

CHAPTER II. NEED

In San Jose and across the country, there is a growing need for community therapeutic recreation services. Federal Laws enacted over the last thirty years, required that all children have access to public education and that people with mental retardation move from institutional living into the community. Also, managed health care has reduced patient services and length of rehabilitation, while the Americans with Disabilities Act heightened awareness and specified the access requirements for facilities, services, transportation, and employment. The first two decades of the new millennium will see a doubling of the nation's older population as the baby boomer generation ages.

In addition, advances in medical care enable people to live longer and survive traumatic injuries. Technology and accessibility enable people to live independently.

Public schools now educate children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers. Employers make "reasonable accommodations" to add people with disabilities to their work-force, and theaters, ball parks, cruise ships, campsites and local parks are accessible. These positive changes have welcomed children, adults and elders with disabilities into all aspects of society.



Community therapeutic recreation provides an opportunity for people of all abilities to increase understanding, improve health, maintain wellness and independence, and develop stronger community by playing together.

Currently, the number of programs that can be offered, and participants who can be served by the City of San José has reached maximum capacity. The potential for growth is limited by budgetary and facility constraints. Several facts indicate the need for additional services.

- *Many San Jose residents with disabilities are not be receiving services.* City of San José therapeutic recreation services and facilities are now used by approximately 3,000-4,000 residents annually. The need for therapeutic recreation services,

however, is much greater. According to 1990 U.S. Census data, more than 93,000 Santa Clara County residents age 16 and older have mobility limitations or work disabilities. For San Jose alone, this figure is nearly 50,000. Additionally, 15,000 youth under age 16 have disabilities in San Jose. This represents approximately 8% of the population.

The Office of Therapeutic Services is currently serving less than 8% of the population with disabilities. According to a recent survey conducted as part of the City of San José Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Strategic Plan, about 29% of the general population attends indoor recreation activities. Therefore 18,850 residents with disabilities could benefit from City programs. This figure suggests a demand to greatly expand therapeutic recreation services.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of San Jose residents currently served by therapeutic recreation compared to number of San Jose and Santa Clara

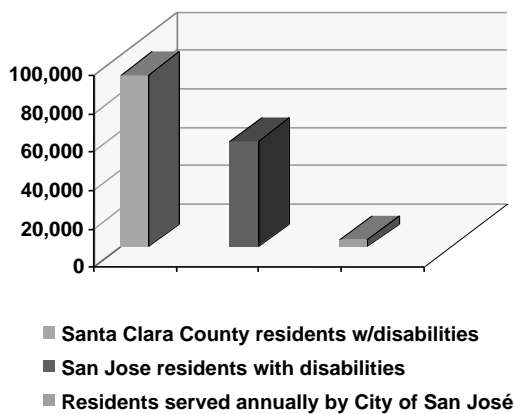


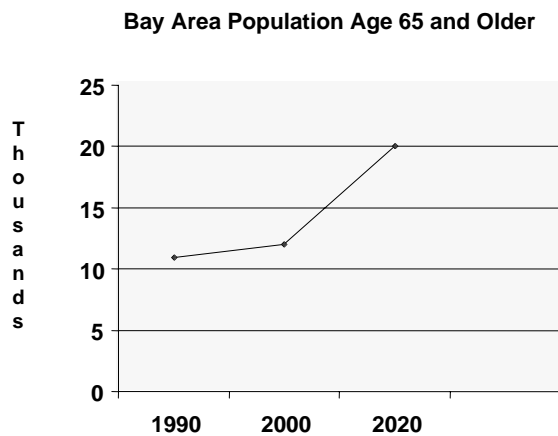
Figure 1: Residents with Disabilities Served

County residents who have disabilities, according to U.S. Census data.

- *Therapeutic recreation provides cost savings to individuals and society.* Therapeutic recreation services can help people with disabilities remain independent and avoid institutionalization. Recreation can help individuals maintain and improve their health, increase independent living skills, and enhance social support. Community-based recreation services can be provided at a much lower cost than institutionalization, providing cost savings to individuals and society. For example, the cost of care in a psychiatric unit in Santa Clara County is approximately \$750 per day. Therapeutic recreation services designed for the mentally ill costs only \$20 per day.

- *Demand for health and wellness programs is growing.* Managed health care has greatly reduced the length of stay for persons recovering from surgery and catastrophic traumas, such as spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries. This under-served segment of the population will greatly benefit from therapeutic recreation programs. As local government recreation and park agencies become more centrally involved in health care, a major issue will be long-term health promotion and maintenance. The City of San José will serve people who are transitioning from rehabilitation services, supporting and promoting their continued recovery and health maintenance in a community setting.

- The aging population will increase the demand for services significantly.* Another trend that will increase the demand for therapeutic recreation services is the aging population. According to Association of Bay Area Governments Projections 2000, those age 60 and older now make up 12 percent of the Bay Area population, but will account for nearly 20 percent of the area's population in 2020. As the population ages, there will be more people who live with chronic, limiting conditions, such as arthritis, post-stroke, Parkinson's disease and cardiac conditions. According to a 1997 Public Health Service Report ¹, 80% of people over age 65 have one chronic illness. Fifty percent have two or more chronic illnesses.



Source: Association of Bay Area Governments

Figure 2: Bay Area Population Age 65 and Older

- Wellness studies of aging adults have documented the effectiveness of recreation in relieving stress and improving health. For example, older adults who use local parks have been

found to make fewer visits to a physician for reasons other than a check-up. ²

- A continuum of services is needed to fully address community needs.* For individuals with disabilities, a "one size fits all" approach to recreation programming is inadequate. The abilities and skills of individuals with disabilities vary greatly. Social skills and comfort levels also vary. While integrating individuals with disabilities into community programs is a primary goal of the City of San José, other individuals may lack the skills and abilities for successful integration. Some individuals may need adaptations for certain activities, may prefer to participate in activities with their disabled peers, or may need specialized facilities. For these reasons, San Jose must provide a continuum of services from inclusive programs to specialized programs to meet community needs and provide **opportunities for choice.**
- Specialized facilities are often needed for recreation programs serving individuals with disabilities.* The expansion of City of San José therapeutic recreation programs has been limited by lack of adequate recreation facilities. Facilities that comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines are a minimum requirement for recreation participation. Other specialized needs of persons with disabilities include additional space meeting ADA guidelines, a warm water

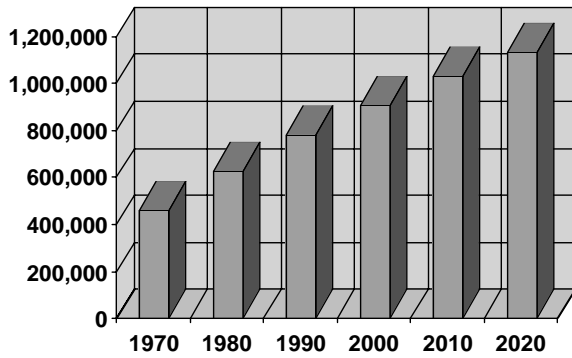


Figure 3: City of San José Population Growth

therapeutic pool, and increased staff to client ratio in order to enhance the effectiveness of the City’s programs. To meet all community needs, existing recreation facilities should be renovated in accordance with ADA guidelines. In addition, a specialized facility is needed that can be designed for individuals with disabilities. The specialized facility may be viewed as a "reverse main-streaming facility" that serves people without disabilities as well as disabled individuals to promote community integration. Many San Jose residents with disabilities or other health conditions would benefit from the expansion of therapeutic recreation services and facilities today.

Expanding facilities and services is even more pressing in light of the anticipated future need for therapeutic recreation services. A continuum of services and convenient access to affordable facilities and programs will ensure that San Jose

residents with disabilities have adequate opportunities to preserve and improve wellness. This Strategic Plan provides a guide for expanding services to address these growing community needs

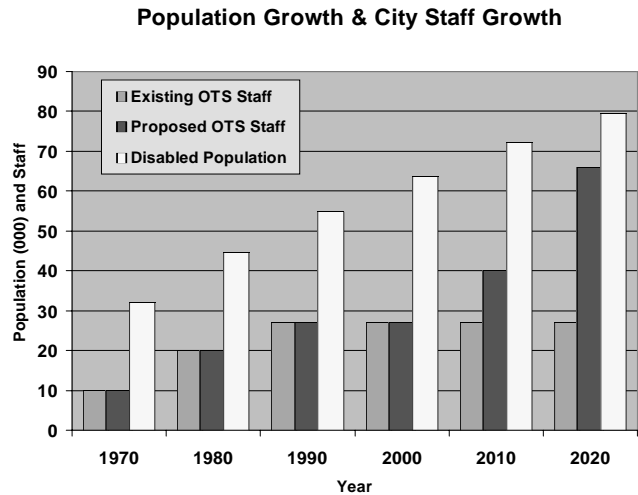


Figure 4: City of San José Disabled Population Growth versus Staffing Levels at Office of Therapeutic Services

1. Teague, M. L., V.L. McGhee, D.M. Rosenthal and D. Kearns. 1997. Health Promotion: Achieving High-Level Wellness in the Later Years (3rd ed.) Dubuque, Iowa: Brown and Benchmark.
2. Godbey, G. M. Roy, L. Payne, and E. Orsega-Smith. 1998. Final research report for the health and park use study. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University