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## **CLARK COUNTY SENIOR FORUM 2000 A REPORT TO THE COMMISSION August 1, 2000**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

On March 7, 2000 Clark County Commissioner Dario Herrera petitioned the Board of County Commissioners to adopt a resolution authorizing Clark County to sponsor a countywide Senior Forum.

Through the adoption of the resolution, the Commissioners stated a desire to increase the awareness of programs and services available to residents and a commitment to secure feedback for improving current services and for developing future services and programs for seniors.

### **WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OUR SENIOR COMMUNITY**

Seniors constitute the largest and fastest growing Clark County sub-population. The impact of this demographic reality is compounded by the rapid increase in numbers of early retirees or those nearing retirement. The rising age of Clark County residents and the subsequent demographic changes will have a profound impact on important public policy issues for southern Nevada at both the local and state levels.

In the 1990s Las Vegas became one of the nation's top retirement destinations. The 2000 Las Vegas Perspective estimates that 25% of the Clark County population (323,867) is age 55+, and nearly half of that group is 55 to 64. Of the 95,445 newcomers who moved to the Las Vegas Valley in 1999, one of every four (26.4%) were 55 or older, and most were retired or nearing retirement. A 1998 UNLV study found that twenty-seven percent of new residents cite retirement as an important reason for their move. The population growth in this age category is not expected to slow. The combination of the indigenous population aging in place and the strong in-migration of retirees will result in the "graying of America" having a very significant impact on Las Vegas.

National statistics show that seniors who move to retire have incomes averaging \$30,000 per year and Las Vegas reflects this trend. Retirees who relocate from other areas are often much wealthier, with an average estate value of more than \$300,000, making them attractive residents as their incomes are virtually recession-proof. New retirees moving to Southern Nevada initially provide an economic boost to the community.

It is important to note that not all Southern Nevada seniors are wealthy. There is a sharp economic contrast between the seniors who move to Clark County to retire and the aging indigenous population, which has a large number of workers who may lack substantial pensions. Lower salaries, multiple job changes, and less retirement planning could make their retirement years a struggle from the beginning, in contrast to retirees who relocate from other areas. Another important characteristic of the migratory senior population is the likelihood that they do not have traditional family support structures. This has serious implications for publicly funded social services.

In addition to the substantial financial resources in-migrating seniors bring with them, many retirees also have valuable work skills, knowledge and other talents developed over a lifetime. Although seniors can be examined in light of their potential drain on social resources, the senior population can also be viewed as a community asset with their active participation in, and contributions to, the local labor force. Seniors thus are an unexpected and cost-effective addition to the community in both paid and volunteer positions. A pro-active approach to community planning would find ways to maximize the impact of this asset.

How Clark County deals with the growth of its in-migrating and long-time senior population will have a tremendous impact on the future of the community and the entire state.

#### **References:**

Gottdiener, M., Collins, C.C. and Dickens D.R. Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City, 1999. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK

Collins, C. "A Profile of Clark County's Senior Population," Nevada Public Affairs Review, Legislative Issues. 1999. pp. 47-53

## **SENIOR FORUM 2000**

The Clark County Senior Forum was designed to be presented in two phases. The first part allowed the county to focus on a large event encompassing three major workshops, exhibits and a general opening session. The input gathered at that function helped structure the format of the following sessions. The second part provided an opportunity for smaller meetings in various commission districts to gather input on ideas and suggestions recommended during the larger forum.

Part One was held Saturday, June 3, 2000 at the Clark County Government Center.

Part Two was held at the following locations:

- Parkdale Community Center - June 13, 1:30 p.m.
- Cambridge Community Center - June 14, 10:30 a.m.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center - June 14, 10 a.m.
- Sunrise Senior Center - June 23, 10 a.m.
- Paradise Community Center - June 24, 9:30 a.m.
- West Flamingo Senior Center - June 29, 6 p.m.

Members of the Senior Forum planning committee included representation from the following Clark County areas:

District Attorney	University Medical Center
Public Administrator	Park and Recreation
District Court	Regional Transportation Commission
Metropolitan Police Department	Neighborhood Services
Social Service	Administrative Services

The committee established the Senior Forum format and selected topics for the three workshops. They were:

- Senior Safety/Security (consisting of panelists from the Clark County District Attorney's office, the Clark County Public Administrator's office, the Clark County District Court and, the Metropolitan Police Department);
- Social Services/Health Care (consisting of representatives from the Clark County Social Services Department and University Medical Center); and,
- Neighborhood Services/Parks & Recreation/Transportation (consisting of representatives from Neighborhood Services, Parks & Recreation, and the Regional Transportation Commission).

A moderator was chosen for each panel and volunteers served as panel facilitators. Facilitators took notes and assisted in each workshop.

The initial draft of the committee plans was reviewed with a group of senior representatives on May 9, 2000. Attendees expressed concern about limited transportation to the Government Center and outdoor temperatures (originally, the opening ceremonies were scheduled to be conducted on the lawn of the amphitheater). Additional input regarding senior issues included:

- The need for a simple way to access information regarding services available to seniors.
- Many seniors don't know what services are available or who to call about services - or, what department within an agency does what. Is it the state? the county? the city?
- Government(s) should take an ombudsman responsibility regarding the coordination of senior services at all levels.
- Comprehensive needs assessments should be conducted before services are offered.
- Additional resources are needed to address senior housing shortages.
- Transportation becomes increasingly difficult when seniors can no longer drive.

Information learned during this overview was shared with moderators and panelists so they could address them, along with any other issues related to their respective topics.

### **THE SENIOR FORUM, PART ONE**

The Clark County Senior Forum 2000 opened on Saturday, June 3, 9 a.m. at the Government Center. Colorful signage directed seniors to the various activities. Participants were greeted by volunteers wearing Senior Forum 2000 shirts and each guest was given a welcome package that included a program, sun visor, ball-point pen and a list of the dates for the follow-up meetings. The Senior Forum 2000 logo was displayed throughout the building and on all printed material.

The opening ceremonies, held in the Commission Chambers, began with a prayer from the Reverend Marion Bennett and welcoming remarks from Commissioner Dario Herrera who led the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Herrera introduced Commissioners Mary Kincaid, Lance Malone and Myrna Williams, each of whom added a personal welcome.

The keynote speaker, Nevada Attorney General Frankie Sue Del Papa, delivered a message related to consumer fraud and its impact on seniors.

At the conclusion of the opening ceremonies, attendees left the Commission Chambers and went to the rotunda where over forty exhibitors answered questions and provided information on services offered to seniors and to the senior community. Refreshments were available throughout the program.

Exhibitors included:

- AARP;
- Alzheimer Association of Southern Nevada;
- American Parkinson's Disease Association;
- Around the Bend Friends;
- Arthritis Foundation;
- Better Business Bureau of Southern Nevada, Inc.;
- Congresswoman Shelley Berkley;
- Senator Harry Reid;
- Blindconnect, Inc.;
- Bureau of Service to; the Blind and Visually Impaired;
- Christmas in April;
- City of North Las Vegas Parks & Recreation;
- Clark County Administration;
- Clark County Assessor;
- Clark County District Court;
- Clark County Election Department;
- Clark County Family Court;
- Clark County Fire Department;
- Clark County Flood Control;
- Clark County Health District;
- Clark County Parks & Recreation;
- Clark County Social Services;
- Henderson Parks & Recreation;
- Howard Cannon Senior Services Center (LVHA);
- Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department;
- Lutheran Social Service;
- Nathan Adelson Hospice;
- Nevada Consumer Affairs Division;
- Nevada Veterans Nursing Home;
- Regional Transportation Commission;
- Social Security;
- State of Nevada Attorney General;
- State of Nevada Division for Aging Services;
- St. Rose Dominican Hospital
- Artie J. Cannon Helping Hands of Henderson;
- United Way;
- University Medical Center;
- U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD);
- Valley Hospital Senior Advantage; and,
- Help of Southern Nevada.

## **INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS**

### ***SENIOR SAFETY/SECURITY***

Moderator: Carla Sloan

Panelists

Ben Graham - Clark County District Attorney's Office

Kathleen Buchanan - Clark County Public Administrator's Office

Jennifer Henry - Clark County District Court Representative

Bill Tullock - Metropolitan Police Department

Moderated by Carla Sloan, AARP Nevada State Director, the panel presented information and responded to questions relevant to the overall safety and security of seniors. An overview of the criminal justice system and senior service agencies was presented, along with detailed information about the Victim Witness Assistance program and Guardianships. The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department presented information on police response, seminars offered by the department, security systems and volunteer programs. Comments noted on the program surveys included:

- "Now, I know."
- "Very interesting and informative."
- "Location of meeting was difficult."
- Air quality needs more attention.

### ***SOCIAL SERVICES/HEALTH CARE***

Moderator: Larry Spitler

Panelists

Bobby Gordon - Clark County Social Services

Neva Brown - University Medical Center

Panelists offered information on social and medical services available to Clark County seniors, including application procedures. Along with information on financial, medical and volunteer assistance, the panel explained the Homemaker Health Aide program, the Alternative Health Care Program, Senior Citizens Protection Service, and Long Term Care Placement.

The University Medical Center reviewed points specific to primary/quick care, stroke, cardiology and oncology programs, as well as the Silver Advantage, rehabilitation and community service programs. An update on growth and expansion projects was also included. Comments included:

- There's a need for the development of a comprehensive booklet (or some other communication tool) to let seniors know all the services available to them (at all levels of government). "A coordinated effort is needed."

- "End of life issues need more attention." We need better care for seniors who are near death.
- Medication costs are too high, especially when seniors are ineligible for assistance because they're slightly above the poverty level.
- One-stop shopping for information is needed. For example, when the need arises, you can't wait for help.
- "I don't feel the need for any of these services...how lucky I am."

## ***NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES/PARKS & RECREATION/TRANSPORTATION***

Moderator: Claudia Collins, Ph.D.

Panelists

Candy Rutledge - Clark County Parks & Recreation

Linda Tunstall - Regional Transportation Commission

Michael Shannon - Neighborhood Services

Claudia Collins, moderated the Neighborhood Services/Parks & Recreation/Transportation panel. Some information points in the Neighborhood Services highlights included Town Advisory Boards, the Neighborhood College, the Neighborhood Congress and mediation. Parks & Recreation addressed services specifically related to senior programs, including information on senior activities in community centers and in freestanding centers. The Regional Transportation Commission presented an overview of its fixed route system, the paratransit operation, and the CAT Ambassador Program. Comments included:

- The fixed route bus system should include stops in neighborhoods.
- Reduced or free rides are needed from the paratransit-transit system. Some seniors and the disabled cannot afford the current fee.
- Senior Centers are needed in additional areas.

## **PROFILE OF SENIOR FORUM ATTENDEES**

Fifty-five percent of the participants who attended workshops completed survey forms. These surveys revealed the following information:

- The average age was 69
- Sixty-five percent of the respondents were female; thirty-five percent male
- Fifty-five percent own their home; thirty percent reside in mobile homes; and, fifteen percent live in apartments
- All who completed the survey reported having a driver's license and sixty-five percent reported owning an automobile
- Income was derived from several sources, including Social Security, private pensions, investments and one participant was employed.
- Forty-seven percent used a Senior Center often; twenty-one percent used a Center occasionally, ten percent seldom and twenty-one percent never

## **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE SENIOR FORUM, PART ONE**

Response from participants attending the workshops was positive. Many were not aware of the wide variety of services offered through the county and expressed interest in learning more. This evolved into a two-part need for information within the context of a community-wide overview.

- The public need to know what services are available and how to access them.
- Service providers need a way to learn what other agencies or organizations are doing.
- For referrals
- To prevent overlap or duplication of services

## **THE SENIOR FORUM, PART TWO**

Part Two of the Senior Forum 2000 was designed to allow an opportunity for feedback on the June 3rd event. It allowed comment from those who had attended Part One and from those who had not. It also encouraged input regarding how seniors ranked topics important to them, how they preferred to receive information regarding senior issues and, in general, what seniors view as important. A total of seventy-nine seniors participated in the six district meetings that comprised Part Two of the Senior Forum.

Six meetings were held at the following locations:

- Parkdale Community Center - June 13, 1:30 p.m.
- Cambridge Community Center - June 14, 10:30 a.m.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center - June 14, 10 a.m.
- Sunrise Senior Center - June 23, 10 a.m.
- Paradise Community Center - June 24, 9:30 a.m.
- West Flamingo Senior Center - June 29, 6 p.m.

## **PROFILE OF SENIOR FORUM, PART TWO, ATTENDEES**

Informal surveys completed by participants revealed the following information:

- The average age of participants was 71
- Sixty-three percent were female; thirty-six percent were male
- Seventy-one percent own their homes; twenty percent live in apartments; four percent live in mobile homes; and one percent reside in some form of subsidized housing
- Income was derived from several sources and/or combination of sources: eighty-five percent received Social Security; fifty percent received private pensions; thirty-eight percent received income from investments; and, six percent were employed either full or part time.
- Ninety percent reported having a driver's license and ninety-two percent indicated that they own cars

- Sixty-six percent used a Senior Center often; twenty-four percent occasionally; seven percent seldom; and, one percent never.

## **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS, PART TWO**

Beyond information gathered at the June 3rd event, participants were asked to provide additional information.

When asked to prioritize topics important to them, the following order of prioritization was observed:

1. Health Care
2. Senior Safety
3. Senior Security
4. Social Services
5. Senior Centers
6. Neighborhood Services & Transportation

How do you usually find information about services available to seniors?

1. Senior Centers
2. Newspapers
3. Television
4. Mail
5. Other sources included senior organizations, church, phone book, community flyers

Do you use public transportation?

Twenty-seven percent use public transportation to some degree.  
Seventy-two percent responded that they did not use public transportation.

What could government do better to serve the needs of seniors?

1. More forums to disseminate information tied with the need to address the high cost of medication
2. Protect Social Security tied with the need for better public transportation
3. Central location to receive information tied with the need for more Senior Centers

Participants were also asked and, in many cases, agreed with earlier observations provided by seniors who attended Part One of the Senior Forum:

1. The need for a simple way to access information regarding services available to seniors. Ninety-two percent agreed with the observation.

## Additional comments

- If public is apathetic they should lose services.
- We want to do this by phone.
- Want to talk to a real person, not "press 1"...
- Want to make one telephone call to one real person and get all information
- Feel there is probably an overlap of services but find it confusing
- Internet is possibility (also Web TV) but most don't have access at home (expense and complicated to install)
- When it comes to program eligibility, definition of "senior" varies (is it 50? 55? 60? 62? 65?).

2. Many seniors don't know what services are available or who to call about services - or, what department within an agency does what. Is it the state? The county? The city?

## Comments

- Ask friends.
- Senator Harry Reid has a booklet.
- Don't know where to find information when you need it.
- Junk mail-information gets lost-don't read it.
- Cannon Center.
- Division of Aging Services - Bruce McAnnany is a troubleshooter.
- Too many organizations - confusing.
- County commissioner's office.
- Neighborhood services.
- Community/senior center.
- Maria Dent - Catholic Charities.
- Need something closer than Cannon Center.

3. Government(s) should take an ombudsman responsibility regarding the coordination of senior services at all levels. Ninety-eight percent agreed with the statement.

## Comments

- Need senior phone line for central information.
- People don't listen or care until they need it.
- Apathetic people won't participate.
- Not sure who should do it.

4. Comprehensive needs assessments should be done before services are offered. Eighty-eight percent agreed with the statement.

## Comments

- Yes, but don't study it to death.

5. Additional resources are needed to address senior housing shortages. Sixty-eight percent agreed with the statement.

#### Comments

- (I'm) in public housing and the process was smooth but took three years.
- Some participants had used or anticipated using senior housing in the near future.
- Need more information about senior housing.

6. Transportation becomes increasingly difficult when seniors can no longer drive. Ninety-one percent agreed with the statement.

#### Comments:

- Busses are the logical "next step," so no problem.
- Looking forward to not driving anymore.
- Need better access to bus stop

Along with asking participants to comment on the issues cited above, each group was briefed on the June 3rd panel discussions and asked to comment and add additional remarks as they felt appropriate. The following comments were noted:

#### Senior Safety/Security

- Not fearful in the daytime but most don't go out at night.

#### Social Services/Health Care

- Social workers need to learn to speak with and communicate with seniors.
- Should provide sensitivity training to senior service providers.
- Dental services are needed for seniors.
- There is a need for printed material regarding senior services - rather speak to a person - at Senior Centers.

#### Neighborhood Services/Parks & Recreation/Transportation

- Frequent reasons why Senior Centers are important: food, companionship, entertainment, exercise classes (more needed)
- Traffic lights on major streets are not long enough for safe crossing.

Finally, participants were asked to respond to the follow observations:

The fixed route bus system should include stops in neighborhoods.

Fifty-one percent agreed.

Reduced or free rides are needed from the paratransit system. Some seniors and the disabled cannot afford the current fare.

Forty-six percent agreed (it should be noted that many respondents had only heard of the service and had not used it).

Senior Centers are needed in additional areas.

Sixty-two percent agreed

## **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS**

Each phase of the Clark County Senior Forum 2000 was a learning experience. We learned that seniors are not a monolithic group and that there is confusion about different age qualifications for services (50? 55? 60? 62? 65?) and to what degree that they may be income-based. We also learned there is a need to more effectively communicate messages to the senior population. For example, Part One of the Senior Forum attracted over two hundred participants and the six meetings of Part Two brought seventy-nine seniors willing to devote a few hours of their time. However, when those attending Part Two, and who did not attend Part One, were asked why they did not attend, seventy-seven percent said they were unaware of the event. This, despite efforts to promote the event through advertising, news stories and neighborhood canvassing.

We realize that the participants both in Part One and Part Two represent a skewed population of Clark County senior residents. Almost all reported having a driver's license and sixty-five percent of the participants in Part One and ninety-two percent of those attending Part Two reported owning a vehicle. They are, for the most part, active in the community and many are already giving time to help others.

However, even this mobile, active and involved group of seniors reported having difficulties obtaining senior related information and said they needed a central source to find that information. They wanted this source to be easy to access and wanted to deal with a person answering the phone, not a voice mail system. Interestingly, when asked, seniors also expressed a willingness to volunteer to assist in the operation of such a program.

We can only estimate a greater need and less ability to access information for senior services from the larger mature population who have limited or no transportation, do not utilize senior centers and are less active in the community.

In closing, the following three recommendations are offered for consideration:

Support the establishment of a central point-of-contact for seniors to obtain information regarding services available at all levels of government. Components of this already exist and it may be that the need is one of organization and oversight, along with the development of a process through which information can be distributed.

Support the development of a senior outreach program that actively locates seniors who may not be aware of the kinds of services available to them. To the level that seniors wish to be involved, provide an avenue for that level of participation. Throughout the Senior Forum, seniors expressed their willingness to volunteer.

Work toward the establishment of an effective communication program and pursue the prospects of interlocal agreements with other government entities and service organizations to maximize resources and to avoid duplication of services.

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