Building Age-Friendly Cities

Rosa Hernandez

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is no doubt that the growth of the aging population in the next 20-30 years will have far-reaching implications for all who live in cities around the world. San Francisco and Morgan Hill are two cities, among others, in California that are engaged in the development of an action plan to prepare for this growth. The County of Santa Clara invested resources into developing and supporting existing programs targeting the aging population. San Francisco is also moving forward with meeting the challenges that the city and county will face in the future and is very invested in planning and setting dynamic and sustainable programs that will support its citizens' healthy aging in place. Planning for dedicated staffing and ongoing collaboration with community partners and advocacy groups will strengthen the probability and sustainability of programs that are being developed in both cities.

Rosa Hernandez Protective Services Supervisor, City & County of San Francisco

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Introduction

The world's population is aging in large numbers. This increase in the percentage of the world's population aging, according to David Wei (1), is due to increased longevity and declining fertility. This increase in longevity increases the number of older people and the declining fertility decreases the number of births.   Some cities are already preparing for this major demographic change by going through a process to assess what cities will need for their aging population and plan how to meet those needs, now and in the future. As part of this process cities must develop a baseline assessment to identify strengths and gaps to plan for the long term.

Knowing how challenging it is to live in San Francisco at any age, it was important to find out what other cities are putting into place for their aging population. San Francisco County's Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) partners' with community-based organizations to provide services to persons over 60 years of age and adults with disabilities over 18 years of age. Since 2002, the City and County of San Francisco has been planning for its aging population. San Francisco's efforts to be an age-friendly city also involve being a disability-friendly city. Community advocates launched a grassroots movement in 2002. In 2014, the city joined the World Health Organization (WHO),.and in 2016 the Aging and Disability Friendly San Francisco task force was created. This task force meets every month to review each domain and to develop SMART Goals for each domain; it is scheduled to complete this phase by December of 2017. The Department of Aging and Adult Services, is part of this task force and forms part of the leadership team leading this effort. This case study will provide San Francisco with lessons learned from Morgan Hill's experience, a city located in Santa Clara County.

An Aging World

Aging impacts everyone. How can cities create an environment that is conducive to healthy environments so aging citizens can live comfortably and have a better quality of life? This case study describes how Morgan Hill and the County of Santa Clara accommodate the aging population at the county and city level.

Santa Clara County's 2015 population, per the U.S. Census (2), is approximately 1.9 million and Morgan Hill's is approximately 40,872. *As the baby boomer generation ages, about 28 percent of Santa Clara County's population will be over the age of 60 by 2030, according to a county report. That is nearly double today's numbers. And experts say that will require rethinking what residents want and need (3).* How cities assess for what residents will need is a big job: how to begin, how can a comprehensive assessment be done, and who will lead these efforts?

The *Seniors' Agenda of Santa Clara County* and Department of Aging and Adult Services using the Age-Friendly (A-F) Initiative are leading these efforts Santa Clara County. The county is working on having all 15 cities designated as A-F by June 2017 by the World Health Organization

World Health Organization and Global Age-Friendly Project

The **World Health Organization** started an international movement to address this demographic trend in 2005. In 2007, WHO published a guide for cities to prepare a plan so they can be designated as *Age-Friendly Cities (5).* The WHO's website lists key facts about the aging world population that provides a sense of the urgency to address an aging world:

- *Between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will nearly double from 12% to 22%.*
- *By 2020, the number of people aged 60 years and older will outnumber children younger than 5 years.*
- *In 2050, 80% of older people will be living in low- and middle-income countries.*
- *The pace of population ageing is much faster than in the past.*
- *All countries face major challenges to ensure that their health and social systems are ready to make the most of this demographic shift. (Fact sheet N0 404, September 2015) http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs404/en/*

Since 2005, over 380 cities in the world have achieved WHO's A-F designation. The WHO identified active aging as a key factor that enhances quality of life as people age in urban settings. Eight additional domains also influence the health and aging of life of older adults. The WHO recommends a bottom-up participation approach and stresses the importance of having two focus groups for the assessment phase. Focus groups should be done separately, one to get input from the professionals and the other to get input from seniors. The process to become a member of the Global Age-Friendly cities is outlined by WHO's Guide 2007 (5). This guide describes how to get started and how to benefit from the continuous cycle of improvement:

Commence a cycle of 4 stages:

1. Complete an application with WHO and submit a letter from the major and municipal administration to WHO indicating their commitment to the cycle of continuous improvement, and
2. Planning (1-2 years): involves an assessment phase of strengths and needs to determine active and healthy ageing in the city. The following eight domains influence the health and aging of life of older adults:
    i. Outdoor spaces and buildings
    ii. Transportation
    iii. Housing
    iv. Social participation
    v. Respect and social inclusion
    vi. Civic participation and employment
    vii. Communication information
    viii. Community support and health services
3. Implementation (3-5 years)
4. Progress evaluation at the end of the 5th year of continual improvement

Obtaining a designation by the WHO provides cities with technical support and access to a worldwide community network. In the U.S., the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has joined this effort as an affiliate of the WHO. According to AARP, the benefits to joining the AARP Network of A-F communities includes access to social experts, cutting-edge information, networking between cities, speaking engagements at conferences and others. AARP specifically states what A-F networks are and are not on their webpage:

> *Communities in the AARP age-friendly network are not retirement villages, gated developments, nursing homes or assisted living facilities….Membership in the network does not mean that the community is, currently, "age-friendly" or a great place to retire…Membership in the network is not an endorsement by AARP….What membership does mean is that a community's elected leadership has made the commitment to actively work toward making their town, city or county a great place for people of all ages(6).*

San Francisco/Morgan Hill Comparison: Cycles of Improvement

This case study focuses on Morgan Hill efforts to become a designated A-F City. Table 1 compares San Francisco and Morgan Hill activities in the cycle of continuous improvement. This table captures the process and steps taken in an urban community and those taken by a rural community to obtain an A-F designation.   Both have already been designated by the WHO and are at different stages of the process:

Table 1. Status of San Francisco and Morgan Hills process 2017		
City	San Francisco City & County	Morgan Hill, Santa Clara
Population	870,887	40,872
Domains	• Outdoor spaces and buildings • Transportation • Housing • Community Supports & Health Services • Engagement & Inclusion • Resiliency & Emergency	• Transportation • Communication & Information • Lifelong Learning

	Preparedness • Employment & Economic Security • Communication, Information, and Technology	
Planning (focus Groups)	7 Completed: 2014 (Completed by non-profits/grassroots efforts prior to official county involvement)	Completed: 2015 1: With older community 2: With Professionals (Completed by CAFÉ)
Phase	Assessment Phase Monthly meetings for development of recommendations for the 1st Action plan.	Implementation of Action Plan Phase New programs and pilot programs
Data Sources	• DAAS needs assessment • City Survey • SF's Strategy for Excellence in Dementia Care • Vision Zero • LGBT Aging at the Golden Gate Policy Issues & Recommendations • Dementia Friendly Planning • Focus Group Report • Long Term Care Middle Income Population study • Families Caring for an Aging America.	County wide surveys
County Departments Involved	• San Francisco City & County, Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) • Department of Planning • Municipal Transit Authority • Department of Public Health • Mayor's Office on Disability	• Seniors' Agenda of Santa Clara County, Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) • Department of Public Health
Staffing	Part time County Worker from DAAS and support staff	Full time County Worker from DAAS
Designation Granted	2014 (grassroots movement started in 2002)	June-2016

Morgan Hill, CA

Morgan Hill is a city located at the southern tip of Silicon Valley in Santa Clara County. The United States Census Bureau reported the city's population was at 40,872 in 2015. The percentages for age groups were at 28.6% for persons under 18 years and 9.5% for persons 65 years and older (7). In June of 2016, after an impressive pace and strong leadership, the city was designated by the WHO as Age-Friendly. Debbie Vasquez, the Older Adult Services Supervisor, leads the efforts in Morgan Hill to improve the quality of life for the aging population in the Morgan Hill Centennial Recreation Center. Ms. Vasquez was hired full-time by the county in September of 2015. The following is a list of highlights and accomplishments:

- October 2015 - formed the senior committee for the project
- November 2015 - presented to the city council
- January 2016 - ran 2 focus groups (professional/older community) with the assistance of Center for Age Friendly Excellence (CAFÉ)
- April 2016 - the city council formally supported the initiative and the application was submitted to the WHO
- June 2016 - Morgan Hill was officially designated as an Age-Friendly City, with a focus on:
    - Transportation
    - Information & Communication
    - Lifelong Learning

The impressive momentum, per Ms. Vasquez, is attributed to one of the benefits of a small town where "you know the stakeholders…and the needs" and how it "all fits." The very active Senior Advisory Committee (SAC) meets monthly to discuss its Age-Friendly senior work plan which now has the following accomplishments:

- The Morgan Hill Endowment is looking at using the Silicon Valley Community Foundation to be the administrator of its endowment and is currently filing for 501c3 status.
- A monthly Age-Friendly column in the local newspaper written by the committee members.

- El Toro Social Club: serves as a venue for older adults 55+ to gather, create and maintain supportive relationships, and provide entertainment and cultural events. El Toro now has 300 members.
- Lifelong Learners, launched in January of 2016,;has already had most of the year's calendar of events fill up with educational presentations, such as Digital Forensic Anthropology, Astronomy and others.
- Volunteer Transportation Pilot Project: Focuses on testing new software for ten volunteers who will be providing transportation to five seniors over the age of 65. The pilot will be expanded once all the results are evaluated.
- Well Check Program: 41 calls were made in March 2016 to see how seniors who had not returned to the center were doing and why they had not returned to the center. Out of these nine returned, two reported transportation was an issue and several did not want to return but wanted volunteers to call back.
- Dementia Friend Drive: did a soft launch by promoting internal staff to become dementia friends before launching a public campaign.

Challenges for Morgan Hill

Morgan Hill believed it had to meet all its goals before submitting the application to the WHO.

CAFÉ, a technical vendor, shared some good news: "…*qualifications for the application* ~~was~~*ere*

not necessary to meet all the goals but to have an intention to complete the goals." Morgan Hill

was able to submit its application to the WHO. Though all fifteen cities in Santa Clara are at

different stages of the application process for designation as an A-F city, it is remarkable that all

of them will be designated as A-F Cities by June of 2017 according to the Seniors' Agenda 2016

Annual Report (Social Services Agency, Department of Aging and Adult Services).

Partnering With the County

Morgan Hill's Debbie Sanchez described the relationship with Santa Clara County as a

partnership. Debbie Miller, a county representative, acts as a liaison and provides the committee

with a direct connection to resources and information to work on the A-F initiative. The county

does not provide direct funding, but instead provides support in the following ways:

- Staff assistance and support
- Technical support of CAFÉ for the focus groups

- Funding of survey administered county wide in May 2016
- Assistance with flyers, adds, and hosting of *Being Mortal on March 16, 2016*

Lessons Learned

Morgan Hill is committed to the longevity of their A-F Initiative by ensuring ongoing funding for its events. Filing for SCVF/501c3 and having the SAC take ownership and leadership of this project are integral to the sustainability of all the programs and support put in place by this dedicated and passionate group. To strengthen this, the county funded a full-time position dedicated to the coordination and development of this initiative in all 15 cities. The funding of a dedicated resource plays an integral role in maintaining the momentum achieved by Santa Clara County, which according to the Seniors' Agenda 2016 Annual Report, , will be the first county to be designated by the WHO as an Age-Friendly County in the United States. Given that the aging population is expected to continue to grow, both San Francisco and Santa Clara Counties should consider allocating funding for full-time staff to meet the growing demand of the aging community.

Morgan Hill's pilot volunteer transportation project, though still small, promises to be setting the ground work for a great transportation project that will be administered by the Morgan Hill Centennial Recreation Center. San Francisco may want to explore partnering with community= based organizations and/or senior centers to provide transportation programs for seniors to health- related and/or civic engagement activities, such as congregate meal programs, to reduce social isolation and promote an active senior life style. The county should consider planning for funding the full-time position for the next fiscal year, which is when San Francisco will be in the implementation phase of the first action plan.

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References

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3) The Mercury News, Eric Kurhi: PUBLISHED: May 6, 2016 at 9:54 am

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