San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers

Every Community Deserves a Modern Senior Center

MASTER PLAN SUMMARY • SUMMER 2022

SAN DIEGO
Seniors Community
FOUNDATION

LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Why Seniors Centers Matter

By 2030, our region will be home to almost one million people over the age of 60. The dramatic increase of older adults in San Diego County is happening now, and we must **take action** to provide the resources and supports they need.

The new wave of older adults have longer life spans, smaller family and friend support networks, and wider ranges of housing, transportation, caregiving, health care and technology challenges.

But it's not just the region's population that is aging. A 2019 assessment study by the San Diego Seniors Community Foundation found that many of our region's existing senior centers are outdated and unprepared for the coming surge of retiring Baby Boomers and the growth of the 75 and over population.

Currently, San Diego County has 28 senior centers in communities from **San Ysidro to Oceanside** and **Coronado to Borrego Springs**. Yet, existing senior centers serve only about 8% of the region's total senior population – and many of these centers are underfunded, understaffed and lack sufficient programming.

Why should you care about senior centers in your neighborhood? Access to communal spaces and trusted resources for our region's older adults correlates with decreased rates of isolation, loneliness and depression. **We believe every older adult should have access to upgraded and updated senior centers for their health and wellbeing.**

San Diego Seniors Community Foundation's "**San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers"** illuminates the disparities that exist in our region with respect to accessing quality senior centers. This report is a direct response to California's "Master Plan on Aging" and Governor Gavin Newsom's call for counties and cities to create specific action plans for what's needed in their community. We hope that this plan will provide a foundation for community dialogue and action to ensure that all San Diego County older adults have a vibrant and safe place to learn, grow, socialize and thrive. This brochure summarizes some of the most critical points.

What will it take to fix it? The comprehensive Master Plan outlines specific initial improvements needed in each city and community of San Diego County to serve local seniors. In total, the plan identifies $147 million of upgrades and new building costs. To begin this long journey, we will engage elected officials and community stakeholders throughout the region in the development of Senior Center Action Plans to assess specific needs and outline implementation plans.

We hope you'll join us in realizing this vision. **Success means our grandmothers/fathers, great uncles/aunts, fathers/mothers, neighbors, friends and eventually, each of us, will benefit from these resources and improvements.**

Bob Kelly
Founder & Board Member,
San Diego Seniors
Community Foundation

Ted Chan
Board Chairman,
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Seniors Community
FOUNDATION

2022

San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers

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THE SITUATION

Modern Senior Centers Matter

The "San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers" uses geographic, demographic and economic data to map and review the overall accessibility and future needs of the region's senior centers. The plan was built from extensive on-site observations by the authors and input from senior center directors and community leaders. Here's a look at the many factors driving our work.

A Look at Senior Centers Today

Key findings of the San Diego Seniors Community Foundation's "The State of San Diego Senior Centers" (2019) include:

- 75% of San Diego senior centers are more than 30 years old.
- Senior centers serve only 8% of the total senior population
- Nearly a quarter of the centers have no full-time employees
- Over 50% of senior centers are in areas with poor or limited public transportation options
- Only 21% of senior centers have a dedicated computer lab with adequate hardware
- Only 18% of senior centers have an equipped fitness room and only one senior center has a gymnasium on site

Defining Dynamic Senior Centers and Identifying Innovations

Critical elements of a new paradigm shift to enrich the aging experience include senior centers as:

- Preeminent community locations that become the trusted sources for all things related to healthy aging
- Emerging leaders in developing solutions that address the impacts that social determinants of health (the conditions of where we live, work and play) have on older adults' wellbeing
- Modern facilities that fit the community culture and provide amenities that reflect the needs and identities of the area's population
- Home to classes and programs grounded in health, fitness and financial well-being that help people thrive
- Gateways to access the vast services and programs of the San Diego aging services network

SAN DIEGANS ARE GETTING OLDER

Almost all of San Diego County's cities will see explosive growth of older adults in their area now and in the coming decades, as forecasted by SANDAG. In some cities, the overall population growth may not be that high, but the increasing percentage of those ages 60+ is substantial, as younger age groups decline in size. More details are outlined in the full Master Plan. Now is the time to bring innovation and new ideas to the challenges right in front of us … and ahead of us.

Top 5 Cities for 60+ Population Growth

	Population Net Growth		% Growth
Community	**2020-2050**	**Residents 60+**	**Residents 60+**
1. Coronado	585	1,060	181%
2. Carlsbad	6,068	8,615	142%
3. Encinitas	3,762	5,241	139%
4. Oceanside	11,537	11,161	97%
5. Poway	3,123	2,885	92%

WHY SENIOR CENTERS?

The majority of San Diegans have made it clear that they want to live out their lives in their homes, in the communities they love and support, and with resources that maximize their independence.

Other cities across the nation have built out modern and robust senior centers and senior center networks. These centralized hubs allow older adults today and of the future to access the resources necessary to maintain, sustain and improve their lives, including:

- Physical/health care
- Behavioral/mental health
- Social interaction and activities
- Intellectual supports
- Creative outlets and resources
- Technology
- Financial education and assistance
- Volunteer opportunities

Senior centers are critical to the families of older adults – providing vital connections for their loved ones' overall health and wellbeing.

Senior centers also play a key role in ensuring there is **equity for healthy aging for all**, especially those who are low-income, from minority backgrounds and/or are "senior orphans" (those without family/caretaking networks).

Adverse social determinants of health conditions and their consequences – e.g. lack of access to nutritious food, transportation, affordable housing and other crucial resources – disproportionately affect marginalized populations. The empowered senior center holds the potential to be the prominent community organization to ensure that every older adult, no matter the socioeconomic standing, has an equal opportunity to thrive.

The unprecedented increase of those 60 and over requires unprecedented support, and a network of sophisticated senior centers is the backbone we need.

OUR VISION

Senior Centers of Excellence

Senior centers must become an essential piece of the infrastructure that supports our aging population. These state-of-the-art centers will be attractive, welcoming and staffed by specialists with expertise in the field of aging. A community's senior center will be the hub for its 60-and-over residents – with programs and vital resources that address four critical areas of their lives: physical, mental, social and financial health.

Ideally, a typical senior would have:

Trained community navigators to help seniors access benefits and services, and to utilize vetted resources such as financial advisors, attorneys, and care providers

An on-site dining room and commercial kitchen offering nutritious daily meal service, along with a meal delivery program for homebound seniors

Extended operating hours (7 a.m.-9 p.m.) to align with active senior lifestyles

Outreach programs to identify socially isolated seniors and elder orphans, connect them with services, visit them regularly, provide needed socialization and monitor their condition

Medical and dental clinics on-site to provide basic services and health screenings

Classroom where educational programming such as art, music, writing, cooking, Spanish, and other courses will give seniors the chance to learn new skills or hone existing ones

A computer lab with tutoring and classes to help seniors stay current on new technology, software applications and social media platforms

Programming designed to appeal to younger seniors (age 60-70), such as field trips, concerts, theatrical performances and other cultural experiences

A gymnasium, pool and fitness facilities with classes and equipment geared toward a new generation of active seniors, including dedicated outdoor space for exercise

Recreational facilities like a game room or theater with organized events to provide opportunities for socializing

A social enterprise (e.g. thrift store, catering business, beauty parlor, etc.) to provide employment opportunities for seniors and spin off income to the senior center

Easy access to public transit and/or dedicated transportation services for seniors who are unable to drive themselves

Job training to support the growing population of seniors who are still in the workforce and can't yet afford to retire, or those who have retired and need supplemental income

Programming centered around the unique cultures and identities of senior center users in a given community. Examples include special events, social or religious groups, and celebrations specifically for Asian, Hispanic or LGBTQ seniors.

Programming designed to increase the civic participation of seniors for the good of society. Examples include intergenerational mentorship programs, volunteerism, voter registration drives and other opportunities for seniors to use their skills and experience to engage with their communities

Building a Stronger Network of Senior Centers

It's time for San Diegans and political leaders to work together and ensure that every community in the San Diego region has access to a state-of-the-art senior center. This means creating a robust network of modern, innovative, well-funded and fully staffed centers throughout the region.

By planning and investing now, we are addressing the health and wellbeing of today's seniors and those of generations to come.

What's it going to cost?

The San Diego Seniors Community Foundation has established the San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers Capital Campaign of $147 million to start building the network of modern senior centers needed countywide. The full Master Plan report details every city/community in the county, its current and forecasted older adult population and demographics, current social service resources, and a cost estimate to modernize or build the senior centers we all deserve.

These public infrastructure investments can help improve the quality of life for everyone in our region, especially older adults and others in low-income communities. Senior centers in a neighborhood contribute to community building, provide a gathering place for extended families and friends, and promote multi-generational interactions.

Reflecting Contemporary Needs

Every modern senior center must be designed to reflect the needs and diversity of the communities they serve. Depending on location, existing senior supports and services, availability of land and buildings, and funding mechanisms, three senior center sizes can be identified: Small (6,000-9,000 square feet), Moderate (17,000-22,000 square feet) and Large (28,000-35,000 square feet).

All models offer modern and well-equipped senior centers that act as social gathering centers for connections and interactions, as well as providing pathways to a higher quality of life. Specific amenities may include small or expansive fitness centers, open space, technology resources, gymnasiums and/or community aquatic pools.

Prioritizing Senior Centers in San Diego County

By advocating for senior center projects in areas without one, we can reduce the disparities and enhance access for our most vulnerable older adults. New senior centers are recommended for the following communities that have no local senior center:

- Barrio Logan
- Clairemont
- Eastlake/Otay Mesa
- El Cajon
- Santee/Lakeside

In addition, we need 13 new senior centers in communities that have older, outdated or extremely limited buildings and amenities, and five senior centers are recommended for expansion, renovation or upgrades.

Why Should YOU Care About Senior Centers?

It takes a committed and courageous village to care for an aging population. We need the collective power of community residents and leaders to provide support to create a countywide network of modern centers. This is a growing population that we all hope to be part of someday. And, nationally, approximately 1 in 4 people who are 65 or older are expected to be senior orphans.

That means that by 2030, approximately 180,000 older San Diegans will not have any support network. Senior centers create a central place for the key resources and supports that seniors need. Vital collaborators include:

Preparing For The Next Generation of Senior Centers

San Diego Seniors Community Foundation is helping to create a thoroughly modern, interconnected network of sophisticated, service-based senior centers throughout San Diego County.

Through the public's support, we already funded "The State of San Diego Senior Centers" Assessment Study and "San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers" to enhance access to more and better senior centers, and continue to provide opportunities for people of all ages to get involved in protecting and promoting the needs of our aging population.

This vital work is just getting underway. An estimated $147 million is needed for existing senior center improvements and new senior center buildings throughout the region.

We need your help now

JOIN THE DIALOGUE

This project highlights the importance of senior centers and provides a roadmap for modernizing old and building new centers. It is critical that senior centers be accessible to all older San Diegans, irrespective of race, ethnicity, economic standing or community of residence.

We expect that the Master Plan will be used by you, your children, concerned neighbors, community groups, elected officials, city planners, private and public foundations, individual donors, and all other stakeholders to inform and prioritize actions and decisions that impact our booming population of older San Diegans.

ADOPT A COMMUNITY

By prioritizing senior center projects in communities that are under-resourced in general, we can reduce the disparities in access and amenities. Individuals, businesses, organizations and neighborhoods can start by fundraising for a Senior Center Action Plan, which includes a community-specific assessment and written implementation plan to get started.

The assessment process brings together local leaders and older adults to garner insight into the specific needs of the community and is supported by a comprehensive review of the existing resources and potential partnerships that can further support the senior center model. The implementation plan builds upon the assessment with thorough integration of

community feedback and research. The final plan presents a financial model that gives stakeholders a framework to realize the vision of a transformed local senior center.

To contribute or find out more, please visit www.sdscf.org/seniorcentermasterplan.

WHAT CAN YOU DO RIGHT NOW?

- Contact San Diego Seniors Community Foundation if you would like a new or improved senior center in your community.
- Contact your mayor, city councilmembers and county supervisors to encourage policies, plans and investments in your neighborhood that support modernizing and building capacity for local senior centers.
- Share this Master Plan summary with elected officials, family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Download a copy of the summary and full report from the San Diego Seniors Community Foundation website at www.sdscf.org/seniorcentermasterplan.
- Get involved in community efforts to build new and modernize older senior centers. Enlist the help of your friends and neighbors to deepen their connection to and build a shared sense of stewardship for the older adults in our own backyards.
- Support senior center-based projects by giving to the San Diego Seniors Community Foundation. We support a variety of working partnerships with local governments, nonprofit groups and businesses to improve access to and enhance the amenities provided to all communities.
- Have an older adult neighbor or relative? Take a few moments to check in.

San Diego Senior Centers – What We Have & What We Need

North Coastal

1. Country Club Senior Center
2. El Corazon Senior Center
3. Carlsbad Senior Center
4. Carlsbad Southeast
5. Encinitas Community & Senior Center
6. Rancho Santa Fe Senior Center
7. Solana Beach
8. Del Mar Community Connections

North Inland

9. Fallbrook
10. Borrego Springs
11. Gloria McClellan Senior Center
12. Vista Southwest
13. San Marcos Senior Activity Center
14. Escondido
15. Rancho Bernardo
16. Ramona
17. Poway
18. Valley Center

Central

19. Mira Mesa
20. Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center
21. La Jolla Community Center
22. Clairemont
23. Pacific Beach / Mission Beach
24. Bayside Community Center
25. College Avenue Center
26. Mission Hills
27. City Heights
28. Balboa Park Senior Lounge
29. Ocean Beach / Point Loma
30. Serving Seniors' Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center
31. Neighborhood House Senior Center
32. Fourth District Senior Resource Center

East

33. Santee / Lakeside
34. Alpine
35. El Cajon
36. La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center
37. Lemon Grove

South

38. John D. Spreckels Center
39. National City
40. Norman Park Senior Center
41. Sweetwater / Eastlake / Otay Ranch
42. Imperial Beach
43. San Ysidro

Scan QR code to visit
www.sdscf.org/seniorcentermasterplan

San Diego Seniors Community Foundation helps San Diego's older adults live healthy, fulfilled lives – maintaining their role as socially connected, physically active and vital members of our community. We do this by raising funds to strengthen services and resources for our older adults – including upgrading or replacing San Diego County's 28 senior centers to bring them to what we call the "senior center of the future," serving as overall advocates for seniors, and much more.

Tax ID: 81-4910505

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This report was funded by a grant from the Parker Foundation, with additional support received from the Gary and Mary West Foundation, Del Mar Healthcare, and California Healthcare Foundation.