

## CAFE: The Center for Age-Friendly Excellence

*Advancing Livable Communities for all Generations*



### Summary and Collated Notes Responses from Law Enforcement Regarding Unmet Needs of Atherton Older Adult Residents

Dates of Focus Group Discussions: August 21 and 23

Total # responses: 2 written, 1 in-person

CAFE Staff Facilitator: Cynthia Nakayama

Video- and Audio-recorded using Altis.io (rough draft summary)

### Law Enforcement: Police and Fire Departments

Questions: We understand that due to the nature of your work, you see situations that most others do not see. Based upon this:

- 1) What do you see as the major unmet needs for the older adult residents of Atherton?
- 2) What are your ideas for solutions for these unmet needs?

### *Police Department*

#### **Police Commander** (written response)

The main issue we see with our aging population is they become more susceptible to being victims of fraudulent crimes where they give money away.

The solution would be outreach and education. We've sent multiple Newsflashes about fraud scams over the past couple years, but if they don't subscribe they don't get them.

About two months ago, we had one of our patrol teams have coffee at a local assisted living facility and talk to the residents about scams and how to avoid them.

#### **Police Chief** (information provided during Focus Groups 1 and 2)

**Community Support / Respect and Social Inclusion:** Police Chief emphasized the importance of safety and security for older adults. He acknowledges the role of the police department in providing resources and support for older adults, with a specific focus on outreach to those who may be isolated or have

difficulty with transportation. He also highlights the importance of emergency preparedness for all residents, including the older adults, and suggests that regular community events and programs like the A.D.A.P.T. program can help promote this.

- A.D.A.P.T. is a volunteer program that is officially a part of the police department with about 40 members. We provide training and have monthly meetings. In addition it is a great opportunity for socialization, learn what is going on in the community and be prepared for disaster. There is an A.D.A.P.T. model.
- Need to have everything prepared so that you can take care of you and your family first; then start going to neighbors, door-to-door. You don't want to think about this when it's already too late
- Isolated older adults who are affirmed and have limited mobility typically have a caretaker or an onsite nurse who may possibly be able to help them.
- In community meetings, there are often people who are sitting next to each other who have been neighbors for 20 years but have never met because of the walls and gates. They can now exchange information which allows them to take care of themselves – it is about people checking on each other. Example: One of our A.D.A.P.T. members noticed the house of the older woman across the street was dark. She has no family and no assistance and has a medical need. So he dragged his generator to her home.
- I failed to prepare and we had to leave the house during a power outage since we had no generator. So that was a failure on my part. The power was out for 2 weeks.
- Resident Volunteer Patrol (RVP) also has about 40 people who go out walking; it offers some socialization and also helps the police department. We provide you with training and we arm you with your cell phone (no guns). Our residents are hypervigilant and if something doesn't look right, they tell us (see something, say something).
- Police force is fully staffed, our police officer constantly out and about just because you don't see them doesn't mean that they're not. We have. We have 5 motorcycle officers, because one of the main issues that we have in town is traffic (supporting metrics have not been included but can be added).

**Safety:** Policy Chief acknowledges the vulnerability of the elderly to scams, indicating a need for better protection and awareness measures. Examples:

- In Victoria Manor, a couple criminals walked up to the home of elderly residents, said their grandson had been involved in an accident, and they need \$10,000. They gave him the \$10,000, unfortunately, and then they will never see him again.
- Scammers called up my father. He has a great grandson. They said your great-grandson, Ethan, been involved in an accident. He needs \$10,000. Fortunately, he called my sister and called me. I said “.. if it doesn't seem right, it's not.”
- There is a gentleman in Lindenwood who is 85, on his own, and has no family to look after him. He was called by a fake police officer who said your accounts have been compromised. We're going to need \$75,000 to correct this. They told him he was in violation of banking laws. He went to the bank to get a cashier's check and the bank was on it and called the police. One of our officers has now befriended the gentleman and regularly checks up on him. We are very fortunate to have the resources and time to be able to do this and we utilize it in a smart way.

Potential Solutions: Increase education and awareness. People need to know:

- They are vulnerable, especially as older adults, and many scammers are very good at what they do

- You need to tell the police department about it so that they can help. Sometimes there is an FBI task force that handles this because it is international. When people lose a lot of money, it is very embarrassing so they tend not to report it, sometimes they don't even tell their spouse about it.

**Emergency Preparedness:** Police Chief expressed concern about the safety of elderly residents in emergency situations, suggesting a need for emergency preparedness resources or information. Need to continue to leverage the police department and programs like A.D.A.P.T. for outreach to the elderly and for promoting emergency preparedness .

- Residents need to get ready to be able to help themselves and their families; this includes any medical equipment needs, refrigeration, electricity to charge your phones
- Residents need to go to the A.D.A.P.T. website where everything you need to know about emergency management is in one place; e.g. recommended products; how to store water and keep it fresh.
- Although this is an affluent community, very few have an emergency generator
- The Police Department will not be able to help everybody with everything during an emergency

**Community Support and Health Services:** The Police Department goes on medical calls for a variety of reasons. When we're in the home, we're looking at things through a different lens to see what's going on. It's not uncommon for us to see person that's not being cared for, and they may have a caretaker. Their adult children aren't aware. When we see that, it doesn't end there, we start connecting resources and the children, whatever else that's needed to make sure that's happening.

**Communication:** Chief McCulley recognizes the need for better communication methods to reach the elderly and other residents . He also emphasizes the importance of effective communication, especially during emergencies, suggesting a need for improved communication channels for the elderly .

- Part of the responsibility is on the residents themselves to ensure they're signed up for the alerts (local newsflash, SMC Alerts, Zone Haven, public works)
- In a large-scale emergency, the police force will not be able to get everyone's situation handled. The police force, fire department, and medical response teams will not be able to respond for at least 7 days.
- People need to prepare so that they are able to take care of themselves since emergencies last a longer time now. You don't want to be looking at empty shelves in the stores.

**Transportation/Mobility:** Chief McCulley identifies the need for better transportation options for older adults who cannot drive.

- There are no plans to add sidewalks to the majority of Atherton, which could be a potential unmet need for the elderly in terms of safety.
- Atherton is a very safe place to walk as long as you're walking against traffic. The Police Department enacted a safe walking program in Lindenwood (signs have been put up). It is the law that you walk against traffic so you can see what's coming toward you.

**Social Inclusion:** Chief McCulley and the residents agree on the need for more social participation opportunities for older adults. This includes opportunities for better engagement with the town and its activities.

- Communication about events and activities in Atherton and nearby cities is available if you are looking for it.

## ***Fire Department***



September 21, 2023

### **Mission Statement**

*To protect and preserve life and property from the impact of fire, disaster, injury, and illness.*

**Question #1:** *What do you see as the major unmet needs for the older adult residents of Atherton?*

**Question #2:** *What are your ideas for solutions for these unmet needs?*

### **Answer #1:**

The first major unmet need for the older residents of Atherton is to ensure that first responders have the ability to gain access to them in a timely manner in the event of an emergency. One of the primary objectives of fire, EMS, and law enforcement is to provide a rapid response to our community members, and one of our challenges can be the physical barriers that are in place that can hinder that initial contact. This can become an issue at times, especially with very large and well-secured Atherton residential properties, so it is important that we have a quick way to gain access to the resident. While we always have the ability to perform forcible entry when necessary, we prefer not to damage property if it is not needed. It is very important, especially for older residents who live alone, to provide emergency services personnel with a means to gain access to them without the need to damage doors, windows, or gates.

### **Solution #1:**

A possible solution to address this need is to ask all older residents to work with the Atherton PD and provide them with access to their residences. This could include gate code information, actual keys to the residence, and alarm system codes. Sometimes residents have hide-a-keys or lockbox information that is very valuable for first responders to have relayed to us by our dispatch centers as this will help expedite our abilities to gain access to the residence and the person in need of assistance. Atherton PD is very responsive to the emergencies that occur in their town and often has a key to the residence and/or codes to gates. We would encourage all older residents of Atherton to provide the police department with information on how emergency service personnel can gain access to their property so that we can quickly provide aid without damaging their property.

**Answer #2:**

The second major unmet need for the older residents of Atherton is to ensure that they have a social support system in place to assist them and check in on them periodically. Oftentimes, when we respond to older residents, especially ones who live alone, their family support system is not always close by and there can be an extended travel time for them to arrive and provide support. Older residents often need assistance with smaller needs around the house such as changing batteries in their smoke detectors and CO detectors, doing household chores, assistance with their unloading their groceries, etc. Many times, these little items can become dangerous activities that result in injury if the resident is not physically able to perform them alone. A perfect example is using a ladder to change out the battery in a smoke detector on the ceiling.

**Solution #2:**

A possible solution to address this need is to establish an Atherton community support group for older residents consisting of dedicated individuals who would be willing to periodically check in on their older neighbors and provide help when needed. While the fire department is always happy to come out and help our residents, it could benefit this community to have some pre-designated residents who would be available to assist them with these daily needs. Having a “go-to” contact person that older residents could reach out to whenever they need assistance would be a great way to help these individuals.

**Answer #3:**

The third major unmet need for the older residents of Atherton is to ensure that they are well-prepared for an extended emergency or natural disaster. As we experienced this winter, severe storms and flooding conditions can have a significant impact on our power and gas utilities and residents should always be prepared for extended periods of service outages. Older residents, especially those who live alone, face additional challenges when there is an extended emergency or a natural disaster and their normal utility services are non-operational and they are isolated in their homes with no access to transportation. Being without heat, air conditioning, lighting, and access to food and water presents significant challenges for older residents so making sure that they are well-prepared for an unforeseen event is critical.

**Solution #3:**

A possible solution to address this need is to assemble and distribute 72-hour emergency kits to all older residents of Atherton. Items such as bottled water, canned and dry foods, warm blankets, flashlights, extra batteries, portable cell phone chargers, battery-operated AM/FM radios, necessary medications, first aid kits, pet food, etc. would be beneficial to the older residents so they are prepared to shelter in place and wait out the emergency.

***Remember that the Menlo Park Fire Protection District is always here 24/7/365 and we are just a phone call away. We will respond out anytime the residents of Atherton need our assistance no matter how small or large the problem is. Never hesitate to call us as our mission is to serve the needs of our community members.***

Thank you,  
Menlo Park Fire Protection District