

Entering the Twenty-First Century
A Plan for Middletown Elders
1991-2001

Prepared for the
Middletown Senior Affairs Commission
by Eldercare Associates
of Bridgeport, Connecticut
June 30, 1991



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ENTERING THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:

A PLAN FOR MIDDLETOWN ELDERS

Developed for the Middletown Senior Affairs Commission

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A PLAN FOR MIDDLETOWN ELDERS

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A PLAN FOR MIDDLETOWN ELDERS

Introduction

The action plan for Middletown described in this document is based upon a study commissioned by the Middletown Senior Affairs Commission and conducted between April and June, 1991. The recommendations and action steps, as well as the analysis contained in this document reflects the views of the consultants for the Commission, Eldercare Associates, based upon primary and secondary data collected during the study period. It is anticipated that the Senior Affairs Commission, after review of the document and plan, will either adopt the plan in full or make modifications, based upon their own policy agenda for Middletown's elders.

Because a plan is essentially a working document and not a set of steps which are static, it is assumed that this "road map" for action will need to be modified over time once there is an adopted version established. The best use of any plan is as a reference and tool to use in evaluating changes in the community and making adjustments in the plan accordingly.

The document is organized with the Action Plan first. Following the Action Plan the reader can find an overview of the community resources of Middletown and a description of Middletown's older population. The final section contains specific discussion of the three primary data collection activities and the findings associated with each of these inquiries.

ACTION PLAN

Based upon analysis conducted, the following goal statement was developed by project staff in order to provide a guide for the development of the action plan:

The goal of the action plan is to maintain and increase the quality of life of Middletown elders through increasing their access to services which support their independence; to support the activities of Middletown's residents who are involved in assisting an older person; to increase community-wide involvement with and sensitivity to Middletown elders; and to enhance the opportunities for older persons to participate within the larger community.

Activities included in the plan are divided into two sections; service and organizational activities and informational activities. Each set of activities is discussed individually.

For each activity the time frame is identified as immediate (within the next year) or intermediate (two to three years) Obviously the time set to undertake and complete each activity must be reviewed by the Senior Affairs Commission and modified according to priorities set within the Commission.

Service and Organizational Activities

It is recommended that the Seniors Affairs Commission establish a sub-committee for services and organizational change of its members and selected key individuals in the community to prioritize the action steps recommended and to provide leadership to the implementation of the action steps.

Immediate Action Steps

1. Review and re-define, if necessary, the role and function of the Senior Affairs Commission in regards to its mission within the community and its relationships with other bodies established to serve Middletown elders.
2. Establish a sub-committee of the Senior Affairs Commission to evaluate a process for establishment of a Middletown Elderly Services Coordinating Council to coordinate the efforts of agencies and organizations service Middletown elders. Membership on the Council should include agency representatives and advocates for the elderly.

Note: The Middlesex United Way is a potential funding source to provide resources needed to develop a coordinating council or mechanism. Because of the interest in the community in such a project, funding for a part-time staff to manage the project during the initial development stage is likely to be sufficient.

3. Modify the operations of the Middletown Senior Center in order that it function as a "focal point" for services and activities for Middletown elders. This can be started by conducting a self-study process, according to the guidelines prepared by the National Institute on Senior Centers, of the Middletown Senior Center. Materials related to the National Institute on Senior Centers standards and self-study process have been provided to the Senior Affairs Commission.

4. Develop a method for the delivery of home maintenance and chore services to Middletown elders. This can be undertaken by existing agencies through special funding and/or through subsidies of the costs of private companies through the Jones Fund for eligible elderly.

Intermediate-Range Activities

1. Establish a position of Aging Coordinator, either through up-grading the position of Director of the Senior Center or creation of a new municipal position. A suggested job description follows the action steps.

2. Develop methods of increasing the service capacity of available agencies through non-traditional approaches such as new partnerships or through the use of volunteers in the area of transportation, escort services, friendly visiting, shopping services, meal preparation, and library services.

* Consider the establishment of a volunteer driver corps through the Senior Center for non-medical transportation services.

* Investigate the possibility of a coordinating volunteers currently involved in religious organizational initiatives, RSVP, and other groups such as AARP, to provide occasional services in the areas of escort, friendly visiting, shopping and meal preparation for Middletown elders recovering from an illness, and to deliver library services to home-bound elders.

3. Begin a partnership with local merchants in order to encourage them to provide delivery services in the Middletown area and to provide discounts to seniors. A possible incentive for participating merchants is the publishing of an "Age-Wise" merchant listing.

4. Increase the linkages between the Senior Center and educational organizations (Wesleyan and Middlesex Community College) in order to provide enhanced educational services both on-site and in other community settings.

5. Increase the linkages between the business community and the network of services to Middletown elders through providing them with access to information and encouraging them to establish, within the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce, a study committee of the factors involved in the aging of Middlesex County.

6. Increase the involvement of other Municipal departments such as Parks and Recreation, in elder activities through increased communications and joint planning of activities.

Informational Activities

As in the area of services and organizational activities, it is recommended that a sub-committee of the Senior Affairs Commission be configured for the express purpose of

managing the informational activities through their prioritization and implementation. Inclusion of a media representative and a business sector representative as well as a representative of the Board of Education is encouraged.

Immediate Activities

1. Reproduce and disseminate the "bill stuffer" prepared by project staff (copy can be found immediately after this section) in the tax bills of property tax payers in Middletown.
2. Develop a public relations workshop for service providers in conjunction with local media representatives to train local agency staff in the preparation of news releases and the development of a public relations strategy for their agency in order to increase the level of information available about elderly services and issues related to Middletown elders.
3. Provide an after-hours and weekend message on a weekly basis for a phone in the Senior Center providing information regarding upcoming events for Middletown elders or special messages of interest to elders.
4. Encourage the Middletown Education Department to become involved in the Elders as a Resource Program now being conducted by the State Departments on Education and Aging. No cost consultation is available through David Shuldiner at the State Department on Aging and curriculum is available through the Department of Education (Donna Couper).
5. Organize a city-wide "Eduthon" program sponsored by Sandoz Pharmaceuticals. This program provides a community-wide educational forum about aging and Alzheimers Disease. There is no cost associated with the program and materials (special coloring books for children), speakers and consultation in the organization is provided free of charge.
5. Consider increasing the access of the older public to the Senior Affairs Commission through holding meetings during day-time hours and publicizing, well in advance, the agenda and any special interest items which may be pending.

Intermediate-Range Activities

1. Develop and plan a "care-giving fair" for the community to be held annually which provides a forum for community and municipal services and assistance.
2. Encourage local news media to develop an elderly "beat" and to assign coverage of elderly affairs to specific reporters.

The Middletown Press should also be encouraged to consider an annual Middletown Elders issue to feature, during the month of May (Older Americans Month), special activities and feature stories about individuals and organizations who are part of the older population and the network which serves them.

3. Develop a mechanism (either a newsletter or an "age page") to publicize regularly (at least on a monthly basis) activities of the Middletown Senior Center and other age-related organizations.

4. Reach out to the area clergy to encourage them to include information regarding community services in their publications as well as to inform them of available services to assist them in their ministry to the elderly.
5. Computerize elderly service information for the library and the senior center.
6. Organize area academe to assist in the production of a cable access show for elders (and hopefully, by elders).
7. Enlist area academics to organize their students and assist themselves in the development of informational products and educational tools for and about Middletown elders.

A message from
**The Middletown
Senior Affairs
Commission**

About one out of every eight persons in Middletown is a senior citizen. These elders are an important part of our community and contribute to the quality of life of all Middletown residents.

We recognize that some of our older citizens need assistance from time to time, and we are proud of the fine community services available to provide this assistance.

This reference card is being sent to you to give you quick access to telephone numbers for several of those services. **The numbers are on the other side of this card.** Please keep the card by your telephone for use when you or someone you care about needs help.

Seth Hubbard, Jr.
Chairman

General Information

INFOLINE

346-6691

<u>Emergency</u>	<u>Police</u>	<u>Fire</u>
911	347-6941	346-8092

Important Telephone Numbers For Elders

Health/Home Care

- Middlesex Visiting Nurse & Home Health Services, Inc.
347-7266
- Community Health Center
347-6971
- Middletown Health Department
344-3474
- Middlesex Memorial Hospital
347-9471

Transportation

- American Red Cross
347-2577
- Middletown Area Transit (MAT)
346-0212
- Action Cab
347-4222

Other

- Municipal Agent: Nathan Shapiro
344-3554
- Middletown Senior Center
344-3512
- Home Delivered Meals: CAGM
347-4465
- Home Outreach Ministry to the Elderly (HOME)
347-5661

Middletown Elder Affairs Director

Job Description

Responsibilities of the Director

*The Middletown Elder Affairs Director shall be responsible for the coordination of community services for Middletown elders and shall be the primary advocate for issues related to the quality of life of Middletown elders. Specifically, the position includes the following:**

- Staffing of the Middletown Senior Affairs Commission
- Coordinating community services, both public and private, through the management of a coordinating council of services for elders
- Initiation of new projects and fostering the development of new services which may be identified by the Director as needed by Middletown elders. The Director should take responsibility for raising funds as appropriate and needed.
- Advocacy activities for the elder population and the services designed to assist the elders
- Encouraging and assistance in the development of aging-related programs and projects within appropriate municipal departments.
- Outreach to fraternal, civic and business organizations around the issues of Middletown elders

Minimum Qualifications

A master's degree in gerontology or related field with a minimum of five years experience in the field of gerontology. Management, grant-writing and fund-raising experience desired.

**If this position is an up-grade of the Senior Center Director's position, the job description should include a reference to oversight and management of the center. A part-time program director would be necessary to manage the day-to-day planning and activity calendar of the center.

ESTIMATED RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR THE ACTION PLAN

(Immediate Action Steps)

PC Computer for Senior Center, laser printer	\$4,000
Planning Activities for Coordinating Council:	
Staffing and direct costs (postage, printing, phone and meeting)	\$15,000*
Printing of tax bill mailer (18,000 households):	
One color	\$ 960
Two color	\$1,400
Public relations workshop (assuming volunteer staffing)	\$100
Phone answering machine message for activity information	\$200
Elders as Resource Program	Free service
Eduthon	Free service

*It may be possible to receive funding through Middlesex United Way for this activity.

MIDDLETOWN ELDERS

The Older Population

In 1985, when the previous study of Middletown elders was conducted, residents over the age of 65 accounted for 12% of the total population of Middletown. Out of the 5,126 older persons, 2,066 were over the age of 75, and over 1,000 over the age of 80. Projections done by the Office of Policy and Management for the State of Connecticut suggested that by 1990 there would be 5,551 older persons residing in Middletown. There also was a projection that, of this elderly group, 2,291 would be over the age of 75.

The State of Connecticut had, as of this writing, not yet received an age breakdown by census tract for the 1990 Census. However, there are figures on total population and population over the age of 18. The total town population was projected to be 41,740 based upon the 1980 Census. In actuality, the population as measured by the 1990 Census is 42,762. It is likely that part of this approximately 800 person discrepancy will be in the elderly age group.

The revised projection for Middletown's total population in the year 2000, based upon 1990 Census data, is 43,290. This compares with previous estimates of total population in 2000 of 44,539. Although the 1980 projections suggested that the percentage of elderly in the year 2000 would be approximately 13.8%, it is likely that this is a conservative estimate. But applying even this conservative estimate to the lowered 1990 Census projections for Middletown's total population gives the city an over-65 population of nearly 6,000 persons.

Influencing Factors

The Northeastern states, however, have been experiencing a higher than anticipated in-migration of older persons and there could be an even larger percentage and thus a larger number of older persons in the city at the turn of the century. For the most part this regional growth has been an increase in the "old-old" who, in frail health, move to be closer to their children or other relatives. Nationally, it is expected that the percentage of elderly will be 13% in the year 2000. In the next nine years, the actual percentage of older residents of Middletown will be dependent upon a number of factors including, whether or how much new elderly housing constructed, the out-migration of younger persons as a result of the state's failing economy as well as the characteristics of those who relocate to the town.

Focus of the Study

Unlike the 1985 study of Middletown seniors, we have elected to restrict our interest to those over the age of 65. Even this definition of "seniors" leaves much to be desired when planning for the needs of those most at risk of losing their independence due to frailty associated with age. It is an appropriate boundary, however, when examining the overall quality of life of older persons in a community because it is the standard retirement age. When planning for the quality of life of older residents, it is important to recognize that, although the demand for services may be less between the ages of 65 and 74; there is nevertheless a strong demand for social, recreational, educational and civic participation.

The fact that a local chapter of AARP has had to limit its membership to its current 300-person level underscores this demand.

Chronological age is an weak indicator, at best, of behavior or ability to function independently within the community. Statistically, however, the chances of needing assistance in the activities of daily living increase over the age of 75 and they markedly increase over the age of 80. For example, approximately 17% of persons between the age of 65 and 74 need some assistance with daily activities while 28% of the 75-84 age group and 49% of the over 85 age group require assistance of some sort. For this reason, it is useful to consider carefully the "old-old" population when planning for needed services -- they are the group most likely to require supportive services in order to remain in the community.

Location of Older Population

More interesting than the estimates of percentage or absolute size of Middletown's senior population today and ten years from now, is the geographic location of the older residents. Consistent with national averages, the majority of Middletown elders are homeowners. The 1985 study indicated that 73% over the age of 60 were home owners. This suggests that the incidence of home ownership among older Middletown residents would be less than the 75% average; but ownership is clearly the norm among older residents. The overwhelming majority of Middletown's residential housing stock is single-family detached housing, most of it dispersed in outlying districts or census tracts. As pointed out in the 1985 survey, some of the largest concentrations of older residents can be found in the same outlying neighborhoods which are distant from shopping and services needed by older residents. Residents of these neighborhoods are dependent primarily upon the automobile for access to goods and services. As one respondent to our survey stated, "...the key to independence is a driver's license."

Farm Hill, Westfield, and South Farms all have large numbers of older residents. The Downtown area and the North End have a high concentration of elderly compared to other age groups in those neighborhoods, but these areas are home to fewer older persons than the more geographically remote area listed above. Because fewer older persons than other age groups elect to relocate, the "aging in place" which will occur in the more remote neighborhoods of Middletown carries with it special challenges in the provision of needed service.

Needed Services

Transportation is only one area of concern as the over 5,000 Middletown elders age in place. Other types of services which are important in assisting an older person to retain his or her home and independence include:

- * Home maintenance and repair services
- * House cleaning assistance
- * Assistance with grocery shopping and meal preparation
- * Personal security and emergency response services
- * Personal care services
- * Home health services

Research has demonstrated that over 80% of all the services received by older people today in this country are being provided by family or friends. Family members are actively involved in providing the services listed above on an ongoing basis, if needed. However, many older people do not have family locally, or at all. There may also be a reluctance on the part of some older persons to rely upon family for some of the services needed; personal care is a good example. Our current survey of Middletown residents included a good percentage of respondents who were providing some assistance to an older person. It should also be noted that much of the informal caregiving is being done by older persons themselves. The largest group receiving assistance in our survey is neighbors or friends.

Residing in elderly housing, with the exception of congregate care or long-term care facilities, does not limit the need for assistance with daily activities. The majority of Middletown's elderly housing is independent housing units which do not have services built into the management of the housing.

Respondents to the survey conducted in conjunction with this study indicated that they had the following needs:

- * Transportation
- * Housing
- * Meals and assistance with meal preparation
- * Chore and cleaning services
- * Shopping assistance

In addition to those needs, many respondents indicated they had a need for more information. This need is further underscored by the large number of respondents who lacked knowledge of services listed in the survey. While only a few respondents indicated a lack of knowledge of any of the listed services, many reported knowledge of only one, two or three services out of the thirteen identified in the questionnaire. (Note: The full analysis of the survey findings can be found in the "Survey of Middletown Residents" section of this document).

Because of the prevalence of informal caregiving for older persons, it is important to provide information regarding available services to all age groups. Access to the available services through the provision of information supports not only the older person but their families and friends who are assisting them.

Summary

Middletown's approximately 5,500 elders are, and will continue to be, "aging in place". The over 2,000 residents over the age of 75 are likely to require some assistance with activities of daily living -- either currently or within the next ten years. This 2,000 figure is also likely to increase significantly during the next ten years. It is projected that nearly 3,000 Middletown residents will be over the age of 75 in the year 2000 and, depending on future events, this figure could be larger. Services will be needed to assist the older person in maintaining independence within the community and, if possible, within the home he or she currently inhabit. A key barrier to meeting the needs of older residents is a lack

of information. This is documented in our survey as well as in the recently completed Middlesex United Way Needs Assessment. Because of the extent to which families are involved in helping older residents, information regarding service options and needs of older persons should be targeted at all age groups within the town of Middletown.

Finally, both the key informant interviews with community professionals and the survey of Middletown residents pointed out the need for better opportunities for younger elders in the area of social, recreational, educational and civic activities.

Ethnicity

Middletown has a primarily white population. However, many of the residents come from Italian backgrounds and it is likely that there are a significant number of Italian speaking older persons. It is unknown whether language (or culture) is a barrier in the use of services available for older persons. This should be considered, however, in planning for the future. In addition, the recent Middlesex United Way Needs Assessment points out that the most ethnically diverse town in the region is Middletown, with nearly 10% of the population of Afro-American origin and nearly 3% of Hispanic origin. In terms of the Hispanic population, language may also be a barrier in service utilization for both health and social services and should be monitored and considered for future planning.

MIDDLETOWN COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community Services

As the center of the Middlesex County region, Middletown enjoys a rich array of services, including a hospital, which serve not only Middletown residents but nearby towns as well. Many of the agencies which provide services to older persons throughout the region are located in Middletown. This situation provides Middletown with advantages often associated with a much larger town -- high levels of professionalism among the agency personnel and a wide variety of resources.

The network of services to the older population is particularly impressive in its comprehensive nature and the commitment of those who manage the services and who work directly with the older person through the services. With the exception of home repair and chore services, most of the basic services which support older persons in the community are present.

In addition to the formal service agencies available in the town, there is an active involvement of clergy in meeting the needs of older persons. Beyond the Home Outreach Ministry to the Elderly program, clergy provide direct assistance to older persons on an as-needed basis.

A missing piece in the service array, as identified by the key informants interviewed for this study, is an mechanism for coordination of existing services. This lack of coordination precludes efficiency of the services that are available and makes identified service gaps, such as the lack of home repair and chore services, difficult to address on a community-wide basis.

The lack of a coordination mechanism also precludes a community-wide initiative which would benefit older Middletown residents through an increase in awareness of their needs and appropriate responses in municipal planning and organization. This lack of coordination of services and advocacy for older residents is the primary barrier to the development of a community-wide strategy for insuring the quality of life of Middletown elders now and in the next ten years.

The Role of the Municipality

The aging services network present in the United States today is based upon a federal, state and regional (through the Area Agency network) partnership to meet the minimum needs of older persons through the Older Americans Act and state supplements. The role of municipalities in meeting the needs of their older residents varies greatly from town to town. The past activities of the Middletown Senior Affairs Commission suggests that an appropriate role for the municipality is in the area of assessing the needs of the Middletown Elders and service through the senior center, health department and the subsidy of the area coordinated transportation system. The municipal ordinance establishing the Senior Affairs Commission also suggests that the function of the Commission is, in addition to the research, sponsorship and initiation of programs, the coordination of programs for the elderly. Because of the importance of the coordination function, it may be timely for the Commission and the City Officials to revisit this legislation and renew or revise its

commitment to this role on behalf of Middletown elders.

Interviews with key informants suggest that there is a lack of understanding and definition of the roles of the municipality vis-a-vis service agencies for older residents. Research has shown that when a lack of clarity regarding roles exists among community services, conflict is likely between the agencies. A review of the role and function of the Senior Affairs Commission and its operating organization, the Senior Center, will undoubtedly go far to minimize any conflict which exists presently or which may emerge in the future regarding elderly services and will increase the cooperation among the key actors.

The Senior Center

The Middletown Senior Center represents a major component of the town's resources allocated to older persons. A wide range of activities is available through the Center and Center personnel staff the Senior Affairs Commission. For those who participate in Senior Center activities, the Center is an important part of their quality of life and connection with the community.

As the older population of Middletown increases and the characteristics of the older population change, it is important that the Senior Center respond to these changes in order to provide an equitable allocation of the town's scarce dollar resources. For many communities the size of Middletown, the senior center is the cornerstone of planning and services and functions as the focal point which links older residents to available community services and cultural and educational activities.

A National Center for Health Statistics (1986) found that 15% of the older population attend senior centers and 8% attend meal programs located within senior centers. Given the fact that, on the average, only 22% of the older population use community services of any type, senior centers are an important link between elders and their community as well as other services they may need. Utilization rates of the Middletown Senior Center are well below these averages.

The National Institute for Senior Centers, an Institute of the National Council on the Aging has established a set of operational standards for senior centers. These standards recognize the potential importance of the senior center to the lives of all older persons within the community. Program standards include the provision of service and activities both within the center and at other locations as well as through linkages with other agencies. An important component of program, according to their guidelines, is outreach in order to serve a diverse population as defined by the demographics of the community served and to serve those who cannot attend center activities.

A better utilization of the town's dedicated elderly dollars will result from the adoption of the standards promulgated by the National Institute for Senior Centers. In addition, the senior center will be more responsive to the changing and increasing demands of Middletown elders through adoption of these standards.

Elderly Housing

There are over 600 units of elderly housing located in Middletown, most of it independent living units. This figure excludes long-term care facilities. The Middletown Housing Authority manages Sabona Towers (125 units) and Marino Manor (40 units). In addition to these elderly housing complexes, they serve approximately 50 older residents through the Section 8 program and within age-integrated public housing. The largest operator of elderly housing in the town is Carabetta which manages 200 units of independent housing for seniors in two buildings.

Both subsidized and market-rate housing units are available to older Middletown residents or to those older individuals who will become Middletown residents. Within the housing managed by the Middletown Housing Authority, Marino Manor is completely filled and has a waiting list. Sabona Towers, on the other hand, has vacancies routinely. The difference, according to the Executive Director, may be in the style of housing offered by each complex. Marino Manor is a garden-type development, while Sabona Towers is a high-rise. There are currently plans to increase the number of units in Marino Manor.

Based upon a brief phone survey by project staff, there appears to be vacancies in both the subsidized and market-rate units of elderly housing in Middletown. Planners for Middletown should carefully consider the implications for service of new elderly housing to be built in the future. New units are likely to affect both the percentage of elderly in Middletown and the demand for services as elderly housing unit residents age in place.

THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Like most communities of comparable size, Middletown has an information network that is sufficient for its needs. The components of that network range from simple word-of-mouth exchanges among friends, relatives and acquaintances to sophisticated, modern electronic messages broadcast over mass media. In between these are such information sources as civic, religious and business groups, as well as political and community leaders. All of these components reach the city's elders.

Personal Sources

Much of what Middletown residents know about services, facilities and activities for the elderly population travels along the more personal avenues of the city's information network. Their priests, pastors or rabbis inform them. Friends who are older themselves, or who live with and/or care for older residents tell one another how a problem was solved, a crisis met, or a new opportunity utilized.

From one perspective, that of influence or persuasion, these personal messages are extremely effective. They may, in fact, be the most influential sources of information simply because they are known and trusted. All of us tend to accept and act upon such proximate information. From another perspective, however, our personal range of acquaintances can never, in a modern and complex society, be broad enough to stand as our only source of information. For those seeking information about elderly affairs in Middletown something more than the usual "grapevine" is required. Even in a community like Middletown where the extended family is often large and deeply concerned about caring for seniors, personal sources remain narrow and limited when measured against all possible sources of information.

Specialized Media

Important supplemental sources of information for those concerned with issues, events, services, programs and activities related to elders are specialized media. These include such publications as newsletters or notices from churches, clubs, and business and professional associations. They also include informational brochures or booklets such as the directory available at City Hall which briefly describes the entire list of Middletown's governmental operation and services. Weekly church bulletins and the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce meeting notices are typical of these specialized media, as are numerous single-sheet informational leaflets like those published by the Connecticut Legal Services, the MAT and Red Cross, and the Middletown Senior Center's description of services and programs.

These publications are aimed at specifically targeted groups, some small, others large, within the community. They play a vital role in providing information. Their availability and proliferation are enhanced by the spread of technology that has made low-cost desktop publishing affordable to even the smallest organizations. The computer and the copy machine will continue to enable such groups to pass on highly focused information efficiently and effectively. None, however, reaches a broad cross-section of the city's population, nor does any single specialized publication have the potential for getting messages to large numbers of citizens quickly. Most contain information which is, at best,

at least a week old; some are published only monthly; others appear but once a year; still others, such as the very fine list of elderly services available at the public library, may not be up-dated for years.

Mass Media

Mass media are well-represented in Middletown's information complex. In addition to the local daily newspaper (The Middletown Press), Hartford, Meriden and New Haven dailies and Sunday papers also circulate within the city as do several advertising publications, commonly referred to as "shoppers", which carry news of the area in limited editorial columns.

A local radio station (WCNX) shares the total Middletown radio audience with several other popular stations including those in Hartford (WDRG, WRCH, WHCN, WKSS, WPOP and WTIC), as well as those in Meriden (WMMW) and New Haven (WELI and WPLR). Highly loyal segments of this audience also listen to the Wesleyan Campus radio station and the nearby Connecticut Public Radio affiliate in Middlefield.

Television are similarly divided. Homes with normal rooftop antenna installations can easily pick up Connecticut's main VHF channels, the network affiliates of WFSB and WTNH as well as UHF channels such as WTIC, WVIT, and the public television channel (24). Those with cable connections receive numerous other TV signals including those from the local cable access channel (Channel 3) broadcast by Comcast Cablevision.

Rounding out these media are a number of outdoor signs or billboards which line several commercial thoroughfares.

Problems and Opportunities

Each of these media provide Middletown citizens with information. Yet each has limitations for communicating information to and about the elderly.

The personal "grapevine" for elders is often limited by the size of ones personal network and the quality and accuracy of the information which is shared. Specialized media must focus first on the issues and needs which caused them to come into existence. Often their pages are limited and their awareness of how they might contribute to spreading information regarding seniors is negligible.

Nearly all of the components of Middletown's information network can present opportunities for use in a comprehensive communication program as part of a plan for seniors. For example, the local daily newspaper, with the exception of its obituary notices, does not regularly publish news or features dealing with elders. In one typical, five-day span, the newspaper carried only two brief meeting announcements for out-of-town seniors clubs. Nevertheless, many activities by and for seniors each week within the city. To cover such activities, the newspaper would have to identify such news as a "beat" and assign a reporter to cover that beat. This need not be a full-time assignment, but it ought to be an acknowledged responsibility of at least one reporter.

Similarly, local broadcast media carry little in the way of either news or other

programming concerning elders. The local radio station, however, could easily find time to present both and seems to have some interest in doing so.

Obviously more news about and for the elderly is needed in the city's mass media. But, before they can begin to provide such programming, the media must have help in solving a few problems which would be associated with this effort. Where will such programming come from? Who will pay for its costs? These are two of the basic problems. Time or space are media's sole financial resources. Stories, articles and problems require time and people to produce them. The media must be shown that using their limited resources for the promulgation of information regarding the elderly is not just equitable; it is also profitable. This may require some sponsorship by the local business community. It may also require the participation of volunteers and possibly the educational component of Middletown's community. Students and teachers must view participation in this process as an opportunity to learn and employ valuable communication skills.

SURVEY OF MIDDLETOWN RESIDENTS

A one-page survey was distributed to Middletown residents in order to update the previous survey conducted in 1985. The method of distribution was designed to elicit responses from those who may not have been surveyed in the previous study. Surveys were distributed during the Health Fair (1991), at a chapter meeting of AARP and through the religious organizations in Middletown. There were 600 surveys distributed and 104 completed and returned. The approximate 17% return rate is an expected return rate in a survey methodology.

The survey (included in the back of this section) was designed to elicit information about respondents' knowledge of existing services in Middletown, involvement in caregiving activities for older persons, and the respondents' perceptions of needs of Middletown seniors. There also was an opportunity for respondents to indicate how they acquired needed information regarding services in the Middletown area.

Out of the 104 surveys completed, 19% of the respondents were male and 72% were female (9% did not indicate their gender). No respondent was less than 40 years of age, 5% were between the ages of 40 and 50, 13% were between 51 and 65 years of age, 51% between the ages of 66 and 75, 13% between 76 and 80, and 17% over the age of 80. Table I illustrates the respondents by age and gender.

Although the survey provides us with some interesting findings, there are limitations to the data collected. These limitations are due to the fact that the survey sample was not randomly selected, but purposive in its sampling procedure. We distributed 500 surveys through places of worship in Middletown as a strategy to survey residents who may not be involved with or served by the existing network of services. In addition to the sampling limitations, there are limitations based upon response bias. That is; it is likely that those individuals who completed the survey and returned it, either to the place of worship or to the Senior Center, were more likely to have an interest in the topic or be involved in some way with the aging network or an aging individual. Because of these limitations we cannot assume that the findings associated with the survey are generally reflective of the population in general of Middletown.

Knowledge of Services

The survey listed 13 services available to Middletown residents and requested the respondent to indicate which of the services were either known or had been used by them. These services included:

- * Special transportation for seniors
- * Middletown Senior Center
- * Home-Delivered Meals
- * Congregate Meals
- * Adult Day Care
- * Respite Care
- * Job Training Program
- * Library Program
- * Home Health

Respondents by Age and Gender

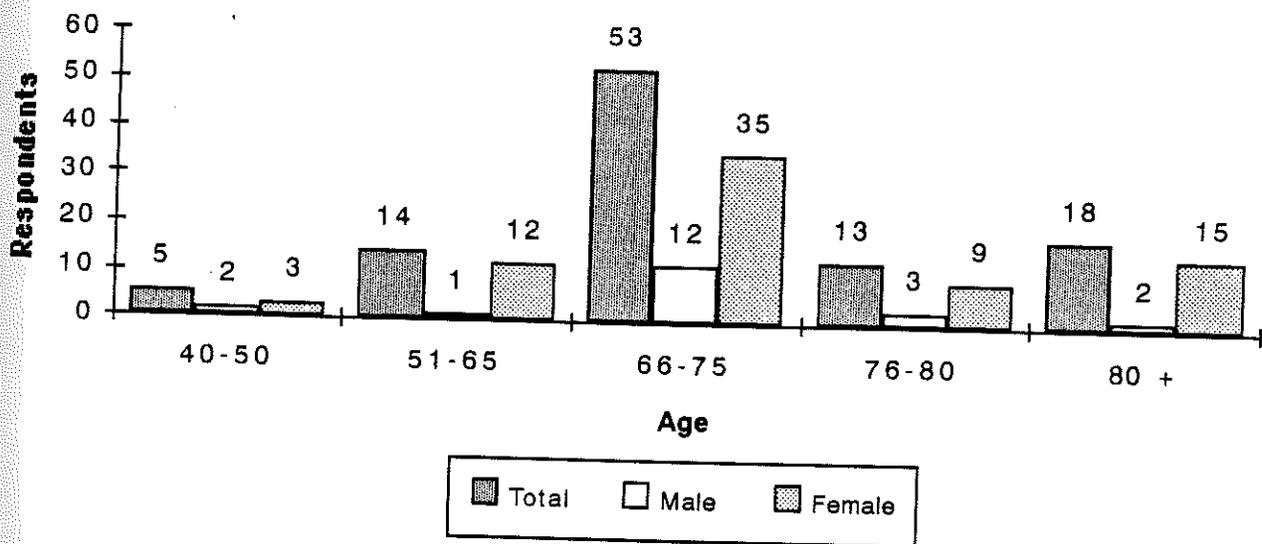


TABLE I

- * Adult Education
- * Home Outreach Ministry to the Elderly
- * Health Screening Programs
- * Emergency Response Systems (Lifeline)

Table II shows the absolute number of services that respondents had knowledge of or had used by gender. Only 10 respondents out of the 104 knew about or had used all of the listed services; 2 were men and 8 were women. Five respondents had no knowledge of or experience with any of the services listed. Knowledge of one service only was the largest response category with 6 men and 10 women indicating this level of awareness. Note: the total number of respondents in this analysis (Table II) is less than the total number of respondents because it does not include those who failed to indicate gender.

Number of Respondents Who Know About
and/or Have Used Services

Number of Services	Male	Female
13	2	8
12	0	0
11	0	1
10	1	4
9	0	6
8	0	5
7	0	3
6	1	5
5	0	9
4	3	1
3	2	9
2	5	8
1	6	10
0	0	5
	20	74

TABLE II

Table III displays the absolute number of services known or used by age. Of those respondents indicating full knowledge of the list of services, all were over the age of 66 (n=10). Likewise, all of the respondents indicating no knowledge of use of services were over the age of 66 (n=6). Knowledge or use of either one or two services was the most prevalent level of awareness for those within the age category of 66-75 years.

Table IV shows the extent to which respondents indicated knowledge of each specific service. The most frequently indicated service by the respondents was special transportation, with the senior center a close second. The least known were job training program, library program and the Home Outreach Ministry program.

In Table V you will see displayed a breakdown of knowledge by gender (percentages of each gender responding in the affirmative regarding knowledge or use) for each specific service. In all but one service category, a higher percentage of women than men reported knowledge or use. That exception was in knowledge of the senior center. A higher percentage of men reported knowing of this service than women in the sample.

Caregiving Responsibilities

Out of those completing the survey, 43 reported that they had caregiving responsibilities associated with an older person. In one case the respondent was providing assistance for two older persons. It is interesting to note that assistance was most commonly being provided for a friend or a neighbor (n=18), with a parent or parent-in-law cited as the second most common recipient of the respondent's aid. Table VI displays the absolute numbers of respondents caring for each of the five categories -- spouse, friend/neighbor, adult child, parent or parent-in-law, or other relative.

There were 5 male caregivers and 34 female caregivers. (Note: the analysis of gender of caregivers is affected by the non-response to gender identification by 10 respondents). The knowledge of services of the caregivers range from knowledge of all 13 services (n=4) to knowledge of none of the services (n=2). Table VII compares the caregivers and the non-caregivers, broken down by gender, in regards to their level of knowledge of services. Men, both caregivers and non-caregivers, are less likely to have high levels of knowledge regarding services than women in either group.

Needs of Middletown's Elders

Respondents were asked to identify what needs, in their opinion, were the greatest for Middletown elders. Seventy-four out of the 104 respondents completed this section of the survey. Because they were not limited in either the category of service or the number of needs they commented on, a numerical analysis of this variable is not possible. However, an analysis was done on the number of times certain commonly cited areas of need were mentioned.

**NUMBER OF
SERVICES RESPONDENTS KNOW
ABOUT AND/OR USE BY AGE**

Number of Services	Total	40-50	51-65	66-75	76-80	80 +	NA
13	10	0	0	4	3	3	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
10	5	2	0	2	0	1	0
9	6	0	3	3	0	0	0
8	6	0	1	3	1	1	0
7	4	1	0	2	0	1	0
6	7	1	1	4	0	0	1
5	9	0	2	5	1	1	0
4	7	1	2	4	0	0	0
3	13	0	2	6	1	4	0
2	13	0	1	9	1	2	0
1	17	0	2	9	3	3	0
0	6	0	0	2	2	2	0
n	104	5	14	53	13	18	1

TABLE III

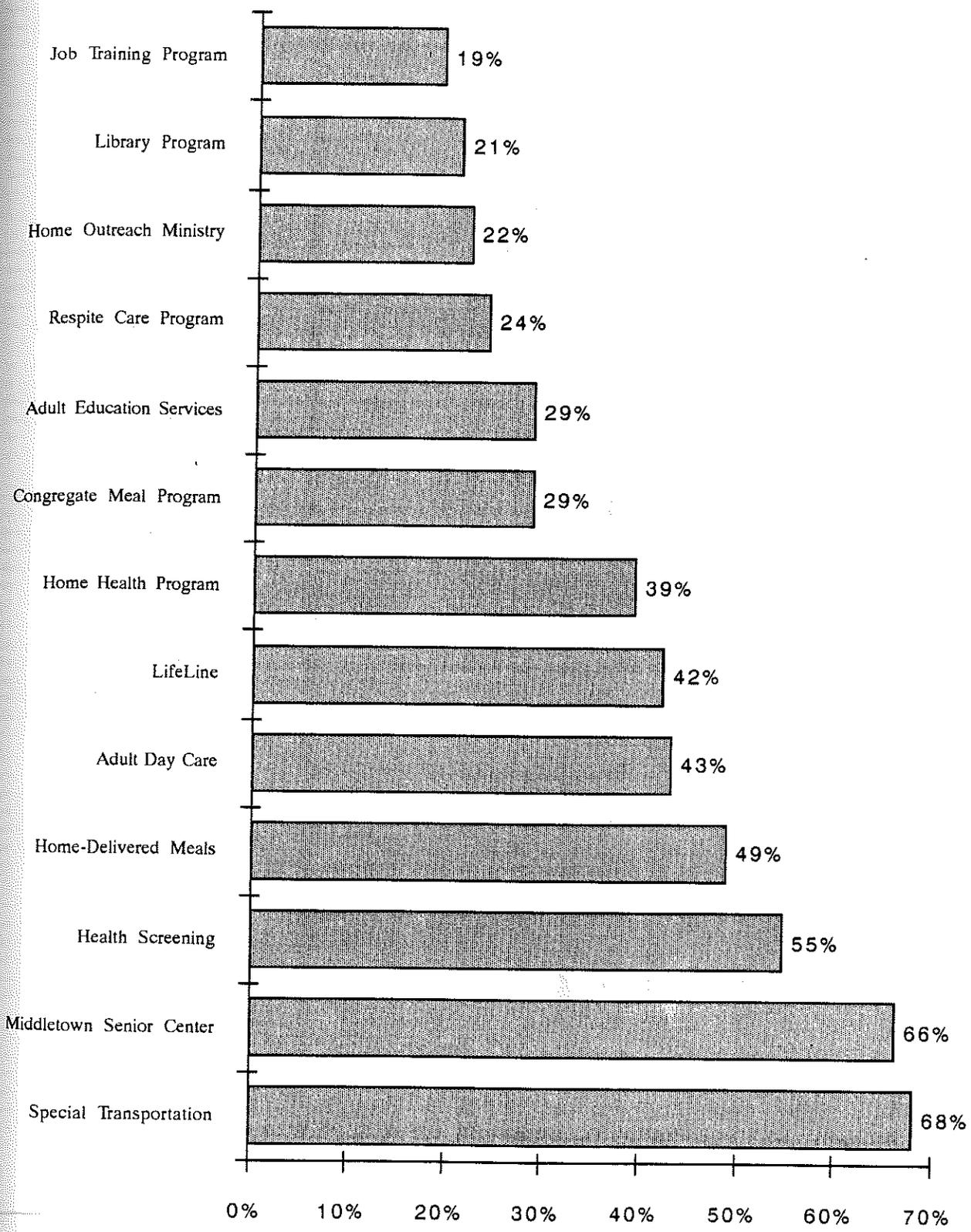


TABLE IV

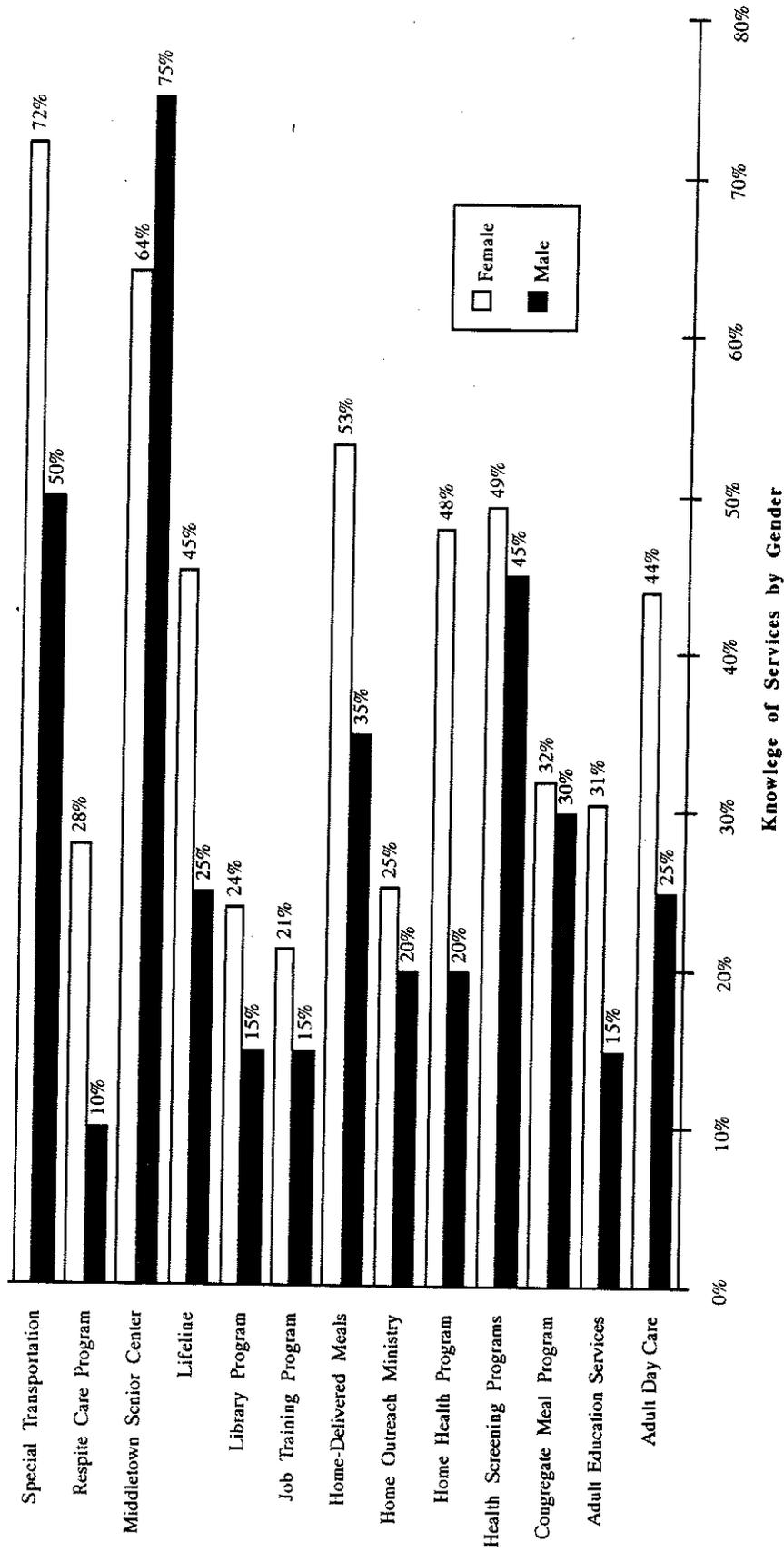


TABLE V

Repondents Who Help Another
Person Daily

Spouse	6
Friend/Neighbor	1,8
Adult Child	4
Parent/In-Law	11
Other Relative	5
Total	44

n = 43

Note in one case respondent helped in more than one category

TABLE VI

**Number of Care Giver vs.
Non-Care Giver by Gender Who
Know About and/or Have Used
Services**

Number of Services	Care Giver		Non-Care Giver	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
13	1	3	1	5
12	0	0	0	0
11	0	1	0	0
10	1	2	0	2
9	0	4	0	2
8	0	3	0	2
7	0	1	0	2
6	0	1	1	4
5	0	4	0	5
4	1	1	2	0
3	0	5	2	4
2	2	3	3	5
1	0	4	6	6
0	0	2	0	3
94	5	34	15	40

TABLE VII

The most commonly mentioned needs are listed below in their order of frequency with one being the most commonly mentioned need.

- * Transportation
- * Housing
- * Meals
- * Chore and cleaning services
- * Companionship and escort services
- * Assistance with shopping

Other areas of need mentioned were social and recreational opportunities, help with medical needs and insurance forms, alternative forms of adult day care, financial assistance and several concerns regarding better information on senior issues in the newspaper. There were also several respondents who indicated that seniors' greatest need was lower taxes.

In terms of transportation, one respondent pointed out that "...the key to independence is a driver's license. The bus service leaves older persons stranded to walk long distances." This 80+ year old respondent reported that she had no knowledge of any services nor had she used any. Her needs were for housekeeping assistance and home repair assistance in addition to transportation.

Another respondent who reported her age at between 76 and 80 was helping a friend and had knowledge of all of the services listed. Her concern however was in the area of information. She criticized the local media for inadequate reporting on senior issues. Other respondents echoed concerns regarding information. One respondent thought it was important to receive some information about making their home a secure environment. Another respondent suggested that a lack of adequate information resulted in seniors being over-looked by other community members.

In the area of housing, several topics were raised. Affordability was the most common issue. Other issues raised included a need for more senior housing that was located near shopping areas and senior housing that was garden-type in design rather than high-rise. Many people indicated they, or someone they knew, needed help with payment of utilities.

Note: Only a few respondents completed answers to the question "Who or what agency/program do you call for information about programs and services for older people" so an analysis of this item is not included.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW PROCEDURE AND FINDINGS

Personal interviews were conducted by project staff with representatives from all of the agencies serving older residents of Middletown. The purpose of these interviews was to determine the scope of services available to Middletown seniors, the extent to which services were comprehensive in meeting the needs of seniors as indicated by the perception of the agency representative, the extent to which agencies serving the older Middletown resident interact, cooperate, and coordinate services with one another, and the perceptions of professionals regarding needs of the Middletown seniors.

Dimensions which were explored during the interview included the following:

- * Agency purpose, client base and outreach activities.
- * Coordinating or interagency groups agencies are involved with on an ongoing basis.
- * Other agencies with which the respondent agency refers clients to and participates with.
- * Future plans of the agency.
- * Perception of respondents regarding adequacy of services to Middletown's older population.
- * Perception of respondents regarding awareness of services on the part of Middletown residents.
- * Suggestions for improvement of the "network" of services available to Middletown's older population.

A total of 24 different organizations were represented in the interview of key informants, many with several respondents because of the different functions within a given organization. In addition, information was sought from members of the Senior Affairs Commission; both individually and during meetings.

The areas of service represented by these agencies include:

Housing
Home Health Care
Respite Care
Transportation
Nutrition Services
Volunteer Opportunities
Friendly Visiting
Recreational Opportunities
Legal Assistance
Information and Referral
Adult Day Care
Advocacy

Educational Services
Employment Services
Specialized Health Care
Dental Care

Findings

The findings of the interview process suggest that Middletown is well-served in terms of meeting the needs of its older population. There is a rich and diverse set of organizations providing a variety of services needed by older persons. There is also an obvious commitment of the professionals to the well-being of Middletown elders and a high level of professionalism within the community.

Most of the respondents believed that, compared with other communities, Middletown had a good service community and was a good place to "grow old." However, there were gaps in services which were identified by the respondents. The services which were not available to Middletown elders, or were not adequately available include:

1. A lack of a service to assist older persons with chores around the house, home maintenance, and personal services;
2. A lack of adequate information for seniors and those who may assist seniors regarding available services;
3. A need for more coordinated transportation and transportation on weekends and evenings;
4. An escort service for frail elderly;
5. Better outreach services for those older persons who may require services but be unaware of or reluctant to use services.

In addition, some respondents pointed out that inadequate recreational services were available for Middletown elders and voiced concern about the needs of the younger elderly and those elders who have recently moved into the community.

A common concern among most respondents was a lack of coordination within the community with regard to the services available to older persons. When asked to indicate whose responsibility coordination is or ought to be in Middletown, half of those responding thought it should rest with the Senior Affairs Commission and the other half indicated that no one or no group had the responsibility for this function. It is also important to note that the majority of those interviewed did not have a clear idea of the function of the Senior Affairs Commission within the community.

Suggestions for improving the services for older Middletown residents included the following:

1. The development of a chore service;
2. Increased outreach from the Senior Center;
3. Increased involvement of seniors with the Senior Affairs Commission;

4. Better newsletters and information for the community;
5. Reduced waiting time for home-delivered meals;
6. Increased capacity for service in all areas, but particularly in medical/health screening, escort and grocery shopping assistance, case management, and legal advocacy services;
7. More opportunities for the younger elders in the community.

The two organized mechanisms for interaction between agencies that serve the needs of Middletown elders were the Midstate Regional Committee on Aging (the Advisory Committee representing the Midstate Region to the Eastern Connecticut Agency on Aging) and the Interagency Council. There are no formal committees or interagency groups devoted exclusively to Middletown providers of service to the elderly.

SURVEY OF BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES

A survey of business representatives was distributed at a breakfast of the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce held on April 19, 1991. The purpose of the survey was to determine the extent to which area business representatives were interested and involved in issues related to older persons. Although we only received 11 completed surveys from those in attendance, some of the findings bear discussion.

Four respondents indicated that their business was providing assistance to employees in locating and obtaining services for employees who were caring for older relatives. Nine of the eleven responding indicated that they personally had been involved in assisting an older relative during the past year.

Seven respondents out of the eleven indicated that their company was actively involved in recruiting and hiring older workers and six indicated that they would be interested in supporting a job re-entry program for seniors.

There also was a high level of interest in receiving information related to aging. The most frequently checked topic of interest was the "elderly market" (6 respondents), with information regarding volunteer opportunities in elderly programs ranking second in level of interest (3). Other areas of interest were "employees and eldercare" and community services for older people.

Although the sample of respondents to the survey was extremely small and statistically insignificant, the findings suggest that it would be worthwhile to explore more fully a link between the business community and the community service network.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations, which are incorporated into the action plan, are based upon the primary and secondary data collected during this project. Primary data sources include interviews with key informants representing agencies and organizations who currently serve older persons, a survey of Middletown residents regarding knowledge of available services and perceptions of needs of Middletown elders, and person interviews with knowledgeable Middletown residents.

The recommendations are limited to those which, in the view of the project team, are possible to act upon in the current environment and given budget limitations.

Informational Recommendations

1. Develop a community education initiative which would foster awareness of and involvement with issues related to Middletown elders and the aging process in general. The audiences for this community education initiative include:

- * The public in general
- * Middletown students (from K through high school age)
- * The business community

2. Increase the awareness of older persons and those who assist Middletown elders of the available resources for assistance when it is needed. This awareness can be enhanced by increased outreach efforts of the Senior Affairs Commission through town actions as well as in conjunction with existing agencies serving Middletown elders.

Service and Organizational Recommendations

1. Develop a method for delivering home maintenance and chore services to Middletown elders.

2. Encourage the Middletown merchants to provide delivery services which are not already in place and assist them in reaching older Middletown residents regarding the delivery options.

3. Evaluate and develop ways to increase the service capacity of available services for the future through non-traditional methods such as new partnerships and volunteers; particularly in the area of transportation for non-medical purposes, escort services, friendly visiting, shopping and meal preparation, and library services.

4. Develop a coordinating council of service agencies and advocates for the elders of Middletown.

5. Modify the operation of the Middletown Senior Center in order that it function as

a "focal point" for Middletown elders through the self-study process and standards developed by the National Institute on Senior Centers.

6. Re-evaluate the role and function of the Senior Affairs Commission in regards to its mission, "(to) study the needs and sponsor, initiate and coordinate programs for the elderly". Inform the public in general and the agency professionals of the role and function of the Senior Affairs Commission.

APPENDIX

Agencies Included in Key Informant Interviews

Middletown Resident Survey

Business Representative Survey

AGENCIES INCLUDED IN KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Municipal Agencies

Middletown Housing Authority
Middletown Health Department
Middletown Social Services Liaison
Human Relations Department
Middletown Municipal Agent
Middletown Senior Center
Middletown Library

Community Organizations

Middlesex United Way
Retired Senior Volunteer Program
Home Outreach to the Elderly (HOME)
Community Action of Greater Middletown
Middlesex Visiting Nurse and Home Health Services, Inc.
Middlesex Memorial Hospital
Community Health Center
Salvation Army and Adult Day Care Program
St. Francis Church
Red Cross
Middlesex Community College
Eastern Connecticut Area Agency on Aging
Middlesex Area Transit
Connecticut Legal Services
Community Associations
Middlesex Chamber of Commerce
Middlesex Chapter AARP

Middletown Residents Seniors Services Survey

Dear Middletown Resident:

Thank you for participating in this Middletown Senior Services Survey. Your responses will assist the Middletown Senior Affairs Commission in planning for the needs of older residents.

Please check those services listed below which you know about and/or have used in the past six months: Check or fill in other answers as appropriate.

1. Special Transportation for Seniors
2. Middletown Senior Center
3. Home-Delivered Meals
4. Congregate Meal Program
5. Adult Day Care
6. Respite Care Program
7. Job Training Program
8. Library Program
9. Home Health Program
10. Adult Education Services
11. Home Outreach Ministry to the Elderly Program
12. Health Screening Programs
13. Emergency Response Systems (Lifeline)

14. Are you now, or have you been within the past year, helping an older person with every-day activities (For example, shopping, cooking, transportation)?
 YES NO
15. If your answer was YES, is/was this person: (Check all that apply) If NO, skip to 16.
 SPOUSE
 FRIEND/NEIGHBOR
 ADULT CHILD
 PARENT (or IN-LAW)

16. Who or what agency/program do you call for information about programs and services for older people? (List those that apply)

17. What are the greatest needs of Middletown's older residents in you opinion?

18. Are you Male? Female?
19. Your age:(Check One) Under 40 40-50 51-65 66-75 76-80 80+

Seniors Services Survey for Distribution to Middlesex Chamber of Commerce Members

Dear Business Professional:

We are conducting a study for the Senior Affairs Commission of Middletown regarding area seniors and their needs. Based upon our research, we will develop a 10-year plan for Middletown's older residents. Your participation is appreciated.

Please fill in or check the appropriate answer:

1. How many people do you employ? _____
2. Does your firm currently offer a discount on goods or services to senior citizens?
 YES NO DOES NOT APPLY
3. Does your firm have a program to help employees locate services or obtain assistance for the problems of their older relatives?
 YES NO DON'T KNOW
4. Please estimate how many of your firm's employees are involved in providing assistance to an older relative or friend?
 Less than 10%
 Between 10% and 25%
 More than 25%
5. Have you personally assisted an older relative in the past year due to their illness or change in circumstances?
 YES NO
6. Does your company recruit and hire older workers?
 YES NO
7. Would you be interested in supporting a job re-entry program for seniors?
 YES NO
8. Please check off any area listed below about which you would be interested in receiving information:
a. The Elderly Market
b. Community Services for Older People
c. Employees and Eldercare
d. Volunteer Opportunities in Elderly Programs
e. Other: (Please specify) _____
9. Are you Male? Female?
10. Your age: Under 40 40-55 56-65 65+