

**Senior Action Committee
May 2001- May 2002
Background Summary**

The Senior Action Committee (SAC) was formed in May 2001 to be creative, innovative, and take a leadership role in planning for the health, well being, and independence for people as they age. The SAC was made up of 21 community representatives invited by the City (**see attachment A**). The SAC was charged with creating a 3-5 year strategic plan to address recommendations set forth from the Senior Needs Assessment completed in March 2000.

Outlined below is the course of accomplishment followed by the Senior Action Committee.

1. **The SAC was asked to define a Centralized Locale/Governance/Frame that would be the hub for senior services. They also wanted to activate a strong senior voice and visibility in the community. The SAC recommended to City Council in September, 2001, that the City institute a Senior Council. This was passed, and is in development.**

The SAC explored several possibilities to enhance the visibility and voice of seniors in the community. They researched National models, regional models, and local efforts. The main need identified was for seniors to be active, informed, and powerful in advocating for themselves in the community. The SAC identified the need for a centralized hub for senior services. This hub could be the existing Senior Center, a Senior Council, a website, etc. The concept would be to create access to information, services, events, activities, political voice and visibility, and have an overall arching organized effort to support seniors.

In researching different models, the committee decided to adapt our local, successful Youth Council model and propose the formation of a Senior Council. This committee developed a frame for the organization, proposing it to City Council in September, 2001 (**see attachment B**). This frame included a definition of the representation, roles and responsibilities of the Council, structure, and a regional focus. In addition it included possible sub-committees. The City Council approved it unanimously. The Senior Action Committee now defined the Senior Council as the hub for all senior services (**see attachment C** for organizational chart).

A subcommittee of the Senior Action Committee was then formed to draft by-laws, and application procedures for the Senior Council (**see attachment D**). The Senior Action Committee decided to roll this out with the final strategic planning report in May 2002.

The role of the Senior Council is to oversee and drive the strategic plan formed from the Senior Action Committee.

2. **The SAC was charged with evaluating partnerships within the senior community, with possible satellite sites, businesses and service providers. The SAC recognized the number and variety of existing partners, and assisted in researching nontraditional models of partnership. The SAC recognizes it is crucial to develop partnerships in order to succeed.**

The SAC recognizes that development of collaboration and partnerships is going to be vital for the success of the Senior Council and senior services in Kirkland. **Attachment D** lists current partners that have already been developed through the Senior Center. The SAC discussed the benefits of partnerships and focused on different partnership models. The SAC also researched possible new partnerships and sites that would be helpful in promoting senior health and well-being.

In summary, the SAC recommends incorporating development of partnerships, both traditional models and creative models, into the strategic plan. Discussion included partnering to provide programs, exchanging ideas, collaborating on regional partnerships, joint fund development opportunities, business partnerships, community service opportunities, and various other methods of collaborating.

3. **The SAC researched ways for seniors to be active, connected and engaged in learning. This topic led to the reemphasis of creating partnerships in order to increase access and availability of service and activities for seniors.**

The Department of Parks and Community Services has established lifelong learning as a goal. The SAC discussed the already existing efforts to accomplish this goal, and researched various ways to increase educational and learning opportunities for seniors. Some of the suggestions included

- Offer classes and programs in the evening and weekends.
- Connect with pre-retirement groups to assist in planning for leisure time.
- Promote the Senior Council as an opportunity to get involved.
- Partner with other senior providers, i.e. faith community.
- Offer on-line classes, or access to on-line classes.
- Change the name of the Senior Center, eliminating senior from the name.
- Provide outreach and education in the community, both for marketing and to provide classes.
- Increase marketing efforts, i.e. churches, web site, newsletters, newspaper, community events.
- Set up strong phone network, using personal calls to promote programs, services, and events.

The SAC emphasized the importance of developing and maintaining the goal of lifelong learning.

4. **The Committee researched ways to increase accessibility to information and resources for seniors. There seems to be some current efforts that could assist with this goal. However, there are some untapped potential sources that could prove to be very helpful.**

The SAC created a profile of what already exists in order to determine the best ways to increase access. They focused on efforts that are already set up in the community (i.e. Senior Services Information and Assistance Program), identified gaps, identified current and potential partners, and identified potential access efforts.

The gaps that were identified included:

- Services/access for non-English speaking individuals
- Support and access for caregivers
- Services for vision impaired and hearing impaired
- Access for homebound seniors
- Limited transportation

After understanding current existing efforts and where there are still gaps in access to information and resources, the SAC identified potential new opportunities to increase access. They focused on a marketing campaign that would utilize various mediums to promote access. They thought it would be important to utilize:

- TV access channels
- Utility billing statements
- Phone stickers that could be distributed to local physicians, post office, hospitals, etc.
- Neighborhood Associations
- Public/Community Fairs
- Business advertising
- Brochures
- Outreach to immigrant/refugee community, with information in various languages.
- Set up strong phone network. Use personal calls to promote programs, services, and events.

In summary, the SAC recommends incorporating some of these ideas into the strategic plan.

5. **The Committee developed ideas to create opportunities for seniors to feel safe, secure, and valued by the community. This was a main issue identified in the Needs Assessment.**

The SAC was presented information on the Gatekeeper Program. This program trains public service workers (i.e. postal delivery workers, utility meter readers, police, paper delivery) to identify the signs of a senior who may need assistance. For example, if the postal delivery worker sees mail piling up, they can call the Gatekeeper Program with their concern. The Gatekeeper Program sends someone to check on the senior. This program is a national program that has been quite successful in assisting seniors who live alone. The Gatekeeper Program operates in this area, but there needs to be training for local workers. The SAC wants this to be a priority for the Senior Council.

Additional safety issues included pedestrian safety, telephone/marketing scams, bus rider safety, and concerns of personal safety around the teen center. The SAC agrees that some of these issues could be impacted by educational workshops at the Senior Center.

6. The Committee researched regional initiatives that impact housing, and transportation. The SAC supports joining regional efforts to advocate for seniors in regards to these issues.

The SAC discussed regional issues regarding housing, transportation, health, and safety. Tom Sherrard, Housing Task Force member presented the final report and evaluation of affordable housing in the community. The Task Force has been concluded, but there still could be efforts in regards to affordable housing that the Senior Council might be involved in. The SAC wants the regional efforts to be part of the strategic plan.

Sandy Stutey from METRO presented current efforts in transportation. METRO's strategy is based on building community partnerships, training to raise awareness of needs, and providing access to a variety of other programs available to the community. The main resources available for transportation include Senior Services Volunteer Transportation Program, Hopelink's transportation to medical appointments, and Northshore's partnership with METRO and Hopelink. The SAC encourages exploring partnerships with Hopelink, and developing a plan to expand current transportation services.

Sharon Anderson presented the final report from the Senior Day Health Committee. Sharon gave an overview of the committee's findings and recommendation. The Committee was comprised of Senior Adult Day Health providers, transportation, Northshore Senior Center, and staff. After a few meetings it was clear that two Day Health providers are already serving Kirkland residents, and that by initiating a new program sponsored by the Senior Center would be duplicating services. The committee concluded that the City should support the existing efforts.

Other health related concerns were discussed. The SAC focused on areas impacting health for seniors, which included access to in-home services,

improving access to mental health, and improving access to services for non-English speaking seniors. Access to in-home services is often limited by the inability to pay. Many seniors are unable to pay and do not qualify for COPES (Community Options Program Entry System), a program which offers alternative care arrangements for those who do not want to go into a nursing home. The SAC agrees this needs to be impacted on a legislative level.

Some of the ideas discussed for improving access to mental health issues included locating a counselor or social worker in the Senior Center, partner with Evergreen Health Network to assist in provision of services, expand existing information and referral resources, and establishing a peer support program.

Increasing access to services for non-English speaking seniors is also a regional issue. The immigrant and refugee community on the Eastside continues to grow. The SAC emphasized the need to establish partnerships with experienced and bilingual programs to assist in provision of services.

- 7. The Committee reviewed the role of the Senior Center in the community. They proposed the Senior Council as the hub, with the Senior Center being a crucial component in providing services and advocating for seniors. From the Needs Assessment, the SAC learned the already established goals of revamping the Senior Center. The SAC discussed other methods to revitalize the Center.**

The SAC focused on four areas of revitalizing the Senior Center. These included organizational approach, programming, volunteer program, and overall role.

The organizational approach was discussed at length. This included the role of the current advisory board. They considered how the Advisory Board would interface with the Senior Council. The SAC agrees it would be effective to have subcommittees on the Senior Council, with one being in an oversight role of the Senior Center. The current Advisory Board did not want the Senior Center to get lost in a larger organized entity and recommended the retention of the current Advisory Board. The role of the Advisory Board will continue to be oversight of the operations of the Senior Center, and having a link to the Senior Council.

There were many ideas on programming, but the main focus was marketing the programs. The SAC recommended various approaches to marketing. They also encouraged increased visibility of volunteers, and having seniors take a more active role in the operations of the Center would be helpful. The SAC concurs it would also be effective to improve signage, conduct community meetings to increase visibility of the center, and develop a database/calling list to encourage participation.

The SAC also focused on the volunteer program. They agreed it would be effective to build up the volunteer program, providing a sense of belonging,

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ownership, and responsibility for volunteers. It also was suggested to partner with existing volunteer programs, i.e. United Way Volunteer Center, the City of Kirkland's volunteer program, to recruit and retain volunteers.

The overall role of the Senior Center was discussed. The SAC recommends changing the Senior Center name. The word "senior" was viewed as a barrier to many needing services, yet unwilling to identify themselves as seniors. Ideas for a new name included: Central Community Center, Downtown Community Center, Moss Bay Community Center. It might be helpful to add "specializing in senior services" as a byline. Other popular ideas included building a new senior center, or remodeling the current facility.