

CAFE: The Center for Age-Friendly Excellence

Advancing Livable Communities for all Generations



CAFE Focus Group Report Daly City March 25, 2019 Older Adult Service Providers

Transportation

Transportation continues to be a major concern for older persons; even extending into northern San Mateo County. Redi-Wheels does not provide same day service and must be booked far in advance, Go-Go Grandparent and Get Up and Go are expensive and, for many, unaffordable. These forms of transportation are both unavailable and unaffordable; two of the key elements of transportation, both public and private.

Older persons don't know about Uber and Lyft and the reasons are unclear. Both perceived affordability and safety are issues to consider in any future attempt to promote Uber and Lyft.

A positive is the Bayshore Shuttle that replaced the SamTrans #34. The focus group members expressed thanks to the City of Daly City for this service. It is free to Bayshore residents and while it is operated on a grant, it still needs riders to help make it permanent. Concerns about the service point out that this bus does not go to needed appointments (medical) nor does it run on the weekend. Focus group opinions are mixed as to local knowledge of the Bayshore Shuttle. Some think few know about it, others think it is well-known.

An overarching view is that San Mateo County does a good job at providing transportation services; the issue among older persons is the gap in expectations. That is, what is wanted and needed and what is available. Expectations and wishes exceed what is offered. A singular issue in this regard is transportation to the senior center. There are very few parking spaces at Lincoln. A question raised by the group was: are there senior centers that can offer some type of transportation? In addition, the group pointed out that with public transportation education and awareness gaps exist with bus drivers. Bus drivers seem to be uninformed regarding older riders, for example, they seem to be unwilling or unable to assist older

persons with walkers. Focus group members pointed out that there is no hot line to call for transportation and often there are no caregivers to help with transportation.

Regarding unmet needs for transportation, it appears that public transportation to/from the senior center, or provided by the senior center would have a significant impact. And, classes on how to use Uber and Lyft could empower individual older persons to call a car when and where they need it. A focused educational Uber/Lyft effort could help Daly City older persons in particular because of the geographic location near San Francisco. Cities like Pacifica struggle to attract Uber/Lyft drivers, but this is not the case with Daly City. Daly City could easily support an Uber/Lyft enterprise.

Housing

In Daly City, major issues are affordability and availability. These issues match the housing challenges in Redwood City and Pacifica. For example, there is a 10-year waiting list at Hillcrest Gardens and 100 seniors are still on the list. In addition, only 3 apartments turned over in last ten years (Hillcrest Gardens is only 10 years old).

Subsidized housing on the Peninsula may be about \$2,000 a month (which is good by Peninsula standards) but this is still too high for many older persons. In addition, there is the problem with HOA dues. While below market rate housing may be available to qualifying seniors, they are still required to pay market HOA dues that can be enormous. For example, HOA dues for a one bedroom, \$2,000 BMR condo can be as much as \$642 a month.

Many seniors do not wish to live in age-segregated housing; they wish for intergenerational housing options. Yet nothing like this exists and there is little hope that such housing is on the horizon. Affordable housing, mid range housing, does not exist and the situation has become so pressed that many homes do not even go to market- they are passed along in families. In addition very high rents and tax rates continue to climb. Older persons are being pushed out of the area. Focus group members pointed out that “affordability” is a relative term and most are not affordable for most older persons.

Focus group members suggested Daly City look to European models for intergenerational housing. They mentioned the intergenerational nutrition program with Bayshore Middle School. There is also the grant-funded program of the Kaiser nutrition department and the San Mateo County Recreation Department. HIP Housing’s home sharing program has a waiting list and the cost is up to the homeowner. (One example was a \$1,200 a month charge to sleep in the living room). The San Francisco Mayor’s Office of Housing holds open houses trying to help connect citizens with available information- focus group members would like something similar done in Redwood City.

This is a good start, and a central clearinghouse of available affordable, BMR or senior housing could go a long way to alleviate lack of information about what housing is available for seniors.

Social Participation

Focus group members expressed a need to find a better way to get information out to the community. The Daily Journal does not seem to cover much of Daly City.

While there are two functioning senior centers, the problem is getting there. Bayshore police will drive a van to get seniors to the center and the Boys and Girls Club has a van that will hold 12-14 persons. They emphasize social participation is directly linked to issues of transportation; you cannot have one without the other.

Respect and Social Inclusion

The main observation here was that all materials needed to be translated into multiple languages.

Civic Participation & Employment

Peninsula Family Services hires older persons and places them at a variety of sites. The hope is that the site will formalize the placement with a regular hire, but with new salary increases, seniors are not getting hired and thus the program is not expanding.

There are a variety of volunteer opportunities including RSVP, but no more reimbursement for travel. The senior centers offer vast volunteer opportunities via the Daly City Partnership and yet there is a continuing need for more volunteers. Many older persons are now caring for grandchildren because parents need to work long hours; thus the grandparents are no longer available to volunteer in the community.

The focus group explained that many volunteer opportunities are not well-advertised like reading for the blind, ESL classes, and volunteering in the schools. Focus group members suggest special programs for grandparents caring for grandchildren.

The group felt it was important to capture and maintain institutional knowledge of older citizens and educate the community that such volunteers are not taking jobs away from others. A chief idea of the group was to identify all potential volunteer positions in Daly City and make that list available to older persons; AND figure out a way to provide transport to those positions.

There have been two recommendations for “clearing houses” of information: for affordable, senior housing and potential volunteer positions. These could be organized through the two senior centers as part of an age-friendly initiative. Once the database was set up, technology would likely allow it to be maintained relatively easily.

Communication and Information

The focus group wondered what percentage of seniors is actually getting information about programs? Is there a way to measure this? The Daly City website is helpful. Unfortunately, the quarterly activity report published by the Recreation and Library has ended. Seniors have to go to the site to get the written report. The Daily Mail quarterly newsletter is somewhat dated and it is only in English. The online news is monthly but it misses seniors who are not online and it is only in English.

(Just translating the online news into two languages would have a significant impact, and a local student might do this economically).

In the Filipino community 3 newspapers exist and they welcome PSAs and free ads for nonprofits. The papers are free, but they are only printed in English. One local innovation is poster boards in the streets that advertise local events. The focus group recommends flyers in the racks at Lawson Hall, Seton Medical Center Clinic racks, or at the entrance. They also recommend community bulletin boards and wonder where they may be located. (Canada has had great success with kiosks placed around communities near bus stops and coffee shops. The kiosks are both push pin and electronic and some are combinations). The group shared that Channel 27 is a public access provider and one can access with both cable and TV antenna.

Community & Health Services

A HICAP counselor comes to the Doelger Senior Center twice a week to help with Social Security questions. There are also one-on-one counseling sites throughout the county. Most of the seniors who are on Medi Medi are in Daly City. Focus group members wonder if seniors know about Medicare Advantage? The focus group members recommend some kind of compilation of co-pay plans connected to Medicare so seniors can make more informed choices.

A major unmet need is dental care. UCSF and Samaritan House offer once a year cleaning (but is far below the recommended 3 or 4 times a year for seniors). MediCal has very limited access to dental care. The Sonrisas in San Mateo is “friendly” to seniors.

Unfortunately, older persons who are not at or below poverty cannot qualify for the low-income programs for dental care. Because of the proximity to San Francisco, middle income and some heavy need older persons are referred to San Francisco for services.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

The focus group was of the opinion that Daly City needs more handicapped ramps. Serramonte is a good open space where seniors can go and to the Brown Line Walkabout Program. It is 1.3 miles. There is tai chi and seniors can socialize in a safe space.

Future open spaces are going to be vital into the future, as Daly City needs more open spaces. Covered bus stops and benches are needed at: Our Lady of Mercy, St. Martins's Episcopal, Methodist Church and St. Andrew's. Carter Street needs benches at the bus stops.

Bayshore Blvd between Geneva and Main Street (SamTrans bus stop) has people standing in the mud. And the stop is right on the edge of the road. (The new development at Baylands will increase the number of commuters so this muddy bus stop needs urgent attention).

The focus group recommends a way for seniors to share information with the City about outdoor spaces and buildings needs. The focus group recommends a walking audit where senior auditors can identify cracks in the sidewalks, garbage in the streets, sidewalks blocked and whatever is needed.

iHelp on the city website is a good start. Livestreaming the City Council meetings and playing back the next day helps people to keep informed and feeling empowered. The focus group also recommended the use of technology to make sidewalk crossing safer.