activities.

### **Respect and Social Inclusion**

At the Gilroy Senior Center, if one does not behave respectfully they are asked to leave and the seniors were clear on that rule.

Seniors shared that it is not safe at night in the community as one can be robbed. One person shared that her friend was robbed.

Many undocumented residents are afraid to go out, especially with the election of the new President Trump. They are particularly fearful of what will happen if they commit a minor infraction.

Senior Center participants want to see and hear from City Council members. Several said they should come out of their offices and visit the Senior Center.

### **Civic Participation and Employment**

Seniors reported that there is not enough employment for them, only very difficult work in agriculture. They also shared that the heavy rains have impacted agricultural work.

At least one elder is receiving unemployment benefits and wants to work but cannot find a job. If they find work of *any* kind they lose their benefits.

### **Communication and Information**



The Senior Center is the go-to place for information on almost everything. The Gilroy Dispatch Newspaper is only in English and therefore not helpful for Spanish speaking seniors.

Univision, the Spanish speaking TV channel, brings a lot of news about what is happening in San Jose.

### **Community Support and Health Services**

The focus group members say they need help with vision, dental care, and hearing loss and cannot obtain it. There is a program called MediConnect to help with this, but seniors don't know about it.

Others reported transportation needs for medical appointments in the first place and cannot get there. They said that CareMore charges expensive fees for their services.

### **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

Seniors reported that violence is a problem in the community. They also need park benches and places to sit downtown, especially by Monterey Road. They say they wish to go for walks but need benches along the way to sit down and rest.

They told the story of a man who tried to rob a senior near the Senior Center around noon.

They are fearful of all the drug use in the parks and try to go there only during "safe" times.

### **Ideas About Programs and Services**

Seniors want to make information about the discount passes more available in the community, and at the Senior Center in particular.

They wish to find a way to get rides to the doctor and hospital.

Seniors, like everyone in the region, need affordable housing. Perhaps a matching program with rooms and older persons might be helpful.

Safety is a major concern and focus group members think community members need to be more culturally competent. Parks have become a risky environment and at the very least seniors should feel safe around the Senior Center.

Focus group members suggested some kind of information and referral program to connect seniors with jobs, particularly jobs besides seasonal agricultural work.

There is a pressing need for information aimed at Spanish speaking older persons, as it is very difficult to know about what is happening in and around the community.

Focus group members share that they need help with health plans and need local support and coverage for health, hearing, dental, and vision needs. Many are suffering with unmet needs and perhaps a kind of Geriatric Care Manager service could help make referrals.

Focus group members want information in Spanish about dementia and how to prevent it, manage it, and obtain help for caregivers. At the least, they need to know about community resources.

### **Dementia Question Feedback**

Most of the seniors seek help via the traditional routes of physicians and family members. At least one focus group member reported not knowing what to do if faced with a friend or family member with memory issues. At least one senior shared that the Gardner Center has some information about dementia issues.

# City of Gilroy Professionals

Age Friendly Focus Group

November 14, 2016

Gilroy Senior Center

7371 Hanna Street, Gilroy, CA 95020

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

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**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?**

## **Focus Group Responses**

### **Transportation**

Local transportation largely depends on an individual being able to drive. Caltrain is designed for commuters and is not helpful for local mobility. Taxi services are considered good and professionals would like to create a way for Caltrain to be more accommodating to seniors who wish to visit cities beyond Gilroy.

Nighttime transportation is especially difficult. The “Outreach” program is available to seniors but it is expensive and difficult to navigate. Outreach costs about \$4.00 each way and Uber can be less, perhaps \$2.00 each way, but seniors struggle to understand how to utilize the service.

Professionals report that the Clipper Card is great for seniors.

### **Housing**

Affordable and available housing continues to be an urgent, unmet need of many seniors in the region. Professionals report that the situation is “really bad” for single mothers and seniors on a fixed income.

Apartments for elders with memory issues can cost up to \$4,000 a month (such as the Village Green apartments). There is limited subsidized housing available and elders living in these facilities (such as Wheeler Manor) never leave and therefore openings are rare even though the need is enormous.

### **Social Participation**

Professionals note that the library is a vital community resource. Yoga, cooking, and the senior lunch programs are free or very low cost.

The community offers a variety of classes and some are conducted by a physical therapist.

Kaiser offers classes for seniors, but they are costly.

The Senior Center is another vital community resource. It offers free classes such as Zumba, Line Dancing, Yoga, Tai Chi, and Craft classes. They also sponsor clubs.

Gavilan College is an important resource as well.

Many seniors volunteer at the Gilroy Demonstration Community Garden between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> streets.

Some professionals observe that some seniors don't wish to identify as such and that isolation and loneliness are becoming issues in the community.

### **Respect and Social Inclusion**

Professionals are of the opinion that seniors are not generally respected in the community and can easily become invisible. They observe that many people are not patient with seniors.

Crossing the streets can be dangerous, even in marked crosswalks, due to speeding and distracted drivers. Motorcycles are particularly hazardous around seniors in the cross walks. Professionals have also observed that seniors are ill-treated at auto repair shops.

### **Civic Participation and Employment**

Many seniors are working in the Gilroy area. Local employers include Barnes and Noble, Café 150, Costco, coffee shops, and grocery stores.

Gilroy Arts Alliance has a lot of senior volunteers and Gavilan College has seniors on its board. The Gilroy Dispatch has asked seniors to serve on its board.

## **Communication and Information**

The cable TV and Dish networks are good but they are very expensive. Comcast and Xfinity can start at \$50 to \$60 a month and approach \$200 even with limited service packages. If seniors cannot afford internet services, they are cut off from vital information and can become isolated. Internet service can easily be \$80 a month for a landline.

Many seniors depend on the Gilroy Dispatch for information. The newspaper goes out once a week and can be delivered door to door.

The library and senior center offer vital information services and serve as hearts of the community. A lot of information is shared via word of mouth. For example, in the Yoga class at the Senior Center, they offer 5 minutes at the start of class for announcements.

## **Community Support and Health Services**

Professionals agree that Hospice is amazing in its quality. They agree that Gilroy needs another skilled nursing facility and a wellness center for seniors. They observe that there is only one rehab center in the area. They report that St. Louise Hospital has received mixed to negative reviews and they don't recommend that anyone go there.

Professionals gave good reviews to the Daughters of Charity facility and mentioned Valley Medical Center and Kaiser in San Jose. They think that most persons, who are able to, go to San Jose for acute health care services. One person reported seeking medical services as far away as Santa Cruz.

A major need is health promotion and disease prevention programs. Many observed that there are very few programs for health promotion and many charge a fee, even with an HMO like Kaiser. Seniors even smoke just outside the Senior Center.

Professionals mentioned a need for mediation use counseling for seniors in the area. To their knowledge, there is no such resource.

## **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

Professionals again observed that crossing the street is very dangerous, particularly for seniors and children. Drivers ignore pedestrians. Rancho Hills and 6<sup>th</sup> Street were named as particularly hazardous areas. Many professionals report that it is simply too dangerous to walk at night.

## **Ideas about Programs and Services**

The Gilroy professional focus group has a lot of ideas about how to meet senior service needs. They recommended a Lyft/Uber type of door-to-door transportation service, with a sliding scale for fees. They also suggested that rides be free for seniors going to the doctor.

They suggested free bus passes for seniors including a free Clipper Pass for seniors going to San Francisco.

In the area of housing, professionals reiterated the pressing need for affordable, available housing. They suggested co-op housing models like Berkeley and Davis. One suggested single level tiny homes, but zoning and ordinances would need to be revised. Oregon offers a model for tiny homes. Some suggested manufactured homes and locating mobile homes on the lakeshore. Many thought it was important to make affordable homes intergenerational.

In the domain of social participation, the professionals suggested free computer classes so seniors can get online and connected. One idea is to find volunteers to assist seniors in getting online. Many expressed concern over the issue of grandchildren living far away and the need to get grandparents connected using Facetime or other technological methods.

The professionals observed that the Senior Center is in need of updating and remodeling, particularly carpeting, air conditioning, and flooring. They reported bad smells in the winter. All of the rooms need refurbishing.

In the area of respect and social inclusion the professionals pointed out the hazards of moving around as a pedestrian. They argued for more stop signs and lights. On 6<sup>th</sup> Street in particular they suggested flags at crosswalks like those used in Morgan Hill. Another model they suggested are marked crossings like in the city of Oakland. The group had mixed feelings about the value of speed bumps.

One idea that emerged was a city-wide grandparents day. They could read a story at the least and other ideas could emerge. Many cities have this kind of programming.

Regarding the communication and information domain, the professionals thought cable TV and internet services were a city wide issue that should be addressed city-wide. They suggested a subsidized program for seniors. Many seniors don't know about the emergency help available via 911. Adaptive devices are important including current glasses, hearing aids, and large screens for seniors. Some of these devices are available at low or no cost, but seniors don't know about them.

Regarding health and human services, the group thinks a major gap exists around health promotion and disease prevention. They also think seniors need education around alternative health choices such as acupuncture. The group also suggested that families of seniors be educated about health promotion and disease prevention through, for example, neighborhood wellness programs.

Professionals suggested wellness programs for all generations, including skilled nursing facilities and elementary schools, particularly schools serving low-income children. They also suggested campus gardens and skilled nursing facility gardens. They suggested that seniors could help young students within school campus gardens.

Professionals suggested emergency preparedness classes and kits as well as CPR training. Most earthquake kits are too expensive and the focus group asked for another way to meet the needs of seniors in this regard. They also pointed out that both of the community fire stations are old and in need of updating.

Regarding exteriors, the professionals shared a common problem of not enough lighting downtown, particularly at street level. They noted that Morgan Hill has



superior lighting. They also noted that a very basic yellow line dividing traffic is missing on many streets.

### **Dementia Question Feedback**

Gilroy needs a support group for persons with dementia. Many Gilroy seniors go to Morgan Hill for this kind of support. Live Oak Adult Day Care has a negative reputation so local professionals do not recommend it. They know of some private services but nothing is offered that is community based.

Professionals observe that there is a lot of denial, particularly among children of elders. Among seniors, there is stigma about dementia and memory concerns. Professionals wish to see a program where elders can be supported in making their wishes known before they begin to develop memory issues.