

# TOWN OF LOS GATOS

## General Plan Update



### COMMUNITY PANEL

### FOCUS AREA WORKING PAPER

#### SENIOR NEEDS

#### Introduction

The Town of Los Gatos is conducting a focused update of its General Plan that addresses four key focus areas in the Town: Environment and Sustainability, Parks and Recreation, Youth Needs and Senior Needs. As part of the update process, the Town hosted a series of community panel discussions on Saturday, May 2, 2009, for each of the focus areas. The goal of the panels was to engage residents, experts and service providers in conversations about the community's needs and to identify potential solutions. This summary provides an overview of the discussion and suggested strategies that came out of the panel on Senior Needs.

#### Panelists

Four panelists participated on the Senior Needs panel discussion.

**Bob Campbell, Executive Director, Senior Housing Solutions.** Mr. Campbell has over 25 years of experience in non-profit organization management in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, healthcare, homelessness and housing. For the past 11 years, Bob has served as the Executive Director of Senior Housing Solutions, a Santa Clara County non-profit organization that develops affordable housing for low-income seniors.

**Alex Candalla, Executive Director, The Terraces of Los Gatos.** Mr. Candalla is Executive Director of The Terraces of Los Gatos, a Continuing Care Retirement Community owned and operated by American Baptist Homes of the West, which primarily serves seniors from the Town of Los Gatos and nearby communities of Saratoga and Monte Sereno. He has been with The Terraces for 13 years. Mr. Candalla currently serves as a Board Member for Aging Services of California. He has also served as Chairman of the Aging Services of California's Santa Rey Region, which covers not-for-profit senior housing and service providers extending from Palo Alto to Monterey.

**Ira Kurtz, Administrator, Los Gatos Meadows.** Mr. Kurtz specializes in retirement housing and has over 25 years of experience in long-term care administration. He works with Los Gatos Meadows (LGM), a retirement and care community that has operated in Los Gatos since 1971. LGM is one of five Continuing Care Retirement Communities owned and operated by Episcopal Senior Communities,

headquartered in Walnut Creek. LGM has been in Los Gatos since 1971 and consists of 152 independent living units, 7 assisted living units, and 39 nursing home beds. Recently, Episcopal Senior Communities has been looking at different options to modernize the campus and to make the community more financially viable.

**Janet Sumpter, Adult Education Supervisor, Los Gatos-Saratoga High School District, and Adult Program Supervisor, Los Gatos-Saratoga Community Education and Recreation.** Ms. Sumpter has 25 years of experience in the Los Gatos community. She is currently the Adult Program Supervisor for Los Gatos-Saratoga Community Education and Recreation (LGS Recreation), a joint powers agreement with Los Gatos Elementary, Saratoga Elementary, and Los Gatos-Saratoga High School District. She supervises the 55+ programs for LGS Recreation, which includes activities at the Neighborhood Center and at Loma Prieta, enrichment classes, and activities through a partnership with Live Oak Nutrition Center.

### **Discussion Summary**

This section summarizes the key topics discussed during the panel on Senior Needs. The panel was conducted informally. Panelists responded to questions from moderator Joanna Jansen of Design, Community & Environment, and community members in attendance.

#### *Existing Programs for Local Seniors*

- ◆ Caring About Resident Elders (CARE) Program: Through this program, a dispatcher calls an individual once a day and sends a welfare officer to the individual's home in the case of an emergency or absence.
- ◆ San Jose State Nursing Program: This program coordinates transportation and outreach services for seniors.
- ◆ Senior Housing Solutions: This organization provides affordable housing in single family home for very low-income seniors earning less than \$15,000 per year. They charge 30 percent of that for rent, which includes utilities, laundry, etc.
- ◆ Live Oak Senior Nutrition Center/Live Oak Recreation and Adult Center: This center offers nutritional support, dinner clubs and reading, art and photo groups. It provides adult education with a focus on gerontology. Facilities are limited to a pool, pool tables and bocce court.
- ◆ Senior Consortium: Local government, non-profit; organizes and sponsors events.
- ◆ Silver Pages. This program keeps an extensive list of all types of senior services. Accuracy of the Silver Pages is difficult to maintain.

*Challenges in Senior Care System*

- ◆ Town lacks a dedicated social worker or coordinator for the programs listed above and many others.
- ◆ The general population, including that of the Town, has outdated views of nursing homes and care networks.
- ◆ The entire senior care system “needs a triage.” While the fundamental care structure is in place, it needs to be more robust. Seniors need multiple levels of care that many are not receiving.
- ◆ There is a shortage of skilled nursing facilities, and strict regulations limit nurses, doctors and caregivers to private facilities such as the Terraces Community.
- ◆ California regulations need to be open to change and adaptation; nuclear power and nursing homes are the two most regulated systems.
- ◆ The overall senior care system suffers from a labor shortage; as a result, workers are sorely needed.
- ◆ Employment discrimination against those 65+ is a constant barrier to seniors who want to work and strive for independence.

*Senior Population Trends*

- ◆ Those 85 and older represent the fastest growing sector of the population.
- ◆ One in four Californians will be 80 years old by 2040.
- ◆ The population of Los Gatos is roughly 30,000 residents with approximately 5,000 individuals that are 65 years of age or older.

*Senior Housing Issues*

- ◆ Town lacks affordable housing options for seniors; this is a major obstacle to self-sufficiency.
- ◆ “Poverty” and “self-sufficiency” need to be redefined in modern mindset. Self-sufficient income in one place does not permit self-sufficiency in Santa Clara County.
- ◆ Senior cost of living is \$1,928 per month, but average income for seniors is \$1,500 per month. Therefore seniors demand multiple subsidies for food, housing, transportation, etc.

*Future Needs of Seniors*

- ◆ Most residents at The Terraces are from Town or surrounding communities. The consensus is that everyone who lives in the area wants to stay here.
- ◆ Los Gatos must prepare for the future of senior care, by asking: Is the senior center of today the same type of center that people in their 50’s and 60’s would want to live in, in the next 10 to 20 years? New ideas:

- Development of computer-based mental exercises
  - Video conferencing facilities for increased family contact
  - Intellectual, as well as physical, enrichment programs/exercises
  - Partnerships with technology firms for improved, wireless home-based medical and communication systems
  - Naturally collaborative environments that promote interaction and activity
- ◆ Regulations must be relaxed to encourage at-home care because the future of senior services will be customized care in the home.

#### *Land Use and Seniors*

- ◆ Land use and development present specific opportunities and challenges related to senior life in Los Gatos.
- ◆ Large tracts of land in the Town will become available for new land uses in the near future. These tracts, although most are currently zoned commercial, represent opportunities for senior-oriented development, as well as opportunities to work with private owners and attract facilities through development incentives.
- ◆ New development related to seniors should consider mixed use strategies and walkability.
- ◆ Los Gatos must decide how to address the issue of single family homes becoming multi-generational homes.
- ◆ Compliance with building and permitting requirements associated with ADA accessibility can be difficult, especially for seniors.
- ◆ Secondary units, or “Granny flats” are allowed, but are restricted by lot size requirements, require specific plumbing/wiring permits, and can lead to parking conflicts and rental infractions.

#### **Suggested Policies and Action Items**

This section summarizes the panelists’ suggestions for policies or actions that may be considered for inclusion in the General Plan Update process. These suggestions are organized by the topics discussed in the Panel Discussion section above.

#### *Existing Programs for Local Seniors*

- ◆ Support development of a “one-stop” assistance and emergency center for Town seniors, in order to provide a “clearinghouse” of information regarding care, housing, safety, financial assistance, activities, classes and other services.

- ◆ Provide an increased number of community spaces for individuals of all ages.

*Challenges in Senior Care System*

- ◆ Work with the State Department of Social Services to change policies that inhibit hiring in California.
- ◆ Allocate funds for hiring of dedicated Town of Los Gatos social worker/case worker(s).

*Senior Housing Issues*

- ◆ Develop assistance programs targeting access to affordable housing for seniors.
- ◆ Pursue Town partnership with local technology firms, such as Intel, to implement at home communications/safety/medical support systems or electronic “senior stations” throughout Los Gatos.
- ◆ Pursue affiliations with local universities, such as San Jose State University, in order to increase provision of senior housing and services/facilities.
- ◆ The Sobrato Building, at the end of Almaden Blvd., could become a senior-oriented development offering economic and social benefits to the community.

*Future Needs of Seniors*

- ◆ Develop a “marketing plan” to attract health and service care providers for town seniors.
- ◆ “Mother Café Plus” in Chicago is a successful example of a meeting place where all ages can interact. It is a traditional café, but with a library, activity room, computer terminals and other amenities. As such, it provides a space where seniors can spend relaxing time without feeling isolated or alone.
- ◆ Improve local bus service with increased bus stops, expanded routes and/or increased frequencies.
- ◆ Seniors need to be provided with opportunities for contact, connections and relationships. Town should show seniors “we’re thinking of you” by facilitating visibility, independence and activity.
- ◆ Promote volunteerism and activity.
- ◆ Provide community spaces for individuals of all ages.

*Land Use and Seniors*

- ◆ Review Town polices and zoning regulations to remove obstacles to the installation of ADA compliance improvements, such as wheelchair ramps, handrails or lifts.
- ◆ Ease restrictions on the permitting of secondary units.