

**COBB SENIOR SERVICES'  
10 YEAR MASTER PLAN**

***THRIVING IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF CHANGE***

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In response to the changing demographics that will impact the future needs of Cobb County's senior population, Commissioner Tim Lee and County Manager David Hankerson requested the development of a ten year master plan to be prepared and implemented by Cobb Senior Services (CSS). "No group in North America is altering as quickly as older people...what older people represent as part of the population is dynamic and rapidly changing..."<sup>1</sup> In a speech to the *Cobb Chamber of Commerce* Commissioner Lee states, "Our Seniors offer the best opportunity to be actively involved in the community through civic participation and leadership. Seniors are the foundation for any successful neighborhood: providing care, guidance and a nurturing environment whether at our schools, businesses or sporting programs. We also recognize the need to position Cobb as an attractive place to live and what we offer for leisure time."<sup>2</sup> The demographic changes will see the population of seniors double in 20 years.<sup>3</sup> The request made in January 2005 was acted upon quickly by CSS's executive staff. Mrs. Pamela Breeden, CSS Executive Director, began the planning process with a meeting on February 11, 2005 with CSS staff members and volunteer facilitator Carolyn Bain. Information was gathered for the Plan based on questions Mrs. Breeden developed. During this time a strategic list of members representing many areas and aspects of the County was developed. Care was taken to create a committee that represented the make up of Cobb County. Their importance to the project is critical. Most are older citizens with the majority being long time residents of Cobb County. They have seen the County grow and know the players who have helped the county's development.

The Master Plan Committee included: June Bentley, retired special education teacher; Joyce Cheek, volunteer and North Cobb Delegate for the Senior Citizen Council; Joseph Daniell, Executive Vice President, Southern National Bank; Dr. Richard L. Hammonds, retired physician and CEO of Wellstar Hospital; Sybil Meyers, member of CSS Board of Advisors and retired Director of ELM; The Rev. Dr. Randy Mickler, Pastor at Mt. Bethel Methodist Church; Dr. David Mitchell, Distinguished Scholar of Gerontology, KSU; Kathy Simpson, retired A.D.A. Administrator for Cobb; Barry Teague, Partner, Walton Communities; Laraine Vance, Cobb County D.O.T. Planning Division Manager; Mary Lou Vergara, ARC, Caregiver Support Programs; Louis Walker, retired City of Marietta teacher; Carolyn Bain, gerontologist, volunteer facilitator; and Cobb County employees: Robert Ash, Public Services Director; Pam Breeden, CSS Executive Director; John Green, CSS Multipurpose Division Manager; Linda Parrott, CSS Social Services Division Manager; Kathy Lathem, Resource Development Coordinator, Shelia Perkins, Volunteer & Advocacy Coordinator; and Mary Boyd, Administrative Specialist.

Letters were sent out to invite the above prospective members by Cobb County Board of Commissioners (BOC) Chairman Sam Olens to the first meeting to be

held at CSS on April 26, 2005 Tuesday, 11:30 a.m. -1:00 p.m. Topics were chosen and scheduled for the following dates:

May 24, 2005,	Education/Information
June 28, 2005,	Status in the Community
July 26, 2005,	Advocacy/Volunteerism
August 28, 2005,	Facilities
September 20, 2005	Services
	Draft Review

Minutes of the resulting discussions and recommendations were taken by Mary Boyd, Executive Assistant to Mrs. Breeden, and sent to the members for their consideration and suggestions. On September 20, 2005 the completed draft document was reviewed and approved by those present. The final draft was previewed with CSS's Board of Advisors on October 3, 2005, and made available for the senior public for their in-put October 3 thru October 14, 2005. The final draft was presented to the Cobb Public Services Director and the County Manager on October 18, 2005 and sent to Commissioner Lee on October 28, 2005 for his review and comments. The Ten Year Master Plan will be submitted to and reviewed by the entire Board of Commissioners at their working session on January 24, 2006.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The broad purpose of the Committee's work was to review and assess CSS current programs and services. Studying current demographics and trends on aging, the committee suggested where gaps in services could be filled and where changes in services and activities could be made. Acknowledging the differing needs of the next generation of seniors, the committee recommended ways to build community access to an efficient continuum of services and environs that provide choices, thus enabling Cobb seniors to determine how and where they may live.

A set of core values was used to guide recommendations at every phase of planning. These core values were:

- Dignity and respect for elders
- Independence and self determination
- Health and well-being
- Safe environs
- Continued productivity
- Active lifestyles
- Interaction with other generations
- Learning opportunities

Considerations were based on the recognition that families are one of the most valuable support systems for seniors, and should be encouraged and empowered in their service. An additional support system, "...the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965 as amended, provides funding for a range of programs that offer services and opportunities for older Americans, especially those at risk of losing their independence. The OAA focuses on improving the lives of older people in areas of income, housing, health, employment, retirement and community services." Many of these sources of funding help Cobb County provide its services to seniors. Recommendations that came from this study anticipate continued funding through the OAA, and other grant sources, as well as County budget allotments and resource income.

## **III. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Purpose**

To review and assess the current programs and services of Cobb Senior Services, study current aging demographics and trends, and make recommendations to meet future needs. A set of core values were used to guide these recommendations at every phase of planning.

The final document will be used by CSS to effect changes in programs, activities, facilities and services. CSS will create action plans based on the Master Plan.

**Methods**

In January 2005, Commissioner Tim Lee and County Manager David Hankerson requested that CSS develop a ten year plan to guide the Department over the next ten years. Mrs. Pamela Breeden, CSS Executive Director, acted quickly to begin this important process, meeting in early February with CSS staff members and volunteer facilitator Carolyn Bain. At this meeting, a comprehensive strategy was outlined. After examining national and regional demographic trends, and identifying changing patterns in how seniors age in America today, a list of issues predicted to impact CSS and Cobb's aging population was developed. The process implemented, to discuss and address these issues effectively, assured that a wide perspective would be brought to bear on the challenges that lay ahead. CSS established a Committee composed of leaders from a broad segment of the Cobb community. The members of the Committee brought unique perspectives and personal expertise encompassing many different fields. Their contributions were essential to the success of the project. Serving at the invitation of Sam Olens, Chairman of the Cobb Board of Commissioners, the members participated in a series of meetings during which specific topics were discussed. The topics were: CSS' role in providing education and information; the status of seniors in the community; the importance of advocacy and volunteerism in meeting seniors' needs; CSS facilities; and CSS services.

The Committee reviewed current CSS operations and service levels and examined pertinent research which indicated possible future gaps in service arising from a combination of the increasing senior population and the changing needs of seniors. The Committee actively participated, bringing forward additional issues and suggesting solutions. From this engagement, CSS and the Committee drafted the CSS Ten Year Master Plan. The draft Plan was reviewed by the CSS Board of Advisors and public input was solicited from the senior community. Subsequently, the draft Plan was submitted for review by County Manager David Hankerson and Commissioner Tim Lee, and will be presented to and approved by the

Board of Commissioners at its meeting on January 24, 2006. Entitled “Cobb Senior Services Ten Year Master Plan: Thriving in an Environment of Change”, the adopted Master Plan now serves as a strategy crafted to meet the challenges of the next decade.

The Master Plan is organized into an Executive Summary followed by treatments of the four principal topics concentrated by subject. References are attached, as are appendices including relevant demographic information and charts reflecting various service statistics.

## **Findings**

The Committee examined a full range of issues regarding the four major topics and identified the following key findings:

### **Information and Education**

- The role of CSS in providing Information and Education related to senior issues is a crucial one, and this role will become even more important in the next ten years because of the evolving needs of the senior community. Cobb County’s population of seniors is expanding faster than other segments of its population and the importance of addressing senior needs is growing commensurately. Effective education of the public as to why senior needs are a priority will be essential to being able to provide the additional services demanded by the burgeoning senior community.
- Statistical information regarding regional and County demographics is vital to accurately forecast future impact on services and CSS must continue to work closely with the Atlanta Regional Commission in order to keep up to date with this information.
- Regional initiatives such as the Sustainable Community Initiative give opportunities to address senior issues which are common needs of the population at large. Some common needs are “walkable communities” and residences which make use of “universal design” principles.
- The need to disseminate information regarding complex issues will continue to grow. In the next ten years, the growth and diversity of the senior population will dictate that professional, non-biased information be easily accessible by seniors to allow them to make decisions. Seniors will face more and more decisions as the world changes faster in areas such as health care and family care-giving. New methods of providing support—such as “Senior to Senior” advocacy—must be enhanced.
- Professional training will be even more important to ensure staff is up to date regarding issues facing seniors and to enable staff to successfully interact with an increasingly diverse senior population.
- The CSS Information and Referral telephone line will be even more important in providing a wide range of information, particularly in providing alternate sources for services which CSS cannot provide.
- Cultural misperceptions that erroneously define what it means to be a senior, such as the widespread belief that retirement is a period of

diminished usefulness, continue to impede the accurate identification of senior needs, and ways must be found to erase negative stereotypes of aging.

### **Volunteerism**

- The challenge of recruiting volunteers will become more difficult and, at the same time, volunteers will become even more essential in providing services. Outside factors such as the price of gasoline, more people in the work place and competition with other worthy volunteer programs will all diminish ability of CSS to recruit volunteers.
- A strategy to recruit existing organized groups to volunteer for Meals on Wheels in their communities has been developed by CSS. The program is called ADOPT A ROUTE.
- Volunteers will require more intensive training in order to provide some of the specialized services which will be required. Heightened awareness of risks will require continued diligence in background checks and screening of volunteers.

### **Advocacy**

- Advocacy has played an important role in bringing CSS to where it is today. The role of advocacy has been incorporated into the department's organizational structure with a new position created to elevate this service via the "Senior to Senior" advocacy team of volunteers.
- The Older American's Act mandates that advocacy be an emphasis of CSS and, additionally, volunteer advocacy provides a means of leveraging the department's resources to provide higher levels of service.
- Advocacy is a key means of bringing awareness to senior issues. Seniors are the best advocates for their own needs and seniors will be even more politically active in the years to come.

### **Facilities**

- While overall the CSS facilities are exemplary for the region, there are some urgent issues regarding the age and capacity of certain facilities. All existing facilities are expected to be impacted by the predicted increase in the number of seniors expecting service in the next ten years and CSS will study ways to maximize appropriate usage however possible.
- Locations for new facilities could be difficult to purchase due to rising costs of land in Cobb County and therefore other options for acquiring land also will be considered. CSS will explore opportunities for land donations, city/county partnerships and campus availabilities.
- Designs for new facilities will accommodate new types of services. In particular, the baby boomer generation will likely demand accommodations for fitness activities and perhaps more casual socialization areas. Facilities will also incorporate additional areas for resource materials and offices for consultation with seniors regarding issues that affect them.

- Efficiency of operation will be considered in designing new facilities because clustering different services in one location could provide savings in dollars and time.
- The choice of location for facilities could serve as another method of matching senior needs with those of the population at large. For instance, an existing empty building successfully adapted for a Center might provide the impetus for renewing a declining area or neighborhood. If a Center adjoins a library, or is placed in a park, the seniors would augment the usage of the other facilities and the resulting synergy could lead to greater transportation service due to activity center priority in DOT planning.
- Funding for senior facilities logically will remain a secondary priority behind public safety and other essential County services. It is therefore important to explore alternate means of funding.

## **Services**

### ***Socialization***

- The average life expectancy will continue to lengthen for both men and women in the next ten years and Cobb County's older adult population is expected to grow much faster than the nation's older population.
- Opportunities for socialization often diminish in later years as a result of divorce, death, or geographic distance from family members but socialization is key to providing "life" to the extra years gained through increased longevity.
- The socialization patterns of baby boomers differ from those of preceding generations. An example is the trend of socializing in coffee shops or fitness clubs.
- Socialization opportunities offered by CSS Centers will continue to grow in demand because of the growth in the senior population. However, the scope of services demanded will also increase due to the greater ethnic diversity and new interests of the senior population. The socialization needs of Cobb's Hispanic community will increase as this community ages with the rest of Cobb's population.

### ***Education***

- CSS has a strong education component in place. Education results from mandates by social services grants and from CSS' mission of providing comprehensive information about topics affecting the senior community.
- CSS markets its educational programs and events successfully by targeting active seniors, homebound clients, Center participants, caregivers and children.
- CSS is fortunate to have educational venues such as *The Bulletin*, a publication unique to Cobb County, and the successful annual Health and Information Fairs.
- CSS has embraced technology to enhance access to information through the development of the CSS web site.

- The next ten years will require more opportunities for educating seniors about consumer issues such as identify fraud and scams targeting the senior community.
- Changes in the senior population will increase the need for education about issues impacting the senior community in the areas of health, such as Alzheimer's disease and care-giving trends such as seniors raising grandchildren.
- The children of seniors represent a receptive market for education about senior issues and this avenue will be further explored by CSS.

### ***In-Home Services***

- As seniors age in place, the need for supportive in-home services will grow. Sectors of the County with large numbers of seniors aging in place will warrant higher volumes of service and these geographic concentrations may impact the location of facilities.
- As family members become responsible for the care of spouses or other loved ones, the support received from in-home respite and out-of-home respite programs such as day care centers will be increasingly important. In 2005, respite care was the number one service provided in the Share the Care program.
- The numbers of service days at the CSS Senior Day Care Center has decreased, probably as a result of its central location being some distance from many parts of the County. This geographic distance and the time required to transport seniors from their homes in outlying areas may mean that additional Centers, provided by either CSS or other community-based organizations, will be necessary to meet existing needs. Some of these needs are already being met by private senior day care facilities.
- Private facilities are typically unable to offer services at prices comparable to those of CSS facilities. Although seniors in Cobb have incomes slightly higher than seniors across the Atlanta region, private pay is frequently an economic barrier that can only be overcome through lower fees as are offered under the sliding scale formula at CSS facilities. Affordability for those who cannot pay otherwise is essential.

### ***Health and Wellness***

- Longevity and good health are blurring the definitions of "old age."
- The baby boom generation will shape senior issues just as it has shaped society throughout its youth and middle adult years. Interests such as health and wellness will be maintained by the baby boomers as they age.
- Good health is key to maintaining strong mental functioning as well as a sense of life satisfaction.
- Wellness incorporates both physical and mental health, and depression in late-life is not a normal factor of aging.
- A healthy life-style is not necessarily restricted by economic barriers.

- Nutrition through congregate meals and the Meals on Wheels programs support good health in the senior clients.
- Practicing a healthy life-style requires good access to information and the programs presented by CSS provide this information regularly and accessibly.

### ***Transportation***

- Transportation is the service most requested through the CSS Information and Referral line, and this need continues to grow every year.
- The CSS transportation service cannot keep up with demand. In 2005 the Transportation unit provided 74,727 one-way trips—an increase of 28% over the number of one-way trips provided in 2002.
- A waiting list for demand/response transportation was put into effect in April 2005 and now has 103 clients. Appointments for transportation must now be scheduled an average three weeks in advance.
- The increasing costs of providing transportation make it even more difficult to function at the service level demanded.
- The lack of available transportation causes a severe hardship for seniors who cannot afford private transport for essential services such as medical treatment. The inability to move around in the community increases seniors' isolation from the mainstream of life.

### ***Nutrition***

- Good nutrition is an essential component of good health and healthy aging.
- A poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle are major causes of morbidity and mortality in the United States.
- Health resulting from a good diet enables older people to maintain independence and to enjoy greater life satisfaction, while poor health can decrease the quality of life and increase the expense of care.

### **Conclusion**

With this report, Cobb County begins the "Age Wave" ahead of the tidal surge of graying Americans. Cobb's population is younger, healthier, wealthier and more educated, which grants us an advantage in planning for all Cobb residents. The county infrastructure is state of the art, giving us extraordinary opportunities to realize the many positive benefits of an aging society in creating this Ten Year Master Plan.

No deadlines have been assigned to the recommendations in this plan in order to remain flexible to the changes in demographics, trends and funding that will surely occur during the next ten years. Action plans will be drafted as they are needed to accomplish the recommendations. We plan to include a consultant fee in our 2011 budget. The consultant will use the data from the 2010 census, along with ARC and Cobb Senior Services data to complete any needed updates to this document

## **Summary of Recommendations**

### **Information and Education**

- CSS will continue to be the voice for expressing the needs of the senior population.
- CSS will continue its crucial work towards correcting misperceptions about aging and the value of contributions made from late life pursuits.
- CSS will further strengthen the status of the seniors in the community by public recognition of seniors' contributions through additional events/programs.
- CSS will facilitate occasions which provide an opportunity for all generations to interact.

### **Volunteerism**

- Increase public relations in areas that have heretofore not been utilized; city utility bill inserts in those cities within Cobb that have their own utilities.
- Continue to develop the Meals on Wheels ADOPT A ROUTE program.
- Establish a Golden Eagle Guild which will define and set levels of volunteerism to formally recognize those seniors who take on leadership roles which go above and beyond.

### **Advocacy**

- Establish a committee to set up intergenerational programs to influence younger generations to volunteer in aging programs and to learn how to age wisely.
- Continue to encourage the Senior to Senior Advocacy Team to impact strategies of local, state and federal governments, legislatures and administrators on senior needs and issues.
- Create a Best Practices recognition program that will showcase businesses and non-profits in the community for their efforts to support seniors.
- CSS will continue to lobby ARC, the Georgia Department of Human Resources and the Federal government for continuation of current funding and future grant opportunities on behalf of our senior population.

### **Facilities**

- CSS's present and future needs resulting from the projected increased demand be met within the framework of prudent budgetary practices.
- To complete a study to ascertain the impact out-of-County residents make on the Centers' attendance. This information will identify the effect that the current policy has on staffing and expansion needs.

- To address the changing needs of the senior population as “baby boomers” age; these needs may dictate changes in both facility design and scope of services.
- CSS will examine any potential facility location with the goal of tailoring it to the needs of the community.
- CSS will consider a variety of options to maximize the usefulness of any planned facility—by grouping services in a shared facility if there could be benefits in efficiency gained.
- Researching affordable and appropriate tracts of available land is a high priority for CSS.
- Accessibility to good transportation is a priority in determining location.
- CSS will pursue other creative options to adding new facilities such as renovation and use of existing buildings.
- CSS will continue utilizing available land in conjunction with Cobb Parks and Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department.
- To continue to pursue funding partnerships between cities and private organizations along with CSS’s present system of public, grant, and community fund-raising.
- In an effort to provide equity in the County and avoid competition between Centers, studies will be done to assure that future facilities are located in areas of greatest need.

### **Services**

- CSS must continue to foster socialization and its resulting benefits to the wellness of seniors.
- CSS will monitor the evolving means of socialization in our culture in order to provide environments and programs that are appropriate and desired by the changing senior population.
- CSS will continue to provide services that offer multiple benefits.
- CSS will continue to recognize that families are one of the most valuable support systems for seniors.
- CSS will be aware of the needs of the Hispanic community as it ages and work to address those needs.
- CSS will continue targeting adult children as a conduit of information to their parents and to help them prepare for their own retirement years.
- CSS will go forward with a planned partnership with local home improvement stores.
- CSS will pursue a partnership with local school systems to develop quality mentoring opportunities.
- CSS to continue providing Alzheimer awareness training to Public Safety personnel.
- CSS will encourage a collaborative effort between the government, faith based, private sector and non-profits to ensure that Personal Care, Homemaker and Respite services are available to all in need and that they continue to maintain a high level of service standards.

- That CSS work in collaboration with other out-of-home respite programs including Senior Day Centers being established in Cobb County.
- CSS will continue to recognize that the concept of health and wellness incorporates both physical and mental well-being.
- CSS will continue to bring together health and wellness speakers and vendors at its Health and Information Fairs.
- CSS will seek additional means of educating the public about aging issues.
- CSS will continue to participate in the annual Cobb Employee Wellness Fairs.
- CSS will continue to promote a healthy life-style through education and fitness programs and new facilities should have appropriate accommodations for these types of programs.
- CSS will be proactive in addressing the concerns of seniors that affect their well-being by providing resources or direction.
- CSS will ensure that resource materials and referral information are up to date to provide support or education to seniors in their changing roles.
- CSS must plan to address the health needs of a diverse population—both the “well senior” and the “frail senior”.
- CSS must continue to seek funding to support health services for those who cannot pay.
- CSS to explore utilizing vouchers for all Demand/Response Transportation clients as private sector transportation availabilities become more prevalent and affordable.
- CSS to address the mounting transportation needs of the senior population through a collaborative effort of public transportation (CCT), community volunteerism, easy living communities, health facilities and to advocate for more affordable private sector transportation opportunities.
- CSS to apply for the Senior Companion Grant in 2006. Senior Companions serve one-on-one with the frail elderly and other homebound persons.
- CSS to work with the County Department of Transportation (DOT) to explore any benefits derived from the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).
- CSS explore the possibilities of sharing resources with other community based nutrition programs.
- CSS will investigate the potential of installing a full service kitchen and hiring either an appropriate staff or contracting for one when plans for the new Marietta Center are underway.
- CSS to create and maintain a Transportation Voucher Program utilizing funds received from the Atlanta Regional Commission.

## **IV. VISION**

## **Cobb County's Senior Population: Looking Toward the Future**

Cobb County, Georgia is a large and rapidly growing community with a diverse population. Its total area is 340.2 square miles and it contains the incorporated cities of Acworth, Austell, Kennesaw, Marietta, Powder Springs and Smyrna. According to the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, "Cobb has a nationally ranked educational system, state-of-the-art infrastructure and lifestyle opportunities like no where else."<sup>4</sup>

It is recognized that the success of CSS is based on the traditional support of the Board of Commissioners. The current Board of Commissioners has pledged their continued support of Cobb Senior Service's mission.

The 2000 Census reported that Cobb County is home to 607,751 residents. Of these individuals, 14% were over the age of 55 and 7% were over the age of 65. When compared to the national age distribution, Cobb County is *younger* than the nation as a whole. From 1990 to 2000, the 55+ population grew by 50%, whereas the total population grew by only 30%. Assuming that Cobb County's baby boomers age in place, we should see a significant increase in citizens aged 65 as soon as 2011. As with the rest of the Atlanta region, the older adult population in Cobb County is expected to *double* over the coming decades, constituting 20% of the total population by 2030.<sup>5</sup>

Senior Services is charged with planning for the needs of this rapidly expanding group of older citizens and to provide the best level of services possible. Because of the growth and diversity of the senior population, and the fact that seniors remain younger longer, services are constantly being adjusted to meet these changing needs. As we look toward the year 2015, Cobb Senior Services will strive to better educate those living and working in our county regarding the needs of one of our most vulnerable populations, the elderly. (see figures 1, 2 and 3)

# CURRENT POPULATION TRENDS

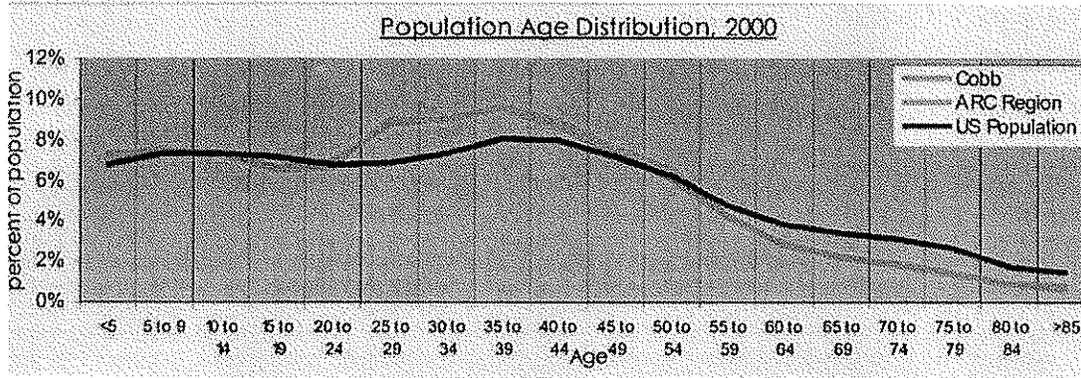


Figure 1

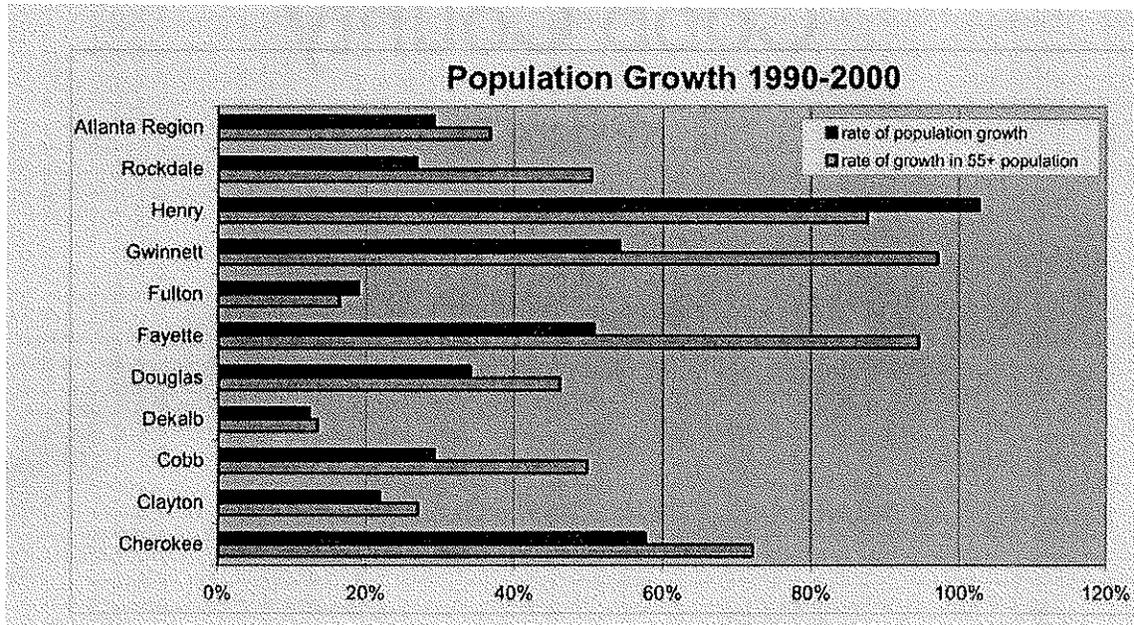


Figure 2

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, Aging Services Division, 2005

Refer to Graphic:

# Older Adults in Cobb County

(Figure 3)

## **AGING SERVICES AND NEEDS IN COBB COUNTY**

During the course of the committee meetings, a number of needs and issues were agreed upon by the group. Some were based on verifiable data, charts, and projections, while others were assumptions based on the current social trends occurring in Cobb County.

### **What Will Be The Same In 2015?**

- Based on the strides made in the past ten years, Cobb County will continue to maintain the lead in services for seniors in the metro area.
- Cobb County Government will most likely remain fiscally conservative.
- Seniors will still need socialization, transportation, and other support services such as Meals on Wheels and In Home Services.
- The cost of medicine and healthcare will be high.
- There may still be some problems with air pollution.
- More than likely, the population characteristics of Cobb County residents in regards to their higher income bracket and higher educational level will be maintained.

### **What Will Be Different In 2015?**

- The senior population will have significantly increased and will be more diversified.
- Baby Boomers will make up a higher percentage of the senior population.
- A higher number of older adults will *age-in-place* in Cobb County. The vast majority of older adults in Cobb County remain in their homes for at least ten years and 40% have lived in their current residences for over 20 years. Of those who move, 60% stay within the same county.
- Senior population will be healthier, more active, more informed and more demanding of a variety of services.
- Earlier retirement will lead to an increase in both second careers and participation in recreation and late-life learning programs.
- Longer life spans will create new family dynamics, which could include: three generations of seniors accessing services at the same time, seniors being caregivers of parents as well as grandparents and more seniors caring for grandchildren.
- The population as a whole will be better informed on aging issues and some of the current stereotypes will no longer exist.
- Due to inflation it will be more expensive to live in Cobb County.
- The wealth controlled by the senior population will increase.
- Seniors will be less conservative than at present, but more so than the general population.
- It may become more difficult to provide affordable support services to lower income seniors due to the increased demand.
- Technology will be developed which impacts the provision of services to seniors and could include: more effective home monitoring devices, better communication devices and the use of robotic aides.

- Zoning development will be impacted with new housing which caters to seniors' need to *age in place* and could include: model communities incorporating universal sustainable design, intergenerational diversity, a mix of *live-work-play*, and will meet the design standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Cobb residents will rely less on Atlanta, as services such as specialized health care and major entertainment venues develop within the County.

The chart in figure 4 reflects the current population and service data for Cobb County and makes calculated projections to 2015.

### COBB COUNTY

	2000	2015
<b>Total Population:</b>	607,751	872,310 *
White	72%	55.44%*
Black	19%	26%*
Other	9%	18.56%
Population over 65	6.9%	10.64%
Hispanic (of any race)	8%	12.03%*
	2005	2015
<b>Units of Service For:</b>		
Multi-Purpose Centers (attendance in all activities)	188,000	628,000
Neighborhood Centers (meals)	29,543	43,312
Senior Day Center (days)	5,159	3,291**
In-Home Services (hours)	5,386	74,257
Home Delivered Meals (meals)	44,476	108,223
Transportation (1-way trip)	74,725	161,324

Figure 4

\*2005 Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.

\*\* It is significant to note that despite the increased need for out-of-home respite facilities that the number of service days at the SDC has steadily *decreased* over the past four years. This phenomenon can be attributed to a number of factors:

- a. The SDC is not restricted to clients in the surrounding areas as the Neighborhood Centers are, instead clients are accepted countywide.
- b. Families living in outlying areas may find it inconvenient that the SDC is located in Marietta.
- c. CSS is unable to transport clients from certain geographical areas.
- d. The Cobb community is seeing an increase in the number of senior day centers and out-of-home respite options.
- e. Even though the sliding scale fee for SDC is low in comparison to other similar programs, cost can still be a prohibitive factor for those families with other financial obligations.

## **V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 1. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

### Findings

During the course of the Ten Year Plan study, CSS gave the Committee a comprehensive overview of the various channels through which the department receives and disseminates information. These channels include information garnered from participation in organizations such as the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)—which provides statistical data regarding regional and county demographic trends. ARC also spearheads projects in the region such as the Sustainable Community Initiative, sets the standards for some of CSS's grant funded services, and is a source for other state and federal regulations. Professional and academic organizations, such as the Georgia Gerontology Society and Kennesaw State University, provide information regarding aging issues as well as training and resources for those in the aging profession. Another key method of gathering information is through tracking calls to CSS's centralized Information and Referral telephone number. This data tracks the type of requests by category, and is used to support statistics reported in the grants: it further serves to measure growing demands in areas such as transportation.

CSS also reviewed methods for disseminating information to the community. Methods include educational and information programs in the Senior Centers; annual senior information and health fairs; the department's web-site with links to aging-related resources; professional direction via case-managers; publications such as *The Bulletin* and *Resource Directory for Senior Citizens* handbook; and participation in various County planning tools such as the Chamber of Commerce's Road Map committee. During the course of the meetings, CSS provided examples of departmental brochures, promotional material, and demographic maps for the Committee to review.

The CSS Information and Referral telephone line gives information daily about a wide variety of subjects to those who call. Whenever CSS cannot provide the service requested, staff is able to draw upon a large resource databank of regional services so that the caller is given an alternative way to meet his or her need. This information includes topics as varied as sources for nutritional pre-packaged meals to agencies providing specialized health care. The new *Senior to Senior* Advocacy program—designed to provide resources and advice through trained and knowledgeable peers-- was presented and further focus on the Advocacy program occurred in a subsequent meeting.

A finding resulting from the study was the importance of CSS's role as a conduit for information and that this role will become even more important with the growth and diversity of the senior population in the next ten years. Complex issues such as the upcoming changes in Medicare and critical

care/end of life decisions will increase the need for professional non-biased information in order to weigh choices and make informed decisions. Emerging trends such as grandparents raising grandchildren and seniors caring for seniors will dictate that seniors will need direction to appropriate resources in order to navigate among government and other entities in roles that are new to them.

Throughout the planning process, a great deal of discussion centered on the status of seniors in the community and how seniors are perceived by the community. Traditionally there has been a cultural perception in the U.S. that work is the most worthwhile activity of life and that old age is a period of decline. It follows from this erroneous belief that once workers retire they lose usefulness to society and that aging diminishes the ability to learn new methods of gaining satisfaction from life. A Harris poll taken for the National Council on Aging found that the public believed “the number one activity of the old is idly watching television.” However, when seniors themselves were polled, “T.V. watching fell behind socializing and gardening”.<sup>6</sup> Many of these negative images have been erased as seniors have shown that the later stage of life can be “progressively more active and adventurous, and physical as well as intellectual—in short, more intensely gratifying.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Recommendations**

- CSS’s planning for the next ten years will consider the increasing need for access to a variety of resources, perhaps with the design of future facilities including expanded areas for resource materials as well as office areas which could be utilized by the volunteer advocates in meeting and advising seniors. Space for other service agencies such as Social Security and Medicare could be included where practical.
- An essential CSS role is to be the voice for expressing the needs of the senior population in order to have their real needs considered equally to those of other citizens and this role should continue.
- CSS will continue its crucial work toward correcting misperceptions about aging and the value of contributions made from late life pursuits—“It’s not about age; it’s about ATTITUDE!” (motto chosen for CSS’s 2005 bumper sticker).
- CSS will further strengthen the status of the seniors in the community by public recognition of seniors’ contributions through additional events or personal history projects. For example, recognition via awards for best practices relating to seniors in business programs and not-for-profit programs would be one way to elevate the status of seniors.
- CSS will facilitate occasions which provide an opportunity for all generations to interact in order to help raise the profile of seniors in the community.

## 2. VOLUNTEERISM

### Findings

Volunteerism has historically been the basis of CSS's success and a crucial factor in their ability to operate in a fiscally conservative manner. The challenge of recruiting volunteers will increase due to several factors: competition with other worthy volunteer based programs, costs of gasoline is steadily climbing, female volunteer sources diminish as more and more women enter the work place, program needs are growing at a faster rate than the volunteer resources. These challenges require more creative and aggressive recruitment techniques. This was the impetus in the development of the ADOPT A ROUTE program, which is designed to use a group approach to recruit volunteers for Meals on Wheels. Churches, home schoolers, businesses, neighborhood and civic groups will be targeted to take on a route in their communities. CSS will research possibilities for this program in areas of greatest need.

Another aspect of the volunteer program's changing perspective is the heightened awareness of risks involved in today's environment of identity theft and other safety issues. These risks require continued diligence in background checks, training and proper security methods to guarantee that the vulnerable clients are protected.

### Recommendations

- Increase public relations in areas that have heretofore not been utilized; city utility bill inserts in those cities within Cobb that have their own utilities
- Continue to develop the Meals on Wheels ADOPT A ROUTE program in an effort to reach churches, home school organizations, businesses and neighborhoods that would be willing to take on an entire route in areas of the County where the greatest needs would benefit from a unified effort.
- Establishment of a *Golden Eagle Guild* which would define and set levels of volunteerism and to formally recognize those seniors who take on leadership roles which go above and beyond. An existing program called the *President's Volunteer Service Awards* could provide such rewards for those who have contributed over 4000 volunteer hours as leaders in CSS's volunteerism program. CSS qualifies as a nominating Agency for a certificate signed by the President of the United States and CSS could frame the certificate and present the accompanying pins and award at the annual volunteer banquet.

## 3. ADVOCACY

### Findings

The Senior Citizen Council (SCC) has been influential at all junctures of CSS's development since its beginning in 1973. Its roots are based in their advocacy role that influenced the B.O.C. to fund the first Multipurpose Center for active seniors in the metro area in 1987 at Windy Hill. Through the 1990's SCC offered positive programs such as the annual Y.E.S.

Conferences. The acronym stands for Youth Encountering Seniors and involved bringing high school students to the Center for a luncheon and frank discussion on timely topics such as violence in the schools. Often the seniors were taken aback by the knowledge and compassion of the students and the students were pleased by the receptive nature of the senior panelists and audiences. Additionally, the SCC sponsored annual political forums to allow seniors to question the candidates and to bring forth issues that were of concern to them. They also offered yearly scholarships for high school seniors who were aspiring to work in related gerontology fields. In 2000 SCC began to concentrate on such endeavors as the *Vial of Life* program, the Cobb County 2002 *Resource Directory* for Seniors Citizens and sponsoring candidates for the KSU Gerontology Certification Program. Their good works have had tremendous impact on the quality of life for Cobb's seniors and been duplicated through the region by other Area Agencies on Aging.

Advocacy in CSS was elevated in 2004 when the position of Coordinator of Volunteerism and Advocacy was created. Soon after, the unit was enlarged to accommodate the development of a *Senior to Senior* Advocacy Team of volunteers. This emphasis on advocacy is mandated by the Older American's Act.

The Committee strongly agreed that there is a need to raise the level of consciousness of senior needs in Cobb County. Just as the *Americans with Disabilities Act* changed the way we planned for the needs of the disabled, awareness of senior issues must be heightened to ensure that we provide for our burgeoning aging population.

### **Recommendations**

- Establish a committee to set up intergenerational programs in order to affect younger generations to volunteer in aging programs and to learn how to age wisely.
- Continue to encourage the Senior to Senior Advocacy Team to impact strategies of local, state and federal governments, legislatures and administrators on senior needs and issues.
- In an effort to reward businesses and non-profits for their efforts to support seniors, it is recommended that CSS create a Best Practices recognition program that will showcase them in the community. Criteria should be established to define eligibility and aid the Board of Advisors in the selection. The awards would be given at the annual volunteer banquet and the winners would be featured in press releases to influence their peers to strive for this prestigious recognition and highlight their contributions to the senior community.
- CSS will continue to lobby ARC, the Georgia Department of Human Resources and the Federal government for continuation of current funding and future grant opportunities on behalf of our senior population.

## 4. FACILITIES

### Findings

After analyzing the facilities data the committee found several challenges. One immediate challenge is to review the existing facility in Smyrna to ensure that it accommodates current and future needs. Another challenge is to build a Multi-purpose Senior Center that is needed in the lower East Cobb area that represents one of the highest concentrations of seniors in the County (Figure C). A facility in the central location of the Roswell Road and 120 Loop quadrant would also attract seniors from existing Centers, thus helping to balance participation levels. This location would also be ideal for the campus concept: to include the relocation of our fleet, administrative offices, Senior Day Center, and possibly the Marietta Neighborhood Center. The Fleet is currently at the Water Department, which is inconvenient since the Transportation Department is on Fairgrounds Street. The two facilities on Fairground Street that house Administration, Senior Day Center, and the Marietta Neighborhood Center are antiquated buildings, which result in problems with parking, wasted space, substandard office designs, mold and other related issues. In the event that the two Fairground Street facilities would close, the sale of the buildings would provide collateral for new construction. The Committee discussed new methods of land acquisition such as county/city partnerships—particularly needed in the development of the proposed Marietta Center, public/private partnerships, legacy giving, and land trusts.

Staff and committee members brought forth some exciting design suggestions. Some of these ideas included the clustering of facilities in a campus-like environment and incorporating new areas within the Centers to create an atmosphere attractive to *baby boomers*—perhaps more casual socialization areas with wireless access. Previous suggestions of including office and resource space within the Centers for the advocates to meet with seniors were reiterated, as was the need for continued and expanded health and wellness focus and the necessary designs to accommodate those types of activities. Another design idea which would reduce risks and costs: centralized accommodations for the nutrition program's kitchen facility and the transportation program's operations (gas pumps, washing bay, and fenced parking).

The trend of sustainable living in communities and the need for senior facilities within the neighborhoods were discussed, particularly the Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) and the initiative being undertaken by the Board of Commissioners through Cobb's Senior Residential Housing zoning ordinance.<sup>8</sup>

## GAP ANALYSIS FOR FACILITIES

2005		2015		
Multi-Purpose				
Service Units	Square Feet	Service Units	Square Feet Needed to Maintain Service Ratio	GAP-Additional Square Feet to Maintain Service Ratio
251,782	81,000	628,000	202,032	121,032
Neighborhood Centers				
Service Units	Square Feet	Service Units	Square Feet Needed to Maintain Service Ratio	GAP-Additional Square Feet to Maintain Service Ratio
24,331	18,900	43,312	33,644	14,744

Multi-Purpose			
Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap	Est. Sq Ft Cost	Est. total Cost	Funding
<b>1) New facilities:</b> Studies to determine the regional vs. community advantages in locating facilities. Access to transportation would be a determining factor.	\$200	\$24,260,400	County Grants Legacy Giving Land Trusts Fund Raisers Private Sector Partnerships
<b>2) Expand existing facilities:</b> Where feasible some facilities may be expanded to save cost of land			
<b>3) Building adaptations:</b> Investigate potential for vacant facilities			
<b>4) Establish non-resident fees</b>			
Neighborhood Centers			
Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap	Est. Sq Ft Cost	Est. total Cost	Funding
<b>1) New facilities:</b> Locations analyzed to assure reduction in travel time for clients	\$175*	\$2,580,200	County Grants Legacy Giving Land Trusts Fund Raisers Private Sector Partnerships
<b>2) Convert existing facilities:</b> As the Senior population changes, the potential for adapting Centers to meet new needs will be addressed			
<b>3) Expand existing facilities:</b> Where feasible some facilities may be expanded to save cost of land			
<b>*Land purchase included in quote</b>			

### **Recommendations**

- CSS's present needs (such as capacity operations in Centers, aging facilities) as well as future needs resulting from the projected increased demand must be met within the framework of prudent budgetary practices.
- A study will take place to ascertain the impact that out-of-County residents make on the Center attendance. Determination needs to be made as to their effect on overcrowding, operating expenditures, parking, and personnel. The results of the study would determine the possible need for surcharges on classes and events to create equity with seniors who pay property taxes in Cobb County.
- The changing needs of the senior population as *baby boomers* age are challenges which CSS must address; these needs may dictate changes in both facility design and scope of services.
- CSS will examine any potential facility location with the goal of tailoring it to the needs of the community in order to be a catalyst for the development of sustainable living.
- CSS will consider a variety of options to maximize the usefulness of any planned facility—by grouping services in a shared facility if there could be benefits in efficiency gained. However, it is recognized that in some cases the community's need could be better met by a stand alone facility more conveniently located in the community.
- Researching affordable and appropriate tracts of available land is a high priority for CSS.
- Accessibility to good transportation is a priority in determining location.
- Other creative options for adding facilities should be pursued by CSS—renovation and use of existing buildings in areas undergoing re-development being one example.
- CSS will continue utilizing available land in conjunction with Cobb Parks and Recreation and Cultural Affairs where such shared use would serve the missions of the respective departments.
- In the area of funding, continued pursuit of partnerships between cities and private organizations was recommended along with the CSS's present system of public, grant, and community fund-raising.

## **5. SERVICES**

### **a. SOCIALIZATION**

#### **Findings**

Socialization can be defined on its simplest level as “enjoying friendly companionship with others”<sup>9</sup> or more profoundly as participation—getting involved, staying active and taking part in the community. On any level, it is considered an essential factor in successful aging. Many people experience increased isolation as they enter their senior years, a time when work relationships are left behind and family relationships diminish because of geographic distance, divorce or death.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the average life expectancy in the United States was almost 80 years for women and 74 years for men. By 2050, life expectancy in the United States is projected to rise to an average age of 87 years for women and 81 years for men. Cobb County's older adult population, like the Atlanta region's, is expected to grow much faster than the nation's older adult population. The 55+ population in Cobb County is expected to double over the coming decades, constituting 20% of the total population by 2030<sup>10</sup>. With longevity comes added years in which to experience life after the major accomplishments of education, work and child rearing are completed.

Interestingly, as Cobb County's older adult population is expected to mirror national demographic trends, the number of seniors remaining single for life will increase. The percentage of single adults aged 30 to 34 doubled from 1970 to 1986 with more people postponing marriage. Some predict that by 2050 the number of older adults who have never married will constitute 10% of the senior population<sup>11</sup>. An estimated 20 per cent of baby boomers will have no children at all; another 25 per cent will have only one.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the Atlanta region that includes Cobb County has a population predominantly re-located from elsewhere--70% of older adults were not born in the region<sup>13</sup>. These demographic patterns indicate that family socialization will not exist at the same level for the coming generations of seniors as it has for previous generations.

The data indicates that the years in which older adults will need new opportunities for social interaction outside of family will lengthen in term and that demand for these opportunities will increase in volume. Although CSS presently offers a wide variety of opportunities for socialization, the changing demographics of the County as it ages will increase demand for existing services and will in all likelihood create demand for new and different opportunities for socialization. There is potentially a double impact through increased number of seniors to be served and increased scope in the services they will demand.

What is certain is that the need for socialization will remain. CSS's current impact in addressing this need is demonstrated through many of its services. Both the Multi-purpose Senior Centers and the Neighborhood Senior Centers provide attractive, welcoming places for seniors to gather and to participate in classes, activities and, in some Centers, congregate meals. Many of the programs provide the benefits of both socialization and education. Senior Day Care provides a similar setting with the addition of medical attention for its clients. Even shared transportation provides an aspect of socialization.

The importance of gathering with peers was mentioned frequently throughout the meetings of the Ten Year Plan Committee. The basic

human need of shared experience which can come from those of similar age and the opportunity to start new friendships were both cited as essential benefits of socialization provided in CSS's facilities. In George E. Valliant's Aging Well, he lists as the first of four basic activities that make retirement rewarding: "retirees will replace their work mates with another social network just as they will replace their dead parents and deceased companions with new friends."<sup>14</sup>

Another challenge that lies ahead will be the socialization needs of the burgeoning Hispanic community in Cobb. "The Hispanic population is growing faster in much of the South than anywhere else in the United States. ... Given its distinctive character, Hispanic population growth in these parts of the South will also have distinctive impacts on public policy, and those impacts have only just begun to be felt."<sup>15</sup>

While the growth in the Hispanic community has been primarily young and male, there is no doubt that many who were initially attracted by the strong job market will put down roots and establish families. It stands to reason that as it ages with the rest of the population, the Hispanic community will face many of the same needs. Some questions to be addressed are: will a language barrier exist and how will the needs of seniors in the Hispanic community differ? How will CSS weigh potentially different priorities against the priorities of the population at large? "The simultaneous aging of the population and the increasing presence of Hispanics provides an opportunity to redefine the American character for the next century without altering its basic political and social structures. This process will require renewed commitment of those public policies that allow Hispanics to feel part of this country and that prepare the entire society for an older population."<sup>16</sup>

### **Recommendations**

- CSS must continue to foster socialization and its resulting benefits to the wellness of seniors.
- CSS will monitor the evolving means of socialization in our culture, particularly the socialization patterns of the *baby-boom* generation, in order to provide environments and programs that are appropriate and desired by the changing senior population.
- CSS will plan for a continuum of socialization opportunities knowing that the increasing number and longevity of seniors could change the volume and scope of services required.
- CSS will continue to provide services that offer multiple benefits such as classes that combine education and socialization opportunities.
- CSS will continue to recognize that families are one of the most valuable support systems for seniors while addressing the needs of those who do not have access to this support.

- CSS will be aware of the needs of the Hispanic community as it ages and work to address those needs.

## **b. EDUCATION**

### **Findings**

Education has been an integral part of the services that CSS has provided to the public for more than 30 years. Annual town hall meeting/focus group and outreach are mandated by the social services grants. Additionally, the grants require topics such as health and wellness education to be addressed. This has included screenings for vision, diabetes and heart related illnesses. CSS also provides programs that concentrate on preventative methods such as flu and pneumonia shots, nutritional advice, food safety, West Nile Virus control and much more. The methods of education are based on marketing principles of successfully targeting active seniors, homebound clients, Center participants, caregivers and adult children.

Another component of educational services has been to keep the senior public informed about consumer issues to which they are particularly vulnerable. CSS routinely notifies seniors about scam alerts and offer seminars on such topics as identity fraud, dealing with contractors and other pertinent safety issues.

CSS has recently implemented collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association and the *Senior to Senior* Advocacy Team to provide training for the County and cities' Public Safety Departments on dealing with individuals with dementia who have wandered away from home. A movement is under way to expand the *Mattie's Law* alerts to Cobb County, which was implemented in Atlanta last year after the tragic death of a senior with Alzheimer's who had become lost. The ability to recognize the signs and deal with a potentially combative person in a sensitive way is the main focus of the training. This type of awareness has proven to be effective in other areas of the United States.

### **Recommendations**

- CSS will continue targeting adult children as a conduit of information to their parents and to help them prepare for their own retirement years.
- CSS will go forward with a planned partnership with local home improvement stores to provide on-site brochures that feature lists of available products to aid home-adaptations, to make senior homes safer and more convenient.
- A partnership with local school systems will be pursued to develop quality mentoring opportunities

### c. IN-HOME SERVICES

#### Findings

As seniors in Cobb County age in place, we will continue to see a need for supportive in-home services such as Personal Care, Homemaker and Respite. Based on the map in figure 3 (page 19), East Cobb, including areas within County Commission Districts 2 and 3, and the southwest quadrant of Cobb has a relatively higher concentration of 55+ older adults than other parts of the county. There are pockets of older adults concentrated in each of the cities in Cobb County, most likely the result of older adults aging in place. Many older adults have lived in Cobb County 20-30+ years and the cities are among some of the oldest communities in Cobb. In the southern half of Smyrna and just south of Smyrna there is an unusual concentration of 85+ adults. It is anticipated that older adults in these areas will need more supportive services than in other areas of Cobb County.<sup>17</sup>

Our agency provides respite, personal care and homemaker services through the following three units: In Home Services, Senior Day Center, and the Share the Care Voucher program. Last year alone, senior citizens throughout the Cobb County region received 1,970 hours of homemaking and 3,416 hours of personal care. The Senior Day Center provided 5,159 *hours* of respite and respite was the number one service purchased by clients in the Share the Care Voucher Program.

More than ever before, family members move out of the general area where they were raised and the remaining family member is often left to care for the aging or frail loved-ones alone. The support received from in-home respite and out-of-home respite programs such as day care centers will be increasingly important to these older adults and their caregivers.

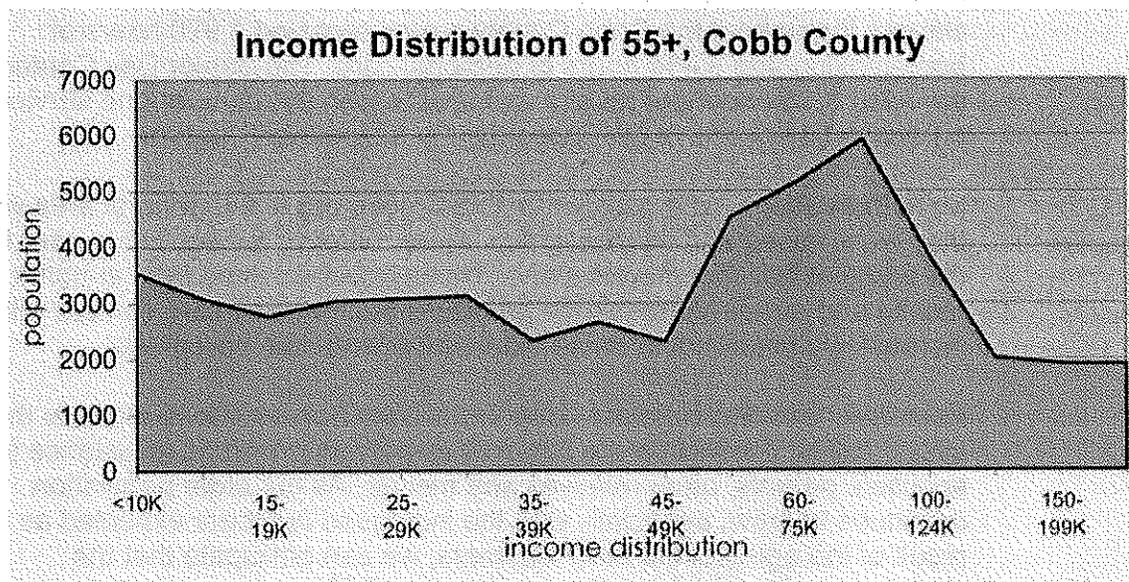
Estimates from the National Long-Term Care Survey (1994) indicate that over 7 million Americans are informal caregivers providing assistance to spouses, parents, other relatives and friends. As our older population continues to grow, especially with the increased numbers expected as a result of the aging of the *baby boomers*, we can anticipate that the challenges of caregiving will increase as well.<sup>18</sup>

It is significant to note that despite the increased need for out-of-home respite facilities, the number of service days at the SDC has steadily *decreased* over the past four years. This phenomenon can be attributed to a number of factors:

- a. The SDC is not restricted to clients in the surrounding areas as the Neighborhood Centers are, instead clients are accepted countywide.

- b. Families living in outlying areas may find it inconvenient that the SDC is located in Marietta.
- c. CSS is unable to transport clients from certain geographical areas.
- d. The Cobb community is seeing an increase in the number of senior day centers and out-of-home respite options.
- e. Even though the sliding scale fee for SDC is low in comparison to other similar programs, cost can still be a prohibitive factor for those families with other financial obligations.

Older adults in Cobb County have incomes slightly higher than older adults across the Atlanta region (see figure 5). Cobb County has the third lowest poverty rate among the region's ten counties-- just 6.83% of individuals over the age of 65 live below poverty. However, (see figure 6 on page 37) over a quarter of all older adults have incomes below \$25,000/year and just over half the older adult population has an annual income below \$50,000<sup>19</sup>



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, Older Adult Profile, 2005

Figure 5

Refer to Graphic:

# Lower Income Older Adults in Cobb County

(Figure 6)

# GAP ANALYSIS FOR IN-HOME SERVICES PERSONAL CARE & RESPITE

<b>Based on State Fiscal Year Actuals:</b>								
2005	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# Hours Requested	# Hours Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	127	9,347	5,386	42%	\$22.20	\$87,934	County CBS Cost Share	Increase Availability of Private and/or Non-Profit Personal Care & respite Services Increase funding/Services
<b>Based on Historic Data, Census and Projection Theories:</b>								
2015	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# Hours Requested	# Hours Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	1,725*	126,811*	5,386	96%	\$29.83**	\$3,622,108	County CBS Cost Share	Increase funding/services Increase Availability of Private and/or Non-Profit Personal Care & respite Services
*Based on a calculated rate of increase in services only, population not factored ** Applied an average 3% rate of inflation per Economic Development.								

### Recommendations

- That CSS encourage a collaborative effort between the government, faith based, private sector and non-profits to ensure that Personal Care, Homemaker and Respite service are available to all in need and that they continue to maintain a high level of service standards. It appears unreasonable to assume that CSS alone will be able to serve the ever-increasing needs in this area. The agency must especially focus on ways that these services are not just available, but also affordable. Given the fact that Cobb County has a high income bracket in comparison to the other Metro Atlanta areas, extra care must be taken to ensure that the

25% of the older adult population in Cobb County with incomes of \$25,000 or less are not overlooked. This effort will also be prioritized in those areas of Cobb with the highest concentrations of older adults.

(see figure 5 and 6)

- That CSS work in collaboration with other out-of-home respite programs including Senior Day Centers being established in Cobb County.

#### **d. HEALTH & WELLNESS**

##### **Findings**

In discussing the changing demographics of the senior population, it is obvious that another off-shoot of the increasing longevity is that the traditional markers of when *old age* begins are no longer relevant. Less and less is age determined by chronological events such as retirement or the receipt of social security benefits. Instead, continued good health in the senior population is blurring these defining events. Already people are working longer, beginning second careers in late life, and pursuing active life-styles which previously were considered more appropriate for the young. In Our Aging Society, the authors write of the “young-old, a new historical phenomenon... a large group of retirees... healthy and vigorous, relatively well-off financially, well integrated into the lives of their families and communities, and politically active.” The authors go on to write that alternatively “old age is often said to begin when a person requires special health care because of frailty or chronic disease, or when health creates a major limitation on the activities of everyday life. Yet half of all persons who are now seventy-five to eighty-four report no such health limitations.”<sup>20</sup>

One reason for the changing definition of age is a concentrated interest in preserving good health. The baby-boom generation has been credited with the incredible growth in the fitness movement and all indications are that this interest will be maintained by them as they become seniors. Already there has been “an explosion of country clubs, recreational vehicles, cruises, and senior centers—representing exactly the kinds of recreational activities that today’s retirees enjoyed while they worked<sup>21</sup>.”

Science supports the belief that good health not only provides longevity but helps to maintain strong mental functioning as well as a sense of life satisfaction. A study of 17,000 Harvard graduates published in the “New England Journal of Medicine” in 1986 showed that death rates were 25% to 33% lower for those who had engaged in moderate exercise than for those who were least active.<sup>22</sup> Good mental health is also essential to aging well and depression in late-life is often mistakenly considered to be a normal factor of aging. As a consequence, late life depression is “widely under-recognized and under-treated”. Other startling statistics reported by the National Institute of Mental Health: “Older Americans are disproportionately likely to die by suicide. Comprising only 13 percent of the U.S. population,

individuals age 65 and older accounted for 18 percent of all suicide deaths in 2000. Of the nearly 35 million Americans age 65 and older, an estimated 2 million have a depressive illness.”<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that the possibility of a healthy life-style is not necessarily restricted by economic barriers. A major objective of the OAA is to “assist older people to secure equal opportunity to the full and free enjoyment of the...best possible physical and mental health which science can make available and without regard to economic status.” In working towards this objective, CSS encourages health and wellness through a variety of programs. Health and nutrition, for example, are regular components of the activities offered in the Neighborhood Centers. The congregate meals served in the Neighborhood Centers are designed by nutritionists to meet high standards, as are the meals served via the Meals on Wheels program. An obvious but important contribution to the health and well-being of its clients lies in the personal care services provided.

CSS’s Multi-purpose Senior Centers provide an array of health and wellness programs, some free and some for a moderate cost, in a variety of settings. Examples are the *lunch and learn* events with educational presentations on topics such as “What Your Doctor Doesn’t Tell You About Prescription Drugs” and special topical presentations to inform seniors about current events such as impending changes in Medicare. Care is taken to provide expert and neutral information. Additionally, the Centers offer year-round programs related to health and wellness such as *Focus on Fitness* exercise groups, and social and recreational programs that range from dancing to fishing.

CSS provides additional health and wellness information through its successful annual information fairs, which attract seniors from across the region, and through the department’s website and its new wellness webpage.

### **Recommendations**

- CSS will continue to recognize that the concept of health and wellness incorporates both physical and mental well-being.
- CSS will continue to bring together relevant speakers and vendors at its Health and Information Fairs, and will work to facilitate the attendance of Cobb County employees at the Fairs.
- CSS will seek additional means of educating the public about aging issues. One suggested method: develop a curriculum of issues on aging to be presented in partnership with Cobb County Human Resources’ Training Unit, and eventually perhaps in the private sector.

- CSS will continue to participate in the annual Cobb Employee Wellness Fairs.
- CSS will continue to promote a healthy life-style through education and fitness programs and new facilities will have appropriate accommodations for these types of programs.
- CSS will be proactive in addressing the concerns of seniors that affect their well-being by providing resources or direction. Examples of these concerns include *seniors caring for seniors*, *seniors raising grandchildren*; and the increasing role of men as primary caregivers--nearly four in ten caregivers are men and male caregivers are more likely to be working full or part-time than female caregivers.<sup>24</sup>
- CSS will ensure that resource materials and referral information are up to date in order to provide support or education to seniors in their changing roles.
- CSS must plan to address the health needs of a diverse population—both the *well senior* and the *frail senior*.
- CSS must continue to seek funding to support health services for those who cannot pay.

**e. TRANSPORTATION**

**Findings**

The need for senior transportation continues to grow in Cobb County with each coming year. A report published by ARC indicates that 19.1% of all seniors 65 and over in Cobb County have mobility and/or self-care limitations and 23% of the 65+ population in the Atlanta Region has a disability which impedes their ability to leave their home<sup>25</sup>. See figure 7.

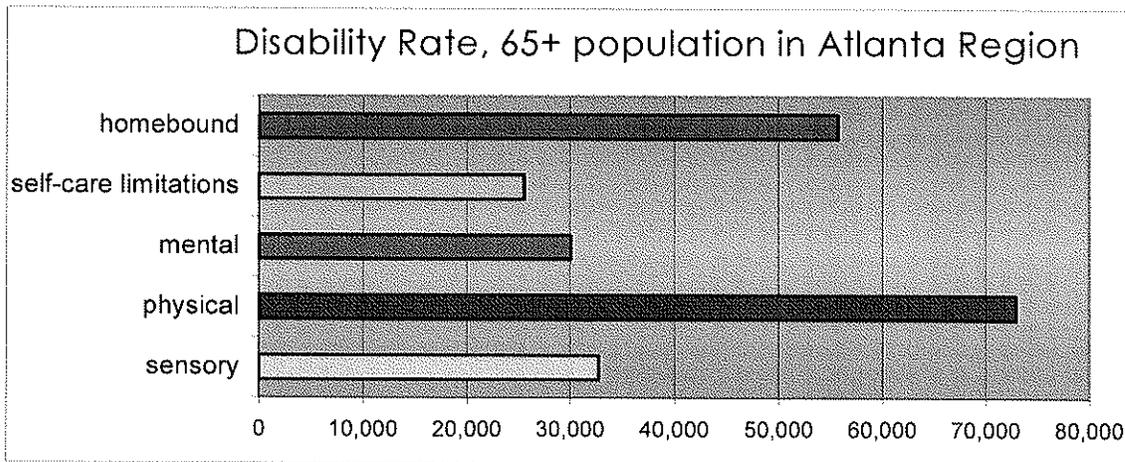


Figure 7 Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, Older Adult Profile 2005

In 2002, the CSS Transportation unit provided 58,201 one-way trips. Even given self-imposed waiting lists and other agency strategies, that figure has grown to 74,727 trips in 2005. CSS currently operates 19 routes per day, with a fleet of 30 vehicles, 14 of which are lift equipped. Demand/Response appointments must now be scheduled three weeks in advance and a waiting list was put into effect in April 2005. The Demand/Response waiting list now has 103 clients, several of whom are dialysis patients. On a daily basis, an average of 15-20 clients, who have already been assessed for service, will call to schedule appointments, but can't be scheduled because the requested date is already filled to capacity. Daily pick-ups occur in every area of Cobb County. See figure 8 (page 43).

The lack of appropriate transportation causes severe hardship to older adults who are unable to keep critical medical appointments because they are unable to pay the costly fees of private transportation agencies and taxicabs.<sup>26</sup>

A report issued by the Department of Human Resources notes that one of the challenges for the future will be "continued shortages in availability of transportation services, combined with increased costs, resulting in reduced access to needed home and community-based services."<sup>27</sup>

Refer to Graphic:

# Cobb Senior Services Transportation

(Figure 8)

Transportation was the number one requested service on the agency's Information & Referral Hotline. See figure 9.

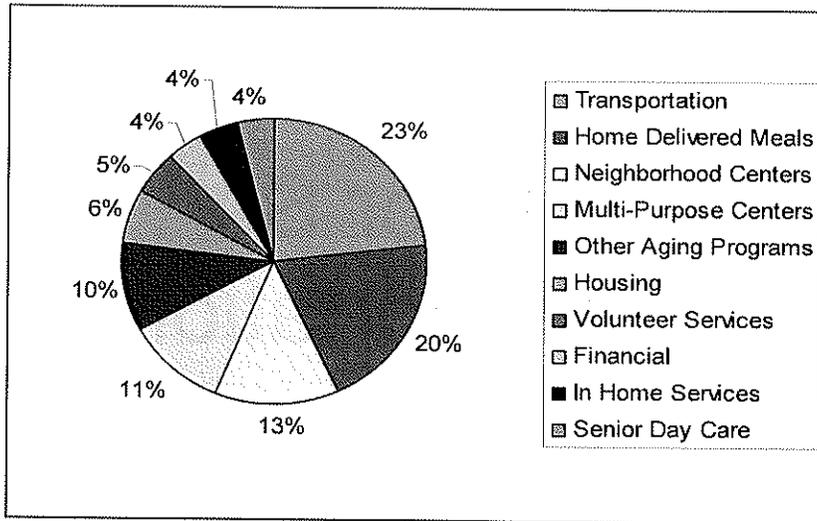


Figure 9

A quote from the AARP report on Livable Communities states, "When people can get where they want or need to go, they are more likely to be attached to their community and also more likely to age successfully." The following chart from that report clearly illustrates this:

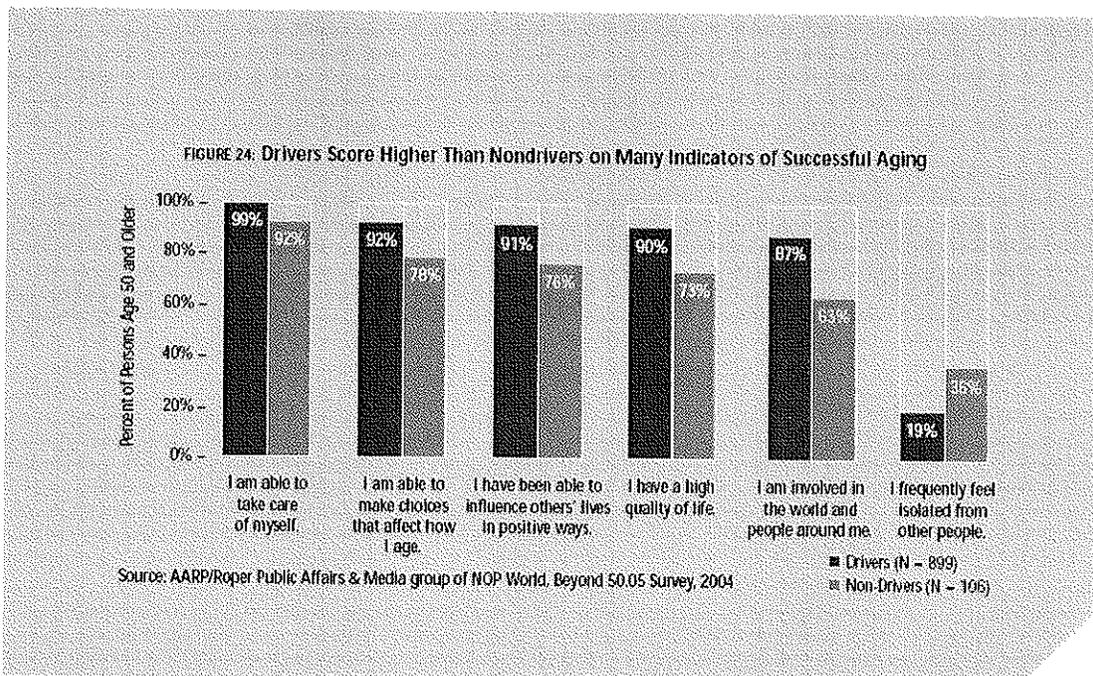


Figure 10

# GAP ANALYSIS FOR FIXED ROUTE TRANSPORTATION

<b>Based on State Fiscal Year Actuals:</b>								
2005	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# 1-way Trips Requested	# 1-way Trips Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	378	70,500	62,000	12%	\$7.59*	\$64,515	County CBS ITCK SSBG Title III Cost Share Client Donation	Explore using vouchers for center clients. Faith Based Orgs Senior Companion Program CCT
<b>Based on Historic Data, Census and Projection Theories:</b>								
2015	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# 1-way Trips Requested	# 1-way Trips Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	816**	152,258**	62,000	41%	\$10.20***	\$920,632	County CBS ITCK SSBG Title III Cost Share Client Donation	Increased use of Transportation Voucher Program CCT/Para Transit Churches/Faith Based Orgs Rapid Rail Easy Living Communities Increased Sidewalk Availability Community Volunteerism Senior Companion Program More affordable private transportation
<p>*Does not include anticipated cost of new vehicles supplied by CDBG funds  **Based on a calculated rate of increase in services only, population not factored  *** Applied an average 3% rate of inflation per Economic Development.</p>								

# GAP ANALYSIS FOR DEMAND/RESPONSE TRANSPORTATION

<b>Based on State Fiscal Year Actuals:</b>								
2005	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# 1-way Trips Requested	# 1-way Trips Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	1,353	71,127	12,591	82%	\$7.59*	\$444,288	County CBS ITCK SSBG Title III Client Donation	Implemented waiting list for all <i>new</i> referrals, which will: Decrease the total active client pool Allow <u>more</u> of the active client pool to receive requested appointments. Implement new voucher program for 100 clients at \$306 each with special SSBG funding
<b>Based on Historic Data, Census and Projection Theories:</b>								
2015	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# 1-way Trips Requested	# 1-way Trips Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	2,950**	155,033**	12,591	92%	\$10.20***	\$1,452,908	County CBS ITCK SSBG Title III Client Donation	Increased use of Transportation Voucher Program CCT/Para Transit Churches/Faith Based Orgs Rapid Rail Easy Living Communities Increased Sidewalk Availability Community Volunteerism Senior Companion Program More affordable private transportation
<p>*Does not include anticipated cost of new vehicles supplied by CDBG funds  **Based on a calculated rate of increase in services only, population not factored  *** Applied an average 3% rate of inflation per Economic Development.</p>								

### **Recommendations**

- CSS to create and maintain a Transportation Voucher Program utilizing funds received from the Atlanta Regional Commission. Vouchers are to be given to those already assessed individuals who are currently on the waiting list for Demand/Response Transportation. Demand/Response includes trips to the doctor, hospitals, therapy, bank and grocery store. Clients can only purchase service from an approved list of transportation vendors.
- CSS explore utilizing vouchers for all Demand/Response clients. This could reduce the number of needed staff, reduce operating costs and allow the Transportation Unit to devote all vans to Fixed Route use, effectively reducing Center waiting lists.
- CSS to address the mounting transportation needs of the senior population through a collaborative effort of public transportation (CCT), community volunteerism, easy living communities, health facilities and to advocate for more affordable private sector transportation opportunities. The most effective way to bring this about is to establish an agency Transportation Committee or incorporate this venture within already existing committees that focus on transportation issues.
- CSS to apply for the Senior Companion Grant in 2006. *Senior Companions* serve one-on-one with the frail elderly and other homebound persons who have difficulty completing everyday tasks. They assist with grocery shopping, bill paying, and transportation to medical appointments, and they alert doctors and family members to potential problems.
- CSS to work with the County Department of Transportation (DOT) to explore any benefits derived from the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This act was signed into law on August 10, 2005 and provides guaranteed funding to DOT for highways, highway safety and public transportation.

### **f. NUTRITION**

#### **Findings**

Good nutrition is vital to good health and is absolutely essential for healthy aging. Major causes of morbidity and mortality in the United States are related to poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle. Specific diseases and conditions linked to poor diet include cardiovascular disease, hypertension, dyslipidemia, type 2 diabetes, overweight and obesity, osteoporosis, constipation, diverticular disease, iron deficiency anemia, oral disease, malnutrition, and some cancers<sup>28</sup>.

Studies show that a good diet in later years helps both in reducing the risk of these diseases and in managing the diseases' signs and symptoms. This contributes to a higher quality of life, enabling older people to maintain their

independence by continuing to perform basic daily activities, such as bathing, dressing and eating.

Poor nutrition, on the other hand, can prolong recovery from illnesses, increase the costs and incidence of institutionalization, and lead to a poorer quality of life. The chart in figure 11, illustrates the percentage of older adults with chronic diseases.<sup>29</sup>

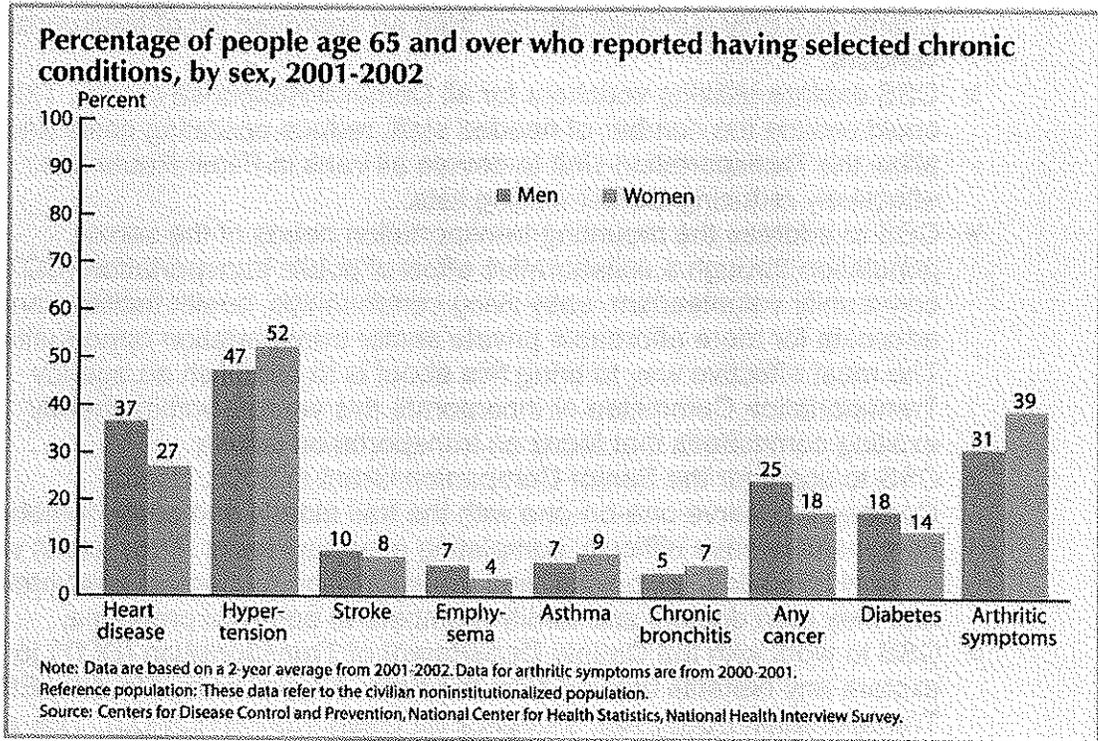


Figure 11

In the last grant year, CSS provided 44,476 Home Delivered Meals, provided 29,543 Senior Center Meals and clients attended numerous classes and seminars on nutrition education. Nutrition has seen a significant increase in the cost of food due to stricter dietary requirements by the Department of Human Resources. The cost for food preparation and delivery will continue to increase as more seniors age in place in Cobb County and more dietary restrictions are mandated.

# GAP ANALYSIS FOR HOME DELIVERED MEALS

<b>Based on State Fiscal Year Actuals:</b>								
2005	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# Meals Requested	# Meals Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	448	52,409	44,336	15%	\$7.40	\$59,740	County Title III Private Pay Client Donation	Recruitment of additional volunteers Adopt-A-Route Project Reorganizing Delivery Routes
<b>Based on Historic Data, Census and Projection Theories:</b>								
2015	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# Meals Requested	# Meals Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	1,093	127,921	44,336	65%	\$9.94**	\$830,835	County Title III Private Pay Client Donation	Recruitment of additional volunteers Adopt-A-Route Project Reorganizing Delivery Routes Churches/Faith Based
*Based on a calculated rate of increase in services only, population not factored								
** Applied an average 3% rate of inflation per Economic Development.								

# GAP ANALYSIS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS CONGREGATE MEALS

<b>Based on State Fiscal Year Actuals:</b>								
2005	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# Meals Requested	# Meals Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	421	33,156	29,506	11%	\$7.86	\$28,689	County Title III NSIP Client Donation	Explore using vouchers for center clients. Churches/Faith Based Orgs Senior Companion Program CCT
<b>Based on Historic Data, Census and Projection Theories:</b>								
2015	#Seniors Assessed for Service	# Meals Requested	# Hours Provided	Gap	Unit Cost of Service	Potential Cost to Close Gap	Funding	Possible Solutions to Closing the Gap
Totals	614*	48,677*	29,506	61%	\$10.56**	\$202,446	County Title III NSIP Client Donation	Increased use of Transportation Voucher Program CCT/Para Transit Churches/Faith Based Orgs Rapid Rail Easy Living Communities Increased Sidewalk Availability Community Volunteerism Senior Companion Program More affordable private transportation
*Based on a calculated rate of increase in services only, population not factored								
** Applied an average 3% rate of inflation per Economic Development.								

### **Recommendation**

- CSS explore the possibilities of sharing resources with other community based nutrition programs. Focus to be placed on County school systems as their dietary requirements more closely match those for older adults. Shared resources could include, seniors being provided lunch in cafeterias after students have been fed and/or food prepared in school cafeterias being sent to senior centers.
- A full-service kitchen be installed and staffed in the newly planned Marietta Center. Operating our own kitchen would ensure that preparation and delivery meet the dietary requirements and could further offset the total cost of food preparation by allowing the general senior public in Cobb County to purchase meals. Kitchen staff could also be available to provide catering services for special events held at some of the Senior Centers and lead workshops on cooking techniques for restricted diets and more.

## **g. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Findings**

Senior Citizen Council, the Board of Advisors, new facility steering committees, focus groups, volunteer programs, Cobb Senior Games, Information Fairs, and public/private partnerships are some of the examples of past community outreach efforts. The Committee proposed excellent ideas for future opportunities and felt that this was the key to the success of the Master Plan on many levels.

### **Recommendations**

- A badge for Girl/Boy Scouts which requires working with and for seniors was suggested as a way to involve our youth in a positive way with seniors. Pursuit of this new relationship would be beneficial for young and old alike.
- CSS will approach the Marietta Daily Journal about developing a weekly column about seniors. This would be another way to keep senior issues at the forefront and highlight important senior news.
- Inclusion of non-seniors on future committees, including the Board of Advisors, was suggested as a way to bring a younger perspective to issues and develop important intergenerational relationships

## VI. CONCLUSION

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express his appreciation to the following individuals and organizations for their assistance and support during the course of this project: Mr. J. H. ... of the ... Department, ... for his helpful discussions and suggestions; Mr. ... of the ... Department, ... for his assistance in the preparation of the manuscript; and the ... for their financial support of this project.

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With this report, Cobb County begins the "Age Wave" ahead of the tidal surge of graying Americans. Cobb's population is younger, healthier, wealthier and more educated; granting us an advantage in planning for all Cobb residents. The County infrastructure is state of the art, giving us extraordinary opportunities to realize the many positive benefits of an aging society in creating this Ten Year Master Plan. President Kennedy was able to recognize the potential of seniors over forty years ago in his statement:

*"This increase in the life span and in the number of our senior citizens presents this Nation with increased opportunities: The opportunity to draw upon their skill and sagacity-and the opportunity to provide the respect and recognition they have earned. It is not enough for a great nation merely to have added new years to life-our objective must also be to add new life to those years."*

In "adding new life to those years" CSS will foster socialization for seniors with its resulting benefit of wellness; and, it should continue to provide services that offer multiple benefits such as classes that combine education and socialization opportunities. Transportation is a very important element of this socialization effort. The resultant community engagement is a large part of life satisfaction and positive aging.

CSS will be a leading force in innovative facility design (renovated and new) dictated by the changing definition of senior. Further, it should also lead in providing transportation and mobility options through zoning, neighborhood and commercial property plans.

Intergenerational programs will be created with opportunities for younger generations to be volunteers providing the younger generation with the side benefit of learning how to age wisely through the intergenerational interactions. CSS will develop a collaborative effort between government, faith-based, private sector, and non-profit organizations to ensure in-home services are available and affordable to all in need.

CSS will become the voice of the senior population's needs through educating others. With that voice CSS will continue correcting misperceptions about aging and continue showcasing the value of contributions made from late life pursuits. CSS will work to develop and integrate specialized programs understanding special needs of all cultural groups, especially the growing Hispanic community as it ages.

No deadlines have been assigned to the recommendations in this plan as we want to remain flexible to the changes in demographics, trends and funding that will surely occur during the next ten years. Action plans will be designed as they are needed to accomplish the recommendations. We plan to include a consultant fee in our 2011 budget. The consultant will use the data from the 2010 census, along with ARC and Cobb Senior Services data to update recommendations pertaining to this Master Plan.

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- <sup>1</sup> Thorsen. P. 3
- <sup>2</sup> Handout from Commissioner Lee
- <sup>3</sup> Coppola, 2005
- <sup>4</sup> Cobb Chamber of Commerce, Webpage, 2005
- <sup>5</sup> Atlanta Regional Commission, Aging Services Division, 2005
- <sup>6</sup> Charles H. Russell, Ph.D.; Good News About Aging. p. 198
- <sup>7</sup> Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D.; Age Wave p. 115
- <sup>8</sup> As individuals age in place, and adults in one area reach 25% or more, it is commonly referred to as a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community, Atlanta Regional Commission
- <sup>9</sup> Webster's Dictionary, 1997
- <sup>10</sup> Atlanta Regional Commission, "Cobb County: Older Adult Profile"
- <sup>11</sup> Charles H. Russell, Ph.D.; Good News About Aging. p. 128
- <sup>12</sup> Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D.; Age Wave. p. 11
- <sup>13</sup> Atlanta Regional Commission; "Regional Snapshot"
- <sup>14</sup> Valliant; Aging Well. p. 224
- <sup>15</sup> Kochhar, Suro, & Tafoya, "The New Latino South: The Context and Consequences of Rapid Population Growth", website, Pew Hispanic Center 7/26/05
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- <sup>18</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services, Special Committee on Aging, Statement of Norman L. Thompson, Acting Principal Deputy As Secretary for Aging
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- <sup>21</sup> Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D.; Age Wave. p. 123
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- <sup>29</sup> (US Food & Drug Administration, Growing Older, Eating Better, FDA Consumer Magazine, April, 1996).

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The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the research and the objectives of the study. It then proceeds to describe the methodology used, including the data collection and analysis techniques. The results of the study are presented in the following section, followed by a discussion of the findings and their implications. The paper concludes with a summary of the key points and a list of references.

## VIII. REFERENCES

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The five "Senior Center Attendance by Zip Code" maps show the zip codes of seniors attending each of the five Multi-purpose Centers as a percentage of each Center's total participation. Compiled from voluntary sign-in sheets, the maps offer a snapshot of each Center's customer base. As shown, the Centers draw from comparatively wide areas outside their immediate vicinities. Some reasons are that participants travel because of interest in a particular program or event, and that some seniors pursue a particular activity frequently at various Centers. A series of "Older Adults in Cobb County" maps outline the density of the senior population geographically in the County. The maps show significant density of seniors in the over 55, over 65, and over 85 age groups in the east Cobb area south of Roswell Road 120. Significantly, this area comprises the third highest percentage of participants at the East Cobb Center despite being some distance from the facility. The location of the proposed new Marietta facility in the eastern sector of the city would offer more convenient access for this population without adversely affecting the existing five Multi-purpose Centers.

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**Refer to Map:**

**East Cobb Senior Center**

10000 East Cobb Road, Atlanta, GA 30343

770.412.1234

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**Refer to Map:**

**Freeman Poole Senior  
Center**

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**Refer to Map:**

**North Cobb Senior  
Center**

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**Refer to Map:**

**West Cobb Senior  
Center**

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**Refer to Map:**

**Windy Hill Senior Center**