

**QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH**  
**REGARDING A SENIOR CENTER**  
**FOR THE CITY OF EL CAJON**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the research was to evaluate the need for a new senior center in the City of El Cajon, California. An additional objective was to determine which activities and programs might be offered. The data contained in this report will, when used in conjunction with other relevant data, provide support for El Cajon's decisions.

Respondents were required to be age 50 or above and to live in the City of El Cajon. A total of 500 interviews were completed from August 16, 2000 to September 12, 2000, resulting in statistical reliability of  $\pm 4.3\%$  at a 95% confidence level.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### *Current Activities*

Respondents represented a variety of activity levels. Almost as many respondents felt they were somewhat or very involved in social, recreational, and educational activities as described themselves as not at all or not very involved. Roughly two-thirds of respondents had participated in some activity for adults 50 years of age and older. The most popular activities mentioned were exercise programs, trips and excursions and classes/ lectures.

Respondents mentioned a variety of locations for their current activities, which included the Wells Community Center and Foothills Adult Center.

A person who had been to a senior center is more likely to be female, over the age of 65, who describes herself as somewhat or very involved in social, recreational, and educational activities and who has an income of less than \$55,000.

### *Interest in a Senior Center*

Survey results do not indicate a groundswell of support for a new senior center; however, there is definite interest.

The data indicate there is an average interest in using specific services, if offered for adults ages 50 and over in El Cajon. Educational and health related activities received the highest levels of interest. Those who had been to a senior center in the past were uniformly more interested in activities than those who had not been. Likewise, those who describe themselves as active were more likely to be interested than those who are not active.

In general, women responded more favorably than men toward the idea of a new senior center. A majority of respondents thought the center should be for seniors only (57%); however, roughly one-third felt it should be intergenerational. A possible

compromise might be to offer some days or specific programs that are intergenerational, but to restrict the majority of days and programs to those over 50.

The results show some willingness to pay for services that are of a social or recreational nature. However, there is some resistance to the idea of payment.

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of several facilities that might be offered at a new senior center. None of the potential facilities suggested received overwhelming support from respondents; however, the most popular would be a fitness room, quiet room/ reading room/ library, and a computer room.

### *Location*

A majority of respondents thought the center should be located near a park (61%). Roughly half thought the center should be centrally located, and half thought location was not important.

### *Communication and Promotion*

In order to effectively reach the different market segments, it may be advisable to develop a communications program specifically targeted to different demographic and psychographic groups (psychographics attempt to explain behavior based on people's personality traits and values), focusing on perceived preferences, concerns and likelihood of use.

The most common reasons why respondents had not been to a senior center centered around a lack of interest, with respondents mentioning no need to attend, time constraints and the perception that senior centers do not offer anything of interest. There are also those who don't consider a senior center to be the place for them, saying they did not consider themselves to be seniors or that they were still in the workforce. Advertising or promotion might be needed to encourage attendance.

The word 'senior' may to be problematic, causing disassociation for some respondents. Additional research, focusing on the name of the center, appears to be warranted.

The newspaper is the most used source of information. Word of mouth through family and friends and TV and radio are also important sources.

### *Characteristics of Respondents*

More than half of the survey participants are retired (60%), while 24% are currently employed full-time and 8% are employed part-time. The respondents are nearly evenly divided into four age groups: 50-55, 56-64, 65-74 and 75 and older. About one in four survey participants indicate a household income below \$20,000, a third of the respondents have incomes between \$20,000 and \$55,000, 21% have incomes of \$55,000 to \$75,000 or more, and 20% refused to reveal their household incomes. Almost two-thirds of those in the study are female.

Respondents expressed the most concern about health care, followed by having adequate retirement income. Whereas those in upper income levels were more concerned with retirement planning than other groups, those with lower income levels were more concerned than others about health care.

The car is the preferred method of transportation for all respondents, even those ages 75 and over. However, several respondents also indicated they walk or use public transportation to get around.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results combined with other important considerations will help the City of El Cajon make an informed decision about whether or not to build a new senior center.

Although the survey results do not indicate a groundswell of support for a new senior center, there are signs of interest. Forty percent of respondents think this type of facility would enhance their lives, and another 20% said it may or may not.

The programs and activities that would most likely attract adults ages 50 and over are health-related programs, and educational programs. The educational programs would be more attractive to those in the 50 to 64 age group than to older respondents. This younger age group may not currently be interested in "senior activities," but they would be potential users of these services.

The majority of survey participants would prefer the facility be exclusively for adults ages 50 and older. Half of the total surveyed would want the facility to be centrally located, and the other half said location would not be important.

A communication program should be designed to attract the various demographic segments. Distinct differences were found in preferences, concerns, and likelihood of use between males and females, younger and older respondents, income groups, previous experience with senior centers as well as between those who consider themselves to be active and those who do not. Newspapers would be the most effective way of getting the word out about a new service or activity.

## OBJECTIVES

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The primary objective of this quantitative research was to evaluate the need for a new senior center in the City of El Cajon, California. An additional objective was to determine which activities and programs might be offered.

To accomplish these objectives, the following information was gathered, processed and analyzed:

- Interests and activities, and where respondents have participated in activities.
- Likelihood of using typical services offered by a senior center, and the maximum amount individuals are willing to pay for those services.
- Sources used to get information about events or activities.
- Importance of facilities at a senior center, and preferred location.
- Demographics
  - age
  - gender
  - employment status
  - household income

The primary objective of this quantitative research was to evaluate the need for a new senior center in the City of El Cajon, California.

An additional objective was to determine which activities and programs might be offered.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

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The questionnaire contains three main areas: current activities, interest in activities in the future, and needs and wants respondents have for a senior center.

This section of the report presents the results of the survey, highlighting differences in responses by age group, income level, gender, and degree of current involvement in activities. Appendix A contains the survey instrument. Appendix B provides the numeric and percent response to each question and crosstabulations by demographic characteristics. Appendix C lists verbatim responses to selected questions that did not fit into predetermined categories.

### SECTION I: CURRENT ACTIVITIES

#### LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN ACTIVITIES (Q15)

Survey participants were asked to rate their level of involvement in social, recreational and educational activities at the present time. A 4-point scale was used where 1 meant not at all involved, 2 meant not very involved, 3 meant somewhat involved, and 4 meant very involved. An overall mean rating of 2.6 indicated respondents consider themselves moderately involved.

These responses were fairly evenly split among respondents. Almost half (44%) felt they were not at all or not very involved and just over half (56%) felt they were somewhat or very involved. (See Figure 1.)

Men were slightly less likely than women to be somewhat or very involved (51% vs. 59%).

Those ages 56 to 64 were the most involved (33% very involved) compared to 21% for those 50 to 55, 23% for those 65 to 74, and 18% for those 75 or older.

Those with incomes over \$55,000 were more likely to feel very involved than were those with incomes under \$20,000 (33% vs. 15%).

Almost as many respondents felt they were not at all or not very involved as felt they were somewhat or very involved in social, recreational and educational activities.





ACTIVITIES FOR SENIORS (Q2)

Respondents were asked if they ever participated in certain activities for adults 50 years and older. Figure 2 and the table below show the percentage of respondents who have participated in each activity.

TABLE 1: ACTIVITIES FOR SENIORS

<u>ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
None	37%
Exercise programs	31%
Trips and excursions	30%
Classes/ lectures	30%
Legal services	13%
Tax preparation	12%
Senior dances	10%
Dance classes	10%
Meal programs	9%
Billiards	8%
Other*	6%

\*See verbatim other responses in Appendix C.  
Sum of percentages greater than 100% due to multiple responses.

Women were more likely than men to mention exercise programs (35% vs. 25%).

Those who had been to a senior center were more likely to have participated in several of the activities than those who had not been to a senior center:

- Senior dances 17% vs. 5%
- Exercise programs 44% vs. 22%
- Trips and excursions 42% vs. 22%
- Classes/ lectures 44% vs. 19%
- Meal programs 18% vs. 3%
- Tax preparation 18% vs. 7%
- Dance classes 16% vs. 6%
- Legal services 21% vs. 8%.

Roughly two-thirds of respondents had participated in some activity for adults 50 years and older.

The most popular activities mentioned were exercise programs, trips and excursions, and classes/ lectures.



Similarly, those who described themselves as somewhat or very active were more likely to have participated in many activities than those who were self-described as not very or not at all active:

- Exercise programs 38% vs. 23%
- Trips and excursions 35% vs. 24%
- Classes/ lectures 39% vs. 18%

Willingness to participate and interest in participating in these types of activities may be what distinguishes those who describe themselves as active from those who do not.

As can be seen in the following table, participation increased with age for senior dances, exercise programs and legal services. This pattern also holds for trips and excursions, with the exception of those 75 or older:

TABLE 2: PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES BY AGE

<u>ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>50-55</u>	<u>56-64</u>	<u>65-74</u>	<u>75+</u>
Senior dances	2%	6%	15%	17%
Exercise programs	20%	29%	36%	41%
Legal services	6%	12%	15%	22%
Trips and excursions	16%	26%	42%	36%

Those with incomes under \$20,000 were more likely to have participated in meal programs than those with incomes over \$55,000 (16% vs. 5%).

WHERE SENIOR ACTIVITIES ARE HELD (Q3)

For each activity in which they had participated, survey participants were asked where the activity was held.

Senior Dances

Twenty percent of the respondents who had been to a senior dance indicated that it was held at the Wells Community Center. Another six percent each mentioned a church, the La Mesa Senior Center or the Elks Club. Fourteen percent of respondents did not remember where the dances had been held.

Participation increased with age for senior dances, exercise programs and legal services.

Respondents mentioned participating in activities in senior centers and community centers such as the Wells Community Center or Foothills Adult Center.

### Exercise Programs

Of the 157 respondents who indicated they had been in an exercise program, thirteen percent indicated that it was held at the Wells Community Center. Another seven percent mentioned the Foothills Adult Center.

While men were more likely to indicate their exercise programs were not organized or public (30% of men vs. 11% of women), women were more likely than men to mention an organized program, such as Wells Community Center (16% of women vs. 7% of men). Those age 75 or over were more likely to mention Wells Community Center than those ages 50-55 (20% vs. 4%).

Those with incomes over \$55,000 were more likely to indicate their exercise programs were not organized or public than were those in the lower income groups (30% vs. 16% for those under \$20,000, 19% for \$20,000 to \$34,999, and 0% for \$35,000 to \$54,999). However, those with incomes under \$20,000 were more likely to mention Senior Housing as the location of the exercise program than those in the highest income group (11% vs. 0%).

### Trips and Excursions

There was some confusion regarding trips and excursions, with some respondents answering about where the trip went to (9% said they had taken a bus trip, cruise or train trip). However, 9% mentioned church, 8% said travel agent, 7% mentioned the Wells Community Center and 5% reported the Foothills Adult Center.

Thirty percent of respondents to this question indicated that the trip or excursion they had taken had not been public or that it was not an organized event.

Younger respondents (ages 50-55) were much more likely than any other group to indicate their trip or excursion was not organized or public (60% vs. 25% for those 56 to 64, 24% for those 64 to 74, and 23% for those 75 or older).

Those with higher incomes were also likely to indicate their trip or excursion was not organized or public (58% for those with incomes of \$55,000 or more vs. 13% for those under \$20,000; 19% for \$20,000 to \$34,999; and, 24% for \$35,000 to \$54,999).

### Classes/ Lectures

The most common location for classes and lectures was the Foothills Adult Center, receiving 20% of the responses. An additional 13% mentioned Grossmont Community College. Seven percent named Wells Community Center.

Women were much more likely than men to mention attending classes or lectures at the Foothills Adult Center (23% vs. 13%) and men were more likely to mention Grossmont Community College (21% vs. 9%).

### Meal Programs

The Salvation Army was the most commonly mentioned location for meal programs (30%). This was followed by Meals on Wheels (17%), Foothills Adult Center (9%) and Senior Housing (9%).

Men were much more likely to mention Meals on Wheels than were women (36% vs. 11%). However, women were more likely to mention Senior Housing (11% vs. 0%).

Those age 75 and older were the only ones to mention participating in meal programs at Wells Community Center (13%).

### Tax Preparation

Most of those who indicated they had participated in tax preparation indicated that it was not a public or organized program (36%). An additional 7% each mentioned H & R Block or an attorney/ CPA. However of the organized tax programs, 14% were at Wells Community Center and 9% were at Foothills Adult Center.

Men were more likely than women to say their tax preparation was not a public or organized program (50% vs. 30%); however, women were more likely to mention Wells Community Center (16% vs. 6%).

### Billiards

Based on the survey data, those residents of El Cajon age 50 and older who play billiards often do so in their own home or in the homes of friends (20%). A like percentage plays in pool halls (20%).

Wells Community Center was mentioned by 10% of the respondents and Senior Housing by an additional 7%.

Women were much more likely than men to mention attending classes or lectures at the Foothills Adult Center (23% vs. 13%) and men were more likely to mention Grossmont Community College (21% vs. 9%).

Dance Classes

Many respondents took dance classes at Wells Community Center (24%). This was followed by the Foothills Adult Center (8%) and the Salvation Army (6%). Ten percent did not remember where they took their dance classes.

Women were more likely to mention dance classes at Wells Community Center than were men (31% vs. 7%).

Legal Services

As with Tax Preparation, most of those who had participated in legal services indicated that it was not a public or organized program (46%). An additional 9% mentioned Wells Community Center. Sixteen percent did not recall where they had received legal services.

Men were more likely to mention receiving legal services at Senior Housing or the East County Council on Aging than were women (13% each vs. 0% each).

LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT ISSUES (Q1)

Survey participants were read a list of issues people face as they grow older and were then asked how concerned they were about each issue. A 3-point scale was used where 1 meant not at all concerned, 2 meant a little concerned and 3 meant concerned a lot. Figure 3 and the following table shows the mean (average) rating for each issue:

TABLE 3: LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT ISSUES

<u>ISSUE</u>	<u>MEAN CONCERN RATING</u>
Health care	2.4
Adequate retirement income	2.3
Retirement planning	2.1
Social and leisure activities	1.9
Educational opportunities	1.9
Job placement	1.6
Providing care for your parent	1.6
Other*	2.9

\*See verbatim other responses in Appendix C.

Of the listed issues, respondents expressed the most concern about health care, followed by having adequate retirement income.

Those people who mentioned an "other" issue (15% of the total sample) were most concerned about one or more of the following issues: utilities, taxes, senior housing, and crime.



Of the listed issues, respondents expressed the most concern about health care, followed by having adequate retirement income. They were the least concerned about job placement and caring for a parent. Social and leisure activities and educational opportunities were of moderate concern.

Those who had not been to a senior center in the past were somewhat less concerned about social and leisure activities (22% are concerned 'a lot') than those who had been to a senior center (32%).

It is interesting that those in the upper moderate (\$35,000 to \$54,999) income levels were more concerned with retirement planning than were those in the lowest income levels (48% concerned 'a lot' vs. 38%). However, those with lower income and lower moderate income levels were more concerned about health care than the other groups (67% of those with incomes under \$20,000 were concerned 'a lot' and 74% for \$20,000 to \$34,999 vs. 58% for \$35,000 to \$54,999 and 53% for \$55,000 or more).

As can be seen in the following table, for all listed issues with the exception of social and leisure activities and health care, reported levels of concern tended to decrease with age.

TABLE 4: CONCERNED 'A LOT' ABOUT ISSUES BY AGE

ISSUE	PERCENT CONCERNED 'A LOT'			
	50-55	56-64	65-74	75+
Health care	71%	62%	56%	62%
Adequate retirement income	60%	55%	49%	41%
Retirement planning	57%	42%	39%	28%
Social and leisure activities	28%	26%	26%	26%
Educational opportunities	40%	37%	28%	26%
Job placement	32%	26%	9%	8%
Providing care for your parent	36%	27%	19%	13%

Those with the upper moderate income levels were more concerned with retirement planning than were those in the lowest income levels.

Those with lower incomes and lower moderate income levels were more concerned about health care than the other groups.



Respondents who were most concerned about social, leisure and educational opportunities had been to a senior center.

Respondents who were most concerned about educational opportunities were of upper, moderate income levels (\$35,000 to \$54,999).

### INFORMATION SOURCES (Q6)

Survey participants were read a list of sources of information about events and activities and were asked which sources they used. The following table shows the percentage of respondents who use each source:

TABLE 5: INFORMATION SOURCES

<u>INFORMATION SOURCES</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Newspaper	58%
Friends	52%
TV or radio	52%
Flyers	38%
Church	36%
Family	34%
Internet	22%
Other*	5%
None	2%

\*See verbatim other responses in Appendix C.  
Sum of percentages greater than 100% due to multiple responses.

While the newspaper is the most used source, word of mouth through friends and family and the TV and radio are also important sources of information for these respondents.

Women were somewhat more likely than men to get information from church (40% vs. 29%), and men were somewhat more likely to get information through the Internet (33% vs. 16%).

The newspaper is the most used source of information.

Women were somewhat more likely than men to get information from church (40% vs. 29%), and men were somewhat more likely to get information through the Internet (33% vs. 16%).



Those who describe themselves as somewhat or very involved were more likely to get information from the newspaper or friends than those were less involved (63% and 59% vs. 51% and 43%, respectively).

Respondents in the younger and middle age groups (50 to 55, 56 to 64 and 65 to 74) were more likely to get information from friends (55%, 59% and 55%), flyers (37%, 44% and 45%) and the Internet (32%, 30%, and 19%) than were those 75 or older (40% for friends, 26% for flyers and 7% for Internet). However, those 75 and older were more likely to get information at church than were those ages 50 to 55 (44% vs. 28%).

There are several interesting differences by income level:

- **Newspaper**  
Those with incomes under \$20,000 are less likely to get information from the newspaper than those with incomes of \$35,000 to \$54,999 or \$55,000 or more (49% vs. 62% and 69%).
- **Friends**  
Those with incomes less than \$20,000 are less likely to get information from friends than those with incomes \$35,000 to \$54,999 or \$55,000 or more (43% vs. 54% and 58%).
- **TV or Radio**  
Those with incomes over \$55,000 are less likely to get information from TV or radio than those with incomes under \$20,000, \$20,000 to \$34,999 or \$35,000 to \$54,999 (42% vs. 53%, 56% and 59%).
- **Flyers**  
Those with incomes in the middle ranges of \$20,000 to \$34,999 and \$35,000 to \$54,999 were more likely to get information from flyers than those under \$20,000 or over \$55,000 (44% and 49% vs. 32% and 34%).
- **Church**  
Those with incomes in the middle ranges of \$20,000 to \$34,999 and \$35,000 to \$54,999 were more likely to get information from church than those over \$55,000 (40% and 38% vs. 28%).
- **Family**  
Those with incomes \$35,000 to \$54,999 were more likely to get information from family than those over \$55,000 (41% vs. 29%).

By income levels, the most used sources of information are:

- Under \$20,000: TV/ Radio and Newspaper
- \$20,000 to \$34,999: Newspaper, TV/ Radio and Friends
- \$35,000 to \$54,999: TV/ Radio and Newspaper
- Over \$55,000: Newspaper.

- **Internet**  
Those in lower income levels tended to use the Internet less as a source of information than those with higher incomes: under \$20,000, 13%; \$20,000 to \$34,999, 21%; \$35,000 to \$54,999, 33%; \$55,000 or more, 28%.

**MODES OF TRANSPORTATION USED (Q7)**

Respondents were asked which modes of transportation they had used in the past month to get to destinations in

El Cajon. Figure 5 and the table below show the responses to this question.

**TABLE 6: MODES OF TRANSPORTATION USED**

<u>TRANSPORTATION MODES</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Drive yourself	80%
Ride with family or friend	41%
Walk	27%
Bus	13%
Taxi	6%
Bicycle	4%
Trolley	3%
Other*	3%

\*See verbatim other responses in Appendix C.  
Total of percentages greater than 100% due to multiple responses.

If the center wants to draw from people who usually walk or take the bus, it is important that it be located in a central or easily accessed area.

Those ages 75 and over are the least likely to drive themselves (63% vs. 82% of those 65 to 74, 86% of those 56 to 64, and 87% of those 50 to 55.) This group also rode with family or friends (51%) and walked to their destinations (26%).

Those with income under \$20,000 were more likely to use the bus than those with incomes over \$55,000 (22% vs. 6%).

While the car is clearly the preferred mode of transportation, many respondents indicated they walk or use public transportation to get around.



HAVE BEEN TO A SENIOR CENTER (Q8)

Survey participants were asked if they had ever been to any senior center. (See Figure 6.)

- 43% Yes;
- 56% No;
- <1% Don't know.

Women were more likely than men to have been to a senior center (48% vs. 35%).

Those who describe themselves as somewhat or very involved were more likely to have been to a senior center than those who were not at all or not very involved (49% vs. 36%).

Those 64 and under were less likely to have been to a senior center than those over 65 (50 to 55, 27%; 56 to 64, 36%; 65 to 74, 57%; and over 75, 53%).

Those in the highest income group were the least likely to have been to a senior center (32% for those over \$55,000 vs. 53% of those under \$20,000; 49% of those from \$20,000 to \$34,999; and 46% of those from \$35,000 to \$54,999).

A typical senior center attendee could be described as a woman, over the age of 65, who describes herself as very or somewhat involved and who has an income of less than \$55,000.

A non-attendee is more likely to be male, who is not at all or not very involved in activities, under age 65 and who has an annual income of \$55,000 or more.



**SECTION II: FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

**LIKELIHOOD OF USING SENIOR SERVICES (Q4)**

Respondents were asked to rate their likelihood of using certain services if they were offered specifically for

El Cajon residents ages 50 and over. They were asked to use a 5-point scale where 1 meant not at all likely and 5 meant very likely. Figure 7 and the following table show the mean likelihood rating for each service:

**TABLE 7: LIKELIHOOD OF USING SENIOR SERVICES**

<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>MEAN LIKELIHOOD RATING</u>
Educational programs, like lectures, computer classes, consumer protection classes, crime prevention classes, and college or Continuing Education classes	3.1
Health related activities such as health screenings, exercise programs, preventive health services, and nutrition counseling	3.0
Professional services, like legal services, tax preparation, financial or retirement planning, grief counseling, employment services, housing services, and HICAP* counseling	2.8
Arts and crafts programs	2.6
Recreational activities such as shuffle board, billiards, walking clubs, and trips or excursions	2.5
Assistance programs, like Meals on Wheels, Pets as Companions, and Project Care	2.5
Leisure activities such as card games, gardening, and bridge clubs	2.2
Peer counseling	1.9

\*HICAP = Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program  
A 5-point scale was used where 1 meant not at all likely and 5 meant very likely.

Respondents did not rate any of the services particularly high; however, educational programs and health related activities rated the highest. This suggests that people might have some resistance to attending programs and would need to be motivated through advertising or some other means.

The data indicate an average likelihood of using specific services, or types of services and programs, if offered for El Cajon residents ages 50 and over.

There appears to be above average interest in educational programs, health related activities, and professional services among those 55 and younger.





Peer counseling received the lowest rating; however, it is not clear from the results whether respondents gave it a lower rating because they were not interested or because they did not know what it was.

As might be expected, women indicated more interest in arts and crafts programs than did men (25% very likely vs. 9%).

As can be seen in the following table, those who had been to a senior center in the past were uniformly more interested than those who had not been to a senior center.

**TABLE 8: LIKELIHOOD OF USING SENIOR SERVICES BY THOSE WHO HAD BEEN TO A CENTER OR HAD NOT**

<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>MEAN LIKELIHOOD RATING</u>	
	<u>HAD BEEN</u>	<u>HAD NOT BEEN</u>
Educational programs, like lectures, computer classes, consumer protection classes, crime prevention classes, and college or Continuing Education classes	3.4	2.9
Health related activities such as health screenings, exercise programs, preventive health services, and nutrition counseling	3.2	2.9
Professional services, like legal services, tax preparation, financial or retirement planning, grief counseling, employment services, housing services, and HICAP* counseling	3.1	2.6
Arts and crafts programs	3.0	2.3
Recreational activities such as shuffle board, billiards, walking clubs, and trips or excursions	2.9	2.3
Assistance programs, like Meals on Wheels, Pets as Companions, and Project Care	2.7	2.3
Leisure activities such as card games, gardening, and bridge clubs	2.6	1.9
Peer counseling	2.1	1.8

\*HICAP = Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program  
A 5-point scale was used where 1 meant not at all likely and 5 meant very likely.

This suggests that a new senior center would draw the most from those who had already been to a senior center. Those who had not been would need more convincing.



With the exception of professional services, assistance programs and peer counseling, this pattern also holds for activity level. Those who describe themselves as more active are more interested in the services offered. This is shown in the following table and in Figure 9.

**TABLE 9: LIKELIHOOD OF USING SENIOR SERVICES BY THOSE WHO SAY THEY ARE ACTIVE OR NOT**

<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>MEAN LIKELIHOOD RATING</u>	
	<u>NOT ACTIVE</u>	<u>ACTIVE</u>
Educational programs, like lectures, computer classes, consumer protection classes, crime prevention classes, and college or Continuing Education classes	2.8	3.4
Health related activities such as health screenings, exercise programs, preventive health services, and nutrition counseling	2.8	3.2
Professional services, like legal services, tax preparation, financial or retirement planning, grief counseling, employment services, housing services, and HICAP* counseling	2.8	2.8
Arts and crafts programs	2.3	2.9
Recreational activities such as shuffle board, billiards, walking clubs, and trips or excursions	2.3	2.8
Assistance programs, like Meals on Wheels, Pets as Companions, and Project Care	2.4	2.5
Leisure activities such as card games, gardening, and bridge clubs	2.0	2.4
Peer counseling	1.8	2.0

\*HICAP = Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program  
A 5-point scale was used where 1 meant not at all likely and 5 meant very likely.

Offering professional services or assistance programs might be the key to getting more people involved in the center. Earlier it was mentioned that it seemed a new senior center would draw mostly from those who had already been to a senior center. Offering professional services and/or assistance programs might draw in those who otherwise might not attend – bringing them into the center for essential services.

Someone who is involved in activities is most likely to be under age 75 and with an income over \$20,000.



AMOUNT WILLING TO PAY FOR SERVICES (Q5)

For each senior service they rated a 5 (“very likely to use the service”) in the preceding question, respondents were asked the maximum amount they would be willing to pay each time they used the service.

Although the question appeared clear and worked well in the pretest, there was some difficulty with this question. For example, with lectures and classes some respondents thought about a one time per use fee while others answered with the amount for a series of classes. In this example, some respondents mentioned \$1 or \$2 while others mentioned \$35 and \$50. The large range and different interpretation by respondents makes averages problematic. As such, the most frequent response (mode) is also shown. The table below shows the average amount the likely users would be willing to pay for each service and the amount mentioned most frequently.

These results suggest that people are willing to pay a small amount for services of a recreational or social nature; however, there is some resistance.

TABLE 10: AMOUNT WILLING TO PAY FOR SERVICES

<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>AMOUNT WILLING TO PAY</u>	
	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>MODE</u>
Arts and crafts programs	\$9.80	\$5.00
Educational programs, like lectures, computer classes, consumer protection classes, crime prevention classes, and college or Continuing Ed classes	\$14.59	\$5.00
Leisure activities such as card games, gardening, and bridge clubs	\$7.54	\$5.00
Recreational activities such as shuffle board, billiards, walking clubs, and trips or excursions	\$39.93	\$0 / \$5.00*
Health related activities such as health screenings, exercise programs, preventive health services, and nutrition counseling	\$9.28	\$0
Professional services, like legal services, tax preparation, financial or retirement planning, grief counseling, employment services, housing services, and HICAP counseling	\$20.49	\$0
Peer counseling	\$12.32	\$5.00
Assistance programs, like Meals on Wheels, Pets as Companions, and Project Care	\$22.19	\$5.00

\*Note: Recreational activities is bi-modal. The same number of people responded with \$0 and \$5.00.

It should also be noted that for each service several people did not know how much they would be willing to pay.

These results clearly suggest that people are willing to pay a small amount for services of a recreational or social nature. However, there is some resistance to paying (each service had at least some respondents who indicated that although very interested they would not pay), which suggests that a sliding scale could be considered. Also, consider offering those services that would have the highest draw at reduced rates to encourage attendance.

Those age 65 or over were somewhat more likely to mention a willingness to pay for several services than those under 65.

TABLE 11: AMOUNT WILLING TO PAY FOR SERVICES BY AGE

<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>AMOUNT WILLING TO PAY (MODE)</u>	
	<u>UNDER 65</u>	<u>65 +</u>
Arts and crafts programs	\$5.00	\$5.00
Educational programs, like lectures, computer classes, consumer protection classes, crime prevention classes, and college or Continuing Ed classes	\$0	\$5.00
Leisure activities such as card games, gardening, and bridge clubs	\$0 / \$5.00*	\$5.00
Recreational activities such as shuffle board, billiards, walking clubs, and trips or excursions	\$0	\$5.00
Health related activities such as health screenings, exercise programs, preventive health services, and nutrition counseling	\$0	\$0
Professional services, like legal services, tax preparation, financial or retirement planning, grief counseling, employment services, housing services, and HICAP counseling	\$0	\$0 / \$5.00*
Peer counseling	\$15.00	\$5.00
Assistance programs, like Meals on Wheels, Pets as Companions, and Project Care	\$0	\$5.00

\*Note: Leisure activities is bi-modal for those under 65. Professional services is bi-modal for those 65 or over. The same number of people responded with \$0 and \$5.00.

REASONS FOR NOT GOING TO A SENIOR CENTER (Q8A)

Respondents who had never been to any senior center were asked their reasons for not going. Figure 10 and the following table show the responses to this question:

TABLE 12: REASONS FOR NOT GOING TO A SENIOR CENTER

<u>REASONS</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
No need to/ no reason to/ not interested	32%
Too busy/ other things to do/ haven't had time	31%
Not old enough/ don't consider self a senior	23%
Still in workforce	9%
Never thought about it	6%
Transportation issue	6%
Disabled/ medical reasons	5%
Needs are fulfilled elsewhere	5%
Don't know where/ what they are	4%
Other*	9%

Sum of percentages may be greater than 100% due to multiple responses.  
\*See verbatim other responses in Appendix C.

Most of the responses to this question center around a lack of interest. Thirty-two percent of respondents mentioned they had no need to attend or were not interested; thirty-one percent said they were too busy or had other things to do. These people do not appear to have the perception that senior centers offer anything of interest to them.

Additional promotion or advertising might be necessary to attract this group.

Several respondents appear to have the perception that senior centers do not offer anything of interest to them.





There are also those who don't consider a senior center to be the place for them. Twenty-three percent of respondents said they did not consider themselves a senior; and, 9% commented they were still in the workforce.

It would follow that the younger the respondent, he or she felt less like a 'senior'; however, 7% of those ages 65-74 gave this response as did 4% of those over age 75.

Younger respondents (ages 50 to 55) were more likely to be in the workforce (17%) than those 65 to 74 (4%) or those 75 or over (2%).

These findings suggests that there is a problem with the word 'senior' and the designation of 'senior center.'

Six percent of respondents cited transportation issues, 5% commented on medical issues and 4% said they don't know what or where the senior centers are. These suggest a need for more information. Promoting the centers as being easy to reach, handicapped accessible or as having health care related services could, perhaps, draw in these people as well as offering educational programs likely to entice all ages.

These findings suggests that there is a problem with the word 'senior' and the designation of 'senior center.'

Additional qualitative research, focusing on the names of the center, appears to be warranted.

### SECTION III: NEEDS AND WANTS FOR A NEW SENIOR CENTER

#### LEVEL OF LIFE ENHANCEMENT PROVIDED BY A NEW SENIOR CENTER (Q9)

Survey participants were asked if a new senior center were to be built in El Cajon to provide activities and services to adults ages 50 and up, how much would it enhance their lives. A 5-point scale was used where 1 meant the new center would not enhance life at all, 2 meant not very much, 3 meant it may or may not enhance your life, 4 meant enhance it somewhat, and 5 meant the new senior center would enhance your life very much.

A mean rating of 3.0 indicated respondents thought a new senior center may or may not enhance their lives. However, there were a number of respondents in each category. Even though 36% of respondents thought the center would not enhance their lives very much or at all, this is balanced by 41% who thought it would enhance their lives somewhat or very much.

This suggests that, rather than a general middle-of-the-road feeling, there are those who would enjoy and use a senior center and those who would not.

In general, women were more favorable toward building a new senior center than men—46% indicated it would enhance their lives somewhat or very much, compared to 33% of men. Likewise, 57% of those who had been to a senior center thought it would enhance their lives, compared to 30% of those who had not been to a senior center.

Also, those who considered themselves as very involved were more likely to feel it would enhance their lives (49% vs. 32% for those who were not at all or not very involved).

The highest income group (over \$55,000) was least interested in a new senior center, with 33% saying it would enhance their lives somewhat or very much. This is compared with 45% of those with incomes from \$35,000 to \$54,999; 46% of those with incomes of \$20,000 to \$34,999; and, 51% of those with incomes under \$20,000. Those with incomes under \$20,000 were most likely to indicate a new senior center would enhance their lives very much (28%).

In general, women responded more favorably toward building a new senior center than men.



**IMPORTANCE RATINGS OF FACILITIES (Q10)**

Survey participants were asked to rate a list of facilities that could be offered at a new senior center in El Cajon. A 5-point scale was used where 1 meant not at all important and 5 meant very important. Figure 12 and the table below show the mean importance rating and the percentage of respondents who indicated each facility was very important.

**TABLE 13: IMPORTANCE RATINGS OF FACILITIES**

<u>FACILITIES</u>	<u>MEAN IMPORTANCE RATINGS</u>	<u>PERCENT VERY IMPORTANT</u>
Fitness room	3.0	30%
Quiet room/ library/ reading room	2.9	27%
Computer room	2.9	30%
Coffee and juice bar	2.8	23%
Meeting rooms	2.7	21%
Garden	2.6	20%
Drop-in lobby/ lounge	2.6	19%
Billiard room	2.0	10%
Shuffle board court	2.0	11%

A 5-point scale was used where 1 meant not at all important and 5 meant very important.

None of the facilities received overwhelming support from all respondents. These findings suggest that there are at least some people who are interested in each of the different facilities. The most popular would be a fitness room, quiet room/ reading room/ library, and computer room. These would be followed by a coffee and juice bar, meeting rooms, a garden and a drop-in lobby/ lounge. The least popular might be a billiards room and shuffle board court.

None of the facilities received overwhelming support from all respondents. The most popular facilities would be a fitness room, quiet room/ reading room/ library, and computer room.



Those with incomes over \$55,000 were less interested in several facilities than those with incomes under \$20,000:

- **Garden**  
14% of those with incomes over \$55,000 rated a garden as very important vs. 28% of those under \$20,000
- **Quiet room/ reading room/ library**  
20% of those over \$55,000 rated a quiet room, reading room, library as very important vs. 35% of those under \$20,000
- **Coffee and juice bar**  
17% of those over \$55,000 rated a coffee and juice bar as very important vs. 33% of those under \$20,000
- **Drop in lobby/ lounge**  
12% of those over \$55,000 rated a drop in lobby/ lounge as very important vs. 27% of those under \$20,000

EXCLUSIVE OR INTERGENERATIONAL (Q11)

Respondents were asked if a new senior center were to be built in El Cajon, would they prefer that it exclusively serve adults ages 50 and up or be an intergenerational center serving all ages. The majority said only adults ages 50 and older; however, there were many who wanted an intergenerational center. (See Figure 13.)

- 57% Seniors 50 and older only;
- 35% Intergenerational;
- 6% Don't care;
- 2% Don't know.

Women were more interested in a seniors-only facility (62%) than were men (47%).

Those who describe themselves as somewhat or very involved were more interested in a seniors-only facility than those who described themselves as not very or not at all involved (62% vs. 51%).

Those ages 50-55 were more interested in an intergenerational center (50%) than those over 55 (56 to 64, 31%; 65 to 74, 27%; 75 or older, 34%).

Those with incomes under \$35,000 were more interested in a seniors-only facility (64% of those under \$20,000 and 61% of those from \$20,000 to \$34,999) than those with incomes over \$55,000 (51%).

It might be acceptable to offer some days or specific programs that are intergenerational, but to restrict the majority to those over age 50.

The majority would prefer a center only for adults ages 50 and older.





LOCATED NEAR COMMUNITY PARK (Q12)

Survey participants were asked if they would prefer that a new senior center with activities for adults ages 50 and up be located near a community park or someplace else. The majority said near a park. (See Figure 14.)

- 61% Park;
- 17% Someplace else;
- 17% Don't care;
- 5% Don't know.

The majority of survey participants would prefer a new senior center near a community park.



CENTRALLY LOCATED (Q13)

Respondents were asked if a new senior center were to be built in El Cajon, would they be more likely to use a facility that is centrally located, or would it not make a difference.

- 50% Centrally located;
- 47% Would not make a difference;
- 3% Don't know.

Respondents were fairly evenly split on this issue. However, those with incomes over \$55,000 were less likely to want a centrally located center (32%) than those in the other income groups (the next lowest group was \$20,000 to \$34,999 with 54%).

Respondents were split between saying they would be more likely to use a facility that is centrally located and the location would not make a difference.



ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS (Q14)

Survey participants were asked what, if any, other ideas or suggestions they had about a new senior center in El Cajon. The following table shows the most common responses to this question:

TABLE 14: ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

<u>IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
None/ Nothing	57%
A place to socialize/ meet/ party room	6%
Leisure activities	6%
Shuttle service	5%
On a bus line	5%
Centrally located	5%
Miscellaneous (less than 5% each)	44%

Sum of percentages may be greater than 100% due to multiple responses.

The majority of respondents had no additional ideas (57%).

The majority of respondents had no additional ideas for a new senior center.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

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### EMPLOYMENT STATUS

BASE FOR PERCENT	500
Employed full-time.....	24%
Part-time.....	8%
Retired.....	60%
Volunteer.....	3%
Other/ unemployed.....	6%
Refused.....	<1%

\* Percents total more than 100% due to multiple responses.

### AGE GROUP

BASE FOR PERCENT	500
50-55.....	25%
56-64.....	24%
65-74.....	26%
75-84.....	19%
85 or older.....	5%
Refused.....	1%

### HOUSEHOLD INCOME

BASE FOR PERCENT	500
Under \$20,000.....	24%
\$20,000 to \$34,999.....	20%
\$35,000 to \$54,999.....	14%
\$55,000 to \$74,999.....	9%
\$75,000 or more.....	13%
Refused.....	20%

### GENDER

BASE FOR PERCENT	500
Male.....	34%
Female.....	66%



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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'To build or not to build?' The results of this research provide direction on the type of location, the demographic segments to which promotions should be directed, and the kinds of services and programs that are most likely to be successful. This information, combined with other important considerations, will help the City of El Cajon make an informed decision.

### SHOULD A NEW SENIOR CENTER BE BUILT IN EL CAJON?

Although the survey results do not indicate a groundswell of support for a new senior center in El Cajon, there are definite signs of interest. Forty percent of those surveyed suggested that such a facility would enhance their lives, and another 20% said it may or may not. Of course, the facility would have to offer the activities and services which people in this particular age group, 50 years and older, prefer.

### PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

The programs and activities that would most likely attract this demographic group are educational programs such as lectures, computer classes, consumer protection classes, crime prevention, and college or continuing education classes. This is especially true for those who have been to a senior center at some time in the past, and those who currently call themselves somewhat or very involved in social, recreational and educational activities.

Also rated above average in "likelihood of using" are health related programs, such as health screenings, exercise programs, preventive health services, and nutrition counseling. With this apparent interest in education and health, the higher ratings (although only in the average range) show the importance respondents place on offering a fitness room, a library or reading area, and a computer room at a new senior center.

Educational programs would be more attractive to those in the 50 to 64 age group than to those older respondents surveyed. Offering such programs may be a way to create interest among this younger segment. This younger segment, which is not very interested at the present time in what they would consider "senior activities," are, in fact, the future potential users of these services.

Another area of disagreement between the younger and older respondent groups is whether the proposed new senior center be exclusively for seniors or be intergenerational. The youngest age group, 50 to 55 years, would somewhat prefer that it be intergenerational (50% vs. 45%), whereas other age groups clearly prefer that it be exclusively for adults ages 50 and older.

## LOCATION

When asked questions pertaining to the location for a new El Cajon senior center, nearly two out of three would want it to be located near a community park. Half of the total surveyed want it to be centrally located in the city, and the other half said it would make no difference to them if it was centrally located or not. This is not surprising, seeing that eight out of ten drive their own vehicles to locations in El Cajon. Interestingly, nearly two out of three in the age group 75 years and older drive themselves where they need to go.

## PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

In reviewing the results of this research study, it becomes apparent that to effectively promote a new senior center a communication program should be designed to attract the various demographic segments.

These data indicate distinct differences in preferences, concerns, and likelihood of use between males and females, younger and older respondents, income groups, previous experience with senior centers, as well as between those who consider themselves to be active and those who do not. Using demographic and benefit segmentation (segmenting the market based on perceived benefits) could be very helpful in decisions regarding media, advertising copy, and in assembling promotional packages.

For example, an evening called an 'Intergenerational Gathering' with an emphasis on various educational opportunities offered at the new center may draw those in the 50 to 64 age group. Offering a Healthcare Day would probably attract people of all age groups over 50 years, but not those from household incomes in the \$55,000 plus category.

Newspapers apparently would be the most effective way of getting the word out about a new service or activity to all ages over 50 years. This is especially true for reaching the youngest age group surveyed, 50 to 55 years old, and those who consider themselves to be actively involved in social and recreational activities at the present time. Nearly two out of three in these segments indicated that they look in the newspaper for information about events or activities. Interestingly, nearly one-third in the under 65 years age group look to the Internet for this type of information.

## PAST EXPERIENCES

In trying to determine what activities and programs potential participants would use if offered at a new senior center, it is always advisable to look at what kinds of experiences they have had in the past. Of the nine possible activities asked about in the survey, those for which respondents indicated the highest level of involvement in the past are exercise programs, trips and excursions, and classes/lectures. These results relate well to what they expressed interest in for future involvement—educational activities and healthcare issues.

The respondent group showing the most experience in these kinds of activities in the past are those who have already been to senior centers. This segment will undoubtedly be the strongest support group for successfully promoting such services and activities at a new senior center.

## METHODOLOGY

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After definition of research objectives with representatives of the City of El Cajon and SANDAG, CJ Olson Market Research designed a first draft questionnaire for review and approval. This first draft was pretested with twenty residents of El Cajon ages 50 or over. The purpose of the pretest was to test the length and communication capability of the questionnaire. SANDAG staff listened by speakerphone while the pretest interviews were conducted from the Olson Phone Center. Pretest results were reviewed and necessary questionnaire revisions were made before full data collection began.

The probability sampling method was used to survey the general public in order to obtain projectable data for decision making. A random digit sample of phone numbers within the incorporated boundaries of the City of El Cajon was purchased from a professional sampling service. Using a random digit rather than a listed sample allowed for inclusion of unlisted telephone households. Spanish speaking interviewers were available to conduct interviews, as needed. A listed sample of households, which were expected to contain adults, ages 50 and over was purchased to supplement the random digit sample.

The total population of the City of El Cajon (based on San Diego Association of Government estimates) is roughly 96,000. Of those, approximately 21,000 are ages 50 or over. A total of 500 interviews were completed from August 16, 2000 to September 12, 2000, resulting in statistical reliability at the 95% confidence level of  $\pm 4.3\%$ .

Completed questionnaires were edited for full probing and clarifying of open-ended responses and complete recording of structured responses. The open-ended responses were coded and all responses entered into a database. The data were processed using SPSS software resulting in multivariate data tables. The data were analyzed and a written report of the findings is presented in this document.

For this study, a total of 500 interviews were completed with residents of El Cajon ages 50 and over.