



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: February 28, 2023

17

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

SUPPORTING SENIOR CENTERS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

Adults 60 years and older comprise America’s fastest-growing population. By 2025, all members of America’s largest population group nicknamed the “baby boomer” generation will be at least 60 years old. It is estimated that older adults over the age of 60 will make up 26.3 percent of the San Diego County population by 2030, up from 20.3 percent in 2018.¹ It is important that all communities within San Diego County have the capacity to support the unique needs of the aging population.

The maturing of the baby boomer generation creates the need for additional infrastructure and resources vital for the aging population. These needs are not just limited to medical services but include important elements of community, socialization, and enrichment activities. Staying active and connected to others has been demonstrated to stem age-related cognitive and physical declines. In addition, socialization and activities play a key role in addressing behavioral health issues that older adults may experience.

Senior centers are a well-established model for older adults to receive a variety of supports and services that foster healthy aging in safe and welcoming environments. However, not every older adult is able to benefit from senior centers due to a lack of availability in some parts of the region or a lack of sufficient enriching services at some existing sites. Cities run senior centers and provide services. There are two proposed senior centers in the unincorporated area of the County, in Ramona and Fallbrook.

¹ [Older Population and Aging \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov)

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A recent report released by San Diego Seniors Community Foundation called the “San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers: Every Community Deserves a Modern Senior Center” (Master Plan) details an effort to create momentum and consensus among community stakeholders. The Master Plan’s goal is for every community in San Diego County to have access to modern, innovative, and resource-rich senior centers. The report describes an innovative model in which centers serve as community spaces that move beyond the traditional functions of providing nutrition services and social events. These reimagined centers transform into dynamic community entities that engage the physical, mental, intellectual, and creative facets of older adults and empower them to realize a higher quality of life by supporting health, wellness, independence, and purposeful connection to their communities. The new vision embraces and engages the increasingly diverse older adult population by identifying the needs and preferences of each community.

Launched at the direction of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) on September 24, 2019 (4), the Aging Roadmap is the County of San Diego’s (County) plan to ensure that the region has communities and programs that equitably support the needs and celebrate the contributions of the growing population of older adults in the San Diego region. There are ten priority areas within the Aging Roadmap, including two of which are particularly relevant to senior centers: Social Participation and Health & Community Support.

While the County does not have a mandate to provide senior centers or services to senior centers, Aging and Independence Services does operate some programs at senior centers throughout the County. These programs can act as an important lifeline to the community. To better serve the community, support the work of the Aging Roadmap, and find opportunities for growth the County should conduct an analysis of existing services at senior centers, build relationships and conduct outreach to senior communities, and evaluate potential locations for enhanced senior center like services at existing County sites.

Today’s action demonstrates the County’s commitment to older adults and the needs of this population. Aligned with the County’s Aging Roadmap, the Master Plan brings a tangible, local model of change that supports visionary policy frameworks. By leveraging the principles outlined in the Master Plan, our region can build a better-connected and unified network of diverse aging stakeholders who are empowered to bring transformative change to an emerging societal challenge. We urge your support.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHAIRWOMAN NORA VARGAS AND SUPERVISOR NATHAN FLETCHER

1. Receive the San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers (Master Plan), titled “San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers: Every Community Deserves a Modern Senior Center” (Attachment A, on file with the Clerk of the Board).
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to report back in 180 days with an evaluation to identify elements of the Master Plan that can be incorporated into the County of San Diego Aging Roadmap.

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3. Direct the CAO to report back in 180 days with an evaluation of existing County of San Diego services provided at senior centers throughout San Diego County and the feasibility and cost of enhancing or expanding services to additional senior centers.
4. Direct the CAO to conduct outreach with community partners, senior centers, and other relevant agencies, and report back in 180 days with a plan to improve access to County of San Diego services, including or not limited to Aging and Independence Services, Self-Sufficiency Programs, Housing and Community Development Services, and Behavioral Health Services.
5. Direct the CAO to report back in 180 days with an evaluation of existing County of San Diego-owned facilities with available space, such as libraries and community centers, compatible with potential senior center activities, to identify opportunities to integrate activities in line with the County's Aging Roadmap and Master Plan.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Senior centers are essential community-based service environments for all older adults but have even greater importance for seniors on fixed or low incomes. Senior centers are often also home to a variety of low-cost or no-cost nutrition, fitness, educational, and social programming and provide older adults access to knowledgeable staff that can help connect them to the various nonprofit services and public benefit programs.

Transforming senior centers results in more than just enhanced physical environments and a few more programs. It is about recognizing the systemic challenges that some individuals have faced throughout their life course due to adverse environments and policies that made economic, housing, educational, and employment opportunities scarce, suboptimal, or practically unavailable. Today's recommendations will allow the County to continue supporting vital programs and services for older adults, improving the quality of life for equity-seeking groups of all ages including Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), women, people with disabilities, immigrants, and the LGBTQ+ community.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed action aims to advance efforts to create a healthier and more resilient San Diego by creating opportunities for community, socialization, and enrichment activities for seniors. Staying active and connected to others has been demonstrated to stem age-related cognitive and physical declines and thus improve health outcomes and costs for all people in the region.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's actions. There will be future fiscal impacts based on recommendations resulting from today's actions for which staff will return to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) with recommendations for consideration and approval. Funding for future costs will need to be identified by the departments and will proceed once identified. The departments will monitor their budgets and return to the Board with mid-year action to adjust the budget as necessary and/or incorporate into future budgets as funding becomes available. At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years

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BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

There are nearly 3.4 million people currently residing in San Diego County, with approximately 783,000 San Diegans over the age of 60. By 2030, the number of adults aged 60 and older in San Diego County is expected to increase to more than 900,000. It is estimated that older adults over the age of 60 will make up 26.3 percent of the San Diego County population by 2030, up from 20.3 percent in 2018. Additionally, the fastest growing age group in San Diego County, those 85 years and older, is expected to increase from 70,395 to nearly 98,000 by 2030.

In addressing the region's trend toward a growing aging population, the County of San Diego (County) has committed to becoming an age-friendly region that supports, nurtures, and leverages the strengths of the increasing older adult population. In 2016, the County joined the AARP and World Health Organization's network of age-friendly communities and since then, the County has continued the journey to become an age-friendly region. Adopted by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors in 2019, the Aging Roadmap is the County's plan to ensure that our region has programs and communities that support the needs and celebrate the contributions of the growing population of older adults in the San Diego region. The Aging Roadmap was conceptualized as a broad framework to encompass all County programs and initiatives for older adults and individuals with disabilities. There are ten priority areas within the Roadmap, including two of which are particularly relevant to senior centers: Social Participation and Health & Community Support.

In January 2021, the State of California released its Master Plan for Aging, outlining a blueprint for state government, local communities, private organizations, and philanthropy to build environments that promote an age-friendly California. Together, the County's Aging Roadmap and the Master Plan for Aging guided the San Diego Seniors Community Foundation (SDSCF) in the development of a complementary report to increase the quality of life for the older adult population in San Diego County.

In May 2022, SDSCF released their "San Diego Master Plan for Senior Centers: Every Community Deserves a Modern Senior Center" (Master Plan) which outlines a vision for a transformed network of sophisticated senior centers for San Diego County's aging population. The purpose of the Master Plan is to set the foundation for a transformation of San Diego County senior centers, for communities where senior centers currently exist, as well as for communities that do not have access to senior centers. Through the improvement and enhancement of facility amenities and programming that reflects the needs, identities, and cultures of the populations served, along with the leadership of well-trained staff who have backgrounds in social work and gerontology, every older adult will have increased opportunities to thrive through their local senior center. Dynamic senior centers can become the community's advocate, champion, and leader in altering the public sphere in ways that ensure equity, representation, and purpose for older adults. The vision for senior centers described in the Master Plan explains that while the various blueprints (e.g., Master

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Plan for Aging, Aging Roadmap) speak to transformation, there lies much potential in the addition of a variety of new and innovative program practices that can anchor an expanded suite of services within senior centers.

Expanding outreach to senior centers can have a significantly positive impact on the quality of life of seniors by promoting social connections, physical and mental health, and access to important resources and information. By strengthening communication between senior centers and the County of San Diego, County services can be tailored to better adapt to the changing needs of the growing senior population. For example, senior centers often offer a range of activities and programs, such as fitness classes, that can promote physical and mental health. Expanding outreach and the opportunity for seniors to give feedback on County services such as fitness classes can increase motivation and retention of seniors participating in these activities. These tailored services will ensure that seniors are prioritized in this County.

The County already provides some services at some settings tailored to the senior community. To better understand the County's role and opportunities for strengthening services, a comprehensive analysis of all San Diego senior centers is necessary to identify which centers currently house County programs such as congregate meals, fitness classes, and other activities. By analyzing existing services, the County can determine what services are in place, where gaps exist, and where enhancements can be made for future and existing programs.

In addition, an analysis of County-owned facilities such as community centers, libraries, or housing complexes that have existing or potential common spaces should be explored to determine if it is eligible for use for senior center activities. While some older adults advocate for traditional senior centers, some older adults may prefer going to all-ages community centers for activities. Options should be made available to all appropriate settings.

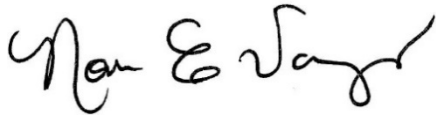
The recommended actions demonstrate the County's commitment to older adults in advancing innovative practices and adopting strategies to improve the quality of life of all residents. Aligned with the State's Master Plan for Aging and the County's Aging Roadmap, the Master Plan brings a tangible, local model of change that supports visionary policy frameworks. By leveraging the principles outlined in the Master Plan, our region can build a better-connected and unified network of diverse aging stakeholders who are empowered to bring transformative change to an emerging societal challenge.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

The requested action supports the County's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan Initiatives of Sustainability, Equity, Empower and Community as it provides a tangible blueprint to transform our senior centers in the face of an unprecedented demographic shift.

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Respectfully submitted,



CHAIRWOMAN NORA VARGAS
Supervisor, First District



SUPERVISOR NATHAN FLETCHER
Supervisor, Fourth District

ATTACHMENT(S)

ATTACHMENT A -San Diego Regional Senior Center Master Business Plan-FINAL-5.19.22