

### An Answer to a Growing Crisis

San Francisco is home to over 163,000 older adults--more than 20% of the City's population as of 2016. The percentage of older adults living in San Francisco will continue to grow to 30% by 2030.

Housing for older adults on fixed incomes, such as those living on social security checks, received some attention in the past with several new older adult housing developments. These developments, however, have come to a screeching halt in recent years while the aging population continues to grow.

The demand for in-home caregivers has grown over the years, due to the growing "baby boomer" generation. The City has continued to support this workforce. In October 2018 the Board of Supervisors approved a wage increase for in-home caregivers to \$16.50 by July 2019.

Eventually many older adults will need higher levels of care and must move to residential care facilities for the elderly, also known as board and care homes, or other forms of assisted living facilities.

San Francisco has been losing assisted living facilities over the last few decades. In the last six years, we have lost 20% of our board and care beds. The bleeding of these beds continues today without any plans for the City to address this issue. Now many of our residents, particularly our low-income but also our middle-income residents, are placed out-of-county, far away from their familiar surroundings and support networks. This is not a humane nor compassionate solution for our City's older adults or their families.

For older adults who can afford it, they have enjoyed "Continuum Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs)", but these facilities remain inaccessible for those on fixed incomes. These Life Care Facilities generally provide older adults a wide range of care from independent living to various degrees of assisted living. Due to increased mobility or medical issues, many older adults will eventually need to move to skilled nursing facilities.

San Francisco already has a great hospital caring for older adults who need skilled nursing care--Laguna Honda Hospital. However when patients are discharged from Laguna Honda because they no longer need skilled nursing care, patients and their families are then faced with limited housing options in the community which provide less acute care. This lack of appropriate placement options in the community upon hospital discharge leads to unnecessary hospital overstays, which then reduces the availability of hospital beds for patients needing skilled nursing.

## POTENTIAL SOLUTION

When the Laguna Honda Hospital built its new facilities in 2010 to replace its outdated and unsafe facilities, there were discussions in 1999 to create assisted living quarters adjacent to the new hospital. However the assisted living facility was not created due to a lack in funding. Since then the situation for older adults have grown direr and will continue to worsen.

There is still an opportunity for the City to begin improving the ever-worsening situation for our older adult population. There is land available at the Laguna Honda Hospital site, but it will take boldness on the part of San Francisco leaders. Will we allow our older adult population to languish or will we and say, “Yes, we will take care of our older adults.”?

The parcel of available space can support a Life Care Facility. This facility should include units for independent living and units for assisted living. It should also have space to support a residential care facility for the elderly, with a minimum of 30 beds to make it economically feasible to operate. Several of the beds could be kept available for patients being discharged from Laguna Honda to lower levels of care. Ideally the facility will include an adult day care facility to serve the wider community and a preschool to foster intergenerational connections.

This facility would be built next to the Laguna Honda Hospital to provide accessible medical care when needed. Placing the Life Care Facility nearby means that an older adult would be able to move easily from one level of care to another as needed, while being able to stay in their community. Anyone caring for their aging relatives know that as older adults age the level of care fluctuates. Building the Life Care Facility next to Laguna Honda Hospital would be a perfect situation to show that San Francisco cares for its older adults who helped build our City in the first place.