



Livable La Mesa

Part of the AARP Livable Communities Network

LIVABLE LA MESA ACTION PLAN: Building an Age-Friendly City for All Ages

October 2019



**CITY OF
LAMESA**
JEWEL of the HILLS



The San Diego
Foundation
Growing a Vibrant Region



SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY
Social Policy Institute
School of Social Work

On behalf of the City of La Mesa, I am very proud to support the Livable La Mesa initiative and the Action Plan described here. It is a strong, viable plan that will contribute to the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in La Mesa for generations to come.

Livable La Mesa planning team members worked diligently for the past year to create goals and objectives that will improve the health and well-being for our community's residents of all ages. The key to developing this tailored plan was significant resident participation in online surveys, community conversations and action planning sessions; staff participation from all departments; input from the Community Relations and Veterans Commission and the Community Services Commission; and ongoing assistance from our partners at the County of San Diego HHS, Circulate San Diego, San Diego State University's Social Policy Institute and AARP. The project was supported by a generous grant from The San Diego Foundation.

Special thanks goes to the La Mesa Community Services Department's Sue Richardson and Megan Howell who were essential in making sure the project was relevant, achievable and honored the history, culture and vibrancy of La Mesa.

The Livable La Mesa Action Plan was available for public comment and the planning team reviewed all comments, revised the plan accordingly and has submitted this Action Plan to the City Council for approval. A recommended three-year implementation phase follows, and will culminate in La Mesa becoming certified as an Age-Friendly Community by AARP.

We aim to be a city that meets the challenges and opportunities of an aging population, so all ages can participate in a fulfilling community life and enjoy robust health and well-being.

I truly hope that each and every one of you who live, learn, work, play in La Mesa will join in the process of helping to build an even more Livable La Mesa.

Sincerely,



Mark Arapostathis, Dr."A"
Mayor City of La Mesa



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Executive Summary

The City of La Mesa launched a project called **Livable La Mesa** through AARP's Livable Communities Initiative, with support from The San Diego Foundation Age-Friendly Communities Program in fall 2018. This initiative is an affiliate of the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for their own and the world's growing population of older adults. AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Communities targets improvements in eight domains that influence the health and quality of life of older adults. Over the course of the past 12 months, and with input from the La Mesa residents, the Livable La Mesa team has prepared this Action Plan to help make La Mesa a more livable community for all ages.

During the process, residents were asked to complete an online assessment of livability perceptions, then attend one of four listening sessions to provide deeper perspective on what was already working, and where there were gaps. Results of the survey and listening sessions were presented to residents for verification and additional input, then to City staff so they could prepare to mobilize next steps.

La Mesa City staff, with support of the Livable La Mesa project team, determined that the baseline assessment pointed to six key domains of livability most relevant to La Mesa:

- Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
- Housing
- Transportation
- Social and Civic Engagement
- Community Information
- Wellness

A vital component of this process was to garner community input in order to define the plan details. Additionally, the community gave input on suggested actions to fulfill the proposed goals and objectives, with recommendations as to who else should be involved. The draft Action Plan was available for public review and comment from September 20 - 27, 2019. This has resulted in an Action Plan that is not solely a "to do list" for City staff, rather a template for shared responsibility.

Finally, senior City staff provided additional input on actions, metrics and timelines. The project team worked closely with City staff to integrate input and finalize the Action Plan for City Council approval.

Livable La Mesa Goals, Objectives and Actions At-A-Glance

Domain 1: Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
<p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer safe and maintained public gathering spaces across the city. 2. Fund and expand upon the availability of public spaces across all City-owned facilities to accommodate future growth.
<p>Objectives/Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess the level of information provided to residents about public safety precautions and measures in-place. ▪ Encourage the routine use and maintenance of public spaces. ▪ Include more Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) training for maintenance staff and include in design of new public spaces ▪ Inform the public on the progress of policies related to older adults in the General Plan.
Domain 2: Social & Civic Participation
<p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on and expand opportunities for social participation. 2. Increase social connections to reduce social isolation. 3. Build capacity for civic engagement.
<p>Objectives/Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to provide high quality intergenerational activities and events across the City. ▪ Increase visibility of opportunities for social participation. ▪ Build neighborhood interactions and connectivity. ▪ Develop/facilitate gender-specific engagement strategies. ▪ Empower residents to work or volunteer as they desire. ▪ Train and develop additional citizen leaders. ▪ Increase opportunities for the community to access and participate in public meetings.
Domain 3: Community Information
<p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase public visibility and access of the City’s plans, programs, and resources. 2. Maximize the use and impact of technology throughout the City.
<p>Objectives/Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broaden the public’s access and visibility by employing a multi-media and multi-level communications approach. ▪ Ensure the City’s communications strategy uses updated and existing communication tools and methods.
Domain 4: Housing
<p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan for safe, accessible housing and neighborhoods to allow all residents to age in place. 2. Grow the affordable housing stock in La Mesa and offer alternative housing models for current and future generations. 3. Create livable neighborhoods within walking distance to local amenities.
<p>Objectives/Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inform the public on the progress of the related Housing Element. ▪ Implement strategies to protect the comfort and safety of all residents in neighborhoods. ▪ Provide more education about affordable housing strategies.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with homeowners/private property owners to offer alternative housing options, especially near transit. ▪ Keep La Mesa a vibrant community by promoting home-buying opportunities for all. ▪ Improve walkability and access to transit to create “complete neighborhoods”.
<p>Domain 5: Transportation</p>
<p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide greater opportunity for the community to become involved in active transportation planning and the development of improvements. 2. Expand/consider mobility options within and around the City of La Mesa. 3. Create a safe travel experience for all mode types. 4. Increase information and education about alternative modes of transportation.
<p>Objectives/Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase education and opportunities for public participation in transportation planning. ▪ Create a more accessible and safe public transportation experience for all City residents. ▪ Apply traffic calming measures to reduce traffic speeds and improve the pedestrian experience. ▪ Implement and promote strategies to improve safety. ▪ Provide more alternative transportation programs education through workshops and other informational strategies. ▪ Improve first-mile / last-mile connections for residents. ▪ Support technological advances in the transportation sector.
<p>Domain 6: Health & Wellness</p>
<p>Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review current health-related data for La Mesa to identify areas of concern. 2. Ensure the Citywide Communications Plan addresses the health and wellness domain. 3. Provide health-related programs to expand upon the educational health resources available.
<p>Objectives/Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess multiple sources of health-related data. ▪ Review and revise the La Mesa General Plan Health and Wellness Goals to identify the successes and remaining challenges. ▪ Design and implement a Citywide Communication Plan highlighting “Livable La Mesa” health and wellness activities. ▪ Provide/facilitate and collaborate with others on programs on healthy eating, exercise, and active living at accessible locations. ▪ Collaborate with key partners on how to prioritize and address the community-identified health and wellness issues. ▪ Implement Urban Trails Mobility Action Plan.

This Action Plan outlines the goals, tasks and timeframes to be accomplished over the next few years by elected officials, municipal staff, city residents and numerous community/civic organizations working together for a common goal; making La Mesa a Livable Community for all ages. An annual progress report will be delivered to the City Council and AARP in November 2020 and 2021 with a final report in November 2022.

Introduction to the Action Plan

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities is the United States affiliate of the World Health Organization’s Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program that was launched in 2006 to help localities prepare for rapid growth of an aging population. Currently the global network includes over 41 countries and 847 cities. The AARP Network serves as a catalyst to inform, involve and recognize the successful efforts that make communities livable for residents of all ages. In the U.S., there are over 389 communities actively involved.



AARP works directly with stakeholders and local governments to promote programs and systems level change to create more livable environments for residents of all ages and abilities. It focuses on actions that foster the full participation of older people in community life and promotes the health and well-being of all ages.

La Mesa, California became part of AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities in 2018 and agreed to explore common challenges across the eight domains of livability:

The Social Environment:

- Social Participation
- Respect and Social Inclusion
- Civic Participation and Employment
- Communication and Information
- Community Support and Health Services

The Built Environment:

- Transportation
- Housing
- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

City leadership recognizes that by 2030 the number of La Mesa residents over 65 will significantly increase by 13% and is committed to making La Mesa more livable for residents of all ages. In an effort to engage residents, community leaders, and staff to review policies and successful programs, the City partnered with The San Diego Foundation, the County of San Diego HHSA, AARP, Circulate San Diego, and the San Diego State University Social Policy Institute to develop this Action Plan to create a more Livable La Mesa.



Community Profile

The City of La Mesa is known as the Jewel of the Hills, and encompasses nearly nine square miles in southern San Diego County. Incorporated as a general law city in 1912, and its rich and colorful history has been well documented. According to the 2019, Community Opinion Survey, that history has

unfolded over more than a century starting with its agricultural roots in the late 1800s and boasts more than three-dozen historical landmarks. As of 2014, La Mesa is home to an estimated 58,769 residents¹ and is known for its rolling hills with quaint neighborhoods and a vibrant downtown shopping and eating district.

By 2032, it is estimated that the City of La Mesa will incorporate approximately 7,800 new residents, 1,800 new housing units, and 1,200 new jobs based on SANDAG's Regional growth forecast.

What is Livable La Mesa?

Livable La Mesa is a project through AARP's Livable Communities and States Initiative, with support from The San Diego Foundation Age-Friendly Communities Program. This initiative is an affiliate of the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and was adapted for La Mesa to guide planning to meet the needs of the growing population of older adults. La Mesa is the third jurisdiction in the San Diego region to become an Age-Friendly Community and worked through the early part of 2019 to develop this community informed Age-Friendly Action Plan as part of the Livable La Mesa project.

La Mesa population trends:

- 2010 La Mesa pop. 58,150
- 2030 La Mesa pop. 65,984 (13% increase)
- 2050 La Mesa pop. 77,780 (33% increase)

Existing Building Blocks for Livability

La Mesa's residents and business owners have made it clear they believe the City is already a great place to live and work. Surveys, public comments, and anecdotal information all attest that La Mesans appreciate that the City is doing a good job in identifying and meeting their livability needs.

The Livable La Mesa project considers and supports the existing values and city planning efforts that are already in place and has sought to develop an action plan that incorporates, rather than duplicates them. Early in the project, a policy scan was conducted by reviewing the existing thirteen (13) City plans to map what was already in place in line with AARP's eight domains of livability. Those efforts were further cross referenced to the World Health Organization's *Essential Features of Age-Friendly Cities*.

The resulting policy scan aligned La Mesa assets (defined as positive characteristics or resources) within each domain of livability. The online AARP baseline assessment largely validated assets as noted. Features of Age-Friendly Cities that did not emerge as strong were incorporated into the community conversations and action planning to elicit ideas on how to strengthen existing efforts and fill gaps. (*Refer to Appendix D for a full copy of the 2018 La Mesa Policy Scan.*)

¹ State of California, Department of Finance

The Journey to a Livable La Mesa

The purpose of the Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program is to serve as a catalyst to educate, encourage, promote, and recognize improvements that could make La Mesa more supportive, not only of older residents but for residents of all ages. This section describes the Livable La Mesa journey.

Impetus for the Action Plan

The journey to a more livable La Mesa has been a natural evolution of key events that have consolidated into the current, ongoing effort. The past decade has ushered in a focused interest in improving the health and well-being of La Mesa residents, supported by the County of San Diego's campaign *Live Well, San Diego*. Opportunities such as "ready...set...Live Well" set the stage for the City's focus on creating a built environment to support livability. A Community Transformation Grant strengthened wellness efforts that were already underway. The City's five year Targets for Action goals align with the Age-Friendly initiative and include providing a safe community; continuing to improve high quality municipal services; revitalizing neighborhoods and corridors; enhancing recreation and quality of life opportunities; facilitating effective and efficient traffic circulation and transportation; and safe and affordable homes for all current and future residents.

2009

"ready...set...Live Well"

- An initiative that integrated efforts to support healthy eating and physical activity in Spring Valley and La Mesa, focusing primarily on environmental change and policy strategies. This gave rise to La Mesa Walks! The 2009 League of California Cities Helen Putnam Award winner for Excellence in the category of Health and Wellness Programs was presented to La Mesa for "ready, set.....Live Well" a community wellness initiative.

2011

Community Transformation Grant

- The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency receive more than \$9 million dollars from the Center for Disease Control to launch a countywide community wellness initiative called *Live Well San Diego* to encourage County residents to become healthy, safe, and thriving through the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits.

2018

La Mesa invited to join Age-Friendly Network

- The San Diego Foundation's Age-Friendly Communities Program in partnership with Del Mar Healthcare and AARP asked the City of La Mesa to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

How the Action Plan was Developed

The Livable La Mesa Action Plan resulted from rich community and City staff involvement. Thus the plan represents the authentic voice of people who live and work in La Mesa and for whom the actions that result from the plan will make a difference in the quality of life for all ages.

Baseline Assessment

A two-part baseline assessment was conducted that included an online assessment for collection of quantitative data, and Community Conversations (listening sessions) to allow residents to go deeper and provide qualitative detail regarding assets to build on, as well as concerns.

Online Assessment

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of certain domains of livability, as well as their perception of La Mesa's success in providing these options. (*Refer to Appendix E for a full copy of the Livable La Mesa Baseline Assessment.*) For each of AARP's domains of livability, specific community characteristics or services were listed and residents were asked to rate:

1. How important is it for your community to have the following?
2. How would you rate your community in providing the following?

There were 249 responses received between January and March 2019. Almost 70% were female with nearly two thirds residing in the southeast and southwest quadrants of the City. Ten percent of respondents lived in the northeast, with almost 17% living in the northwest. Over 85% had an annual income of greater than \$50,000. On average, respondents had lived in La Mesa an average of 24 years, with a range of 6 months to 75 years. The percentage of residents who owned the home they live in was 83.9%.

Almost half of the respondents rated La Mesa as an excellent place to live, with nearly half rating livability as adequate. The online survey was widely advertised through print and electronic media. Hard copies of the survey were provided at scheduled meetings and events, as well as at "Pop Up" events. All of the domain areas were rated as "very important", except for Health and Wellness, in which some items were marked "somewhat important." Respondents indicated all domains were adequately provided, but called areas for further attention: smaller housing units, bike paths, and community gardens.

Community Conversations (Listening Sessions)

There were 69 residents and community leaders who attended at least one of the four in-person Community Conversations. Attendees were asked about their experience with each domain by topic; what was already taking place that could be built upon; and what more could be done to increase livability in respective domains. Participant demographics roughly mirrored the survey results, with educated, mid-upper income residents from the southern quadrants of La Mesa being most highly represented. Seven areas of specific concern were identified:

Social Participation	Safety	Staying Informed	Public Spaces	Sidewalks	Public Transportation	Housing
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Social Participation These comments indicated a strong interest in public recreational activities that could bring together broad cross-sections of the community including on-going drop-in programs or annual traditions, that were accessible in terms of timing and location. Comments also emphasized the importance of social activities and networks for men, who commenters felt may struggle with social opportunities in post-work life.

Safety Comments regarding street lights, police presence, and trolleys suggest two areas of follow up: (1) To what extent are people of La Mesa unsafe in the ways they have anticipated or in ways they may not have? and (2) How can the City best work with residents to minimize any actual risks and offer continuing education about unsubstantiated perceived risks to dispel fears? This latter tactic of reducing fear through education bridges the topic of feeling unsafe and the next topic, staying informed.

Staying Informed is meant to capture a two-way process--how the City informs residents about its actions and intentions and how the City takes in information from citizens. In some cases, the act of informing may itself accomplish the desired end, e.g. educating residents about how to protect themselves and about the low incidence of crime. In others this topic addresses the importance of effective channels of communication to facilitate other subsequent actions or events.

Public Spaces came up several times as a center of information-sharing activity. This includes the Civic Center, Community Center, library, etc. Residents spoke to the need for space for music, art, theater, and intergenerational activities.

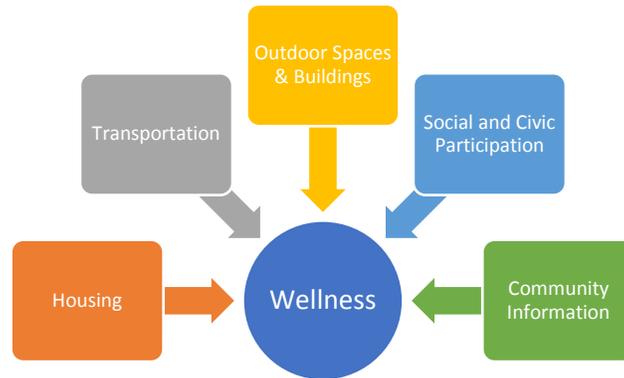
Sidewalks were the next most mentioned topic. Sometimes these comments came in the form of specific geographical tips where repairs were needed. Residents felt sidewalks also needed to be more accessible for persons with wheelchairs and walkers. There was concern expressed about scooters as obstacles, and lack of sidewalks in certain neighborhoods.

Public Transportation and **Housing** came up significantly less but still quite a bit. These included general calls for improvements in and information about both.

Results of the survey and listening sessions were presented to residents for verification and additional input, and to City staff to prepare to mobilize next steps. *(Refer to Appendix F for the March 2019 Progress Report that documents the results from the survey and listening sessions.)*

Action Planning

La Mesa City staff, with support of the Livable La Mesa project team, determined that the baseline assessment pointed to six key domains of livability most relevant to La Mesa:



There was considerable cross-over and interaction between the domains, with safety being a consideration for each. City staff and the project team developed a draft vision, goals, and objectives for each La Mesa domain based on cumulative input from the community.

Four action planning sessions were conducted in order to gather community input on the drafts. Additionally, the community gave input on suggested actions to fulfill the proposed goals and objectives, with recommendations as to who else should be involved. The draft Action Plan was available for public review and comment from September 20 - 27, 2019.

Finally, senior City staff gave additional input on actions, metrics and timelines. The project team worked closely with City staff to integrate input and finalize the Action Plan.

Implementation and Oversight of the Plan

The first step of implementation is for City staff to operationalize key tasks and calendar for planning purposes and accountability. This will include developing an evaluation plan for regular progress reporting by key departments and tracking of metrics, or measures of success. A continuous quality improvement (CQI) process will be applied so that resulting data can be used to direct and improve implementation. An annual progress report will be delivered to the City Council and AARP in November 2020 and 2021 with a final report in November 2022.

Livable La Mesa Action Plan Overview

The Livable La Mesa Action Plan was developed to increase livability for people of all ages, with particular attention paid to the City’s evolving needs based on the percentage of adults over 55 years of age rapidly increasing. The Livable La Mesa Age-Friendly project team gathered data from the community through a series of Community Conversations and a project survey. They also analyzed data from the La Mesa Community Opinion Survey (2019), the AARP Livability Index for La Mesa (2018), and conducted a policy scan.

La Mesa Domains of Livability

The pages that follow lay out the plans in each domain area using the following template:

Domain Definition	Details what this domain is/entails; shared language helps to build shared understanding.
Vision	What is desired to happen/be in place once this plan is complete; describes future aspirations.
What We Heard	Key findings from the baseline assessment survey, community listening sessions, policy scan and other relevant existing data, including the 2019 Community Opinion Survey.
What We Know	Key assets that are already in place and available to build on; includes programs, services, City plans and facts (data) regarding the population.
What We Will Do	Goals (what we want to achieve) and objectives (what will result or be in place) for each domain. (Note the associated actions, metrics and timeline are found in Appendix A.)
Partnerships & Available Resources	This section details who is available to help with implementation of the Action Plan, as well as resources that might be utilized to help achieve one or more of the goals and objectives.

Refer to Appendix A for the full Action Plan.

Domain 1: OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings focuses on the availability of safe and accessible recreational facilities.

Vision: La Mesa is a city with safe and accessible buildings and open spaces with amenities and resources that are supportive of healthy living and social inclusion for current and future generations.

What we heard:

La Mesa resident's priorities are activation of the parks and public spaces through the use of programs and events, providing an adequate amount of street furnishings that are maintained regularly, and addressing accessibility conflicts on sidewalks and ramps in a timely manner.

Safety and Accessibility

- Maintain the safety and accessibility of all parks, buildings, and other public spaces.
- Provide well-lit streets and neighborhoods for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Establish and support Neighborhood Watch programs

Amenities

- Provide well-maintained parks, public areas, sidewalks, and streets so that residents can enjoy utilizing these spaces and the activities they provide.
- Include benches and resting areas in public spaces.
- Develop more and adequately sized community gathering space options for activities and events.

What we know:

Access to safe and cared for open space and public facilities are important to La Mesa residents. Having these resources available helps facilitate a healthy lifestyle, community interaction, and a greater quality of life.

Community Resources

- Resources available to the public include a County library, the Adult Enrichment Center, and the La Mesa Community Center as well as numerous community-based organizations. At these facilities, programs are provided to people of all ages. Classes range from dance, gymnastics, arts, and swimming, to leisure activities such as creative writing and financial planning.²
- The City manages 15 public parks scattered throughout the community, made up of 135.4 acres of park land and 56 acres of public open space.³
- The parks provide access to a variety of amenities such as play fields, courts, picnic areas, dog parks, and walking paths.
- The La Mesa Walks! program helps activate these spaces and creates the opportunity for group recreation and socialization.

² <http://www.cityoflamesa.com/DocumentCenter/View/2496/La-Mesa-Parks-Master-Plan-2012-optimized?bidId=>

³ Id.

- The La Mesa Community Services Department also provides staff support to the La Mesa Park and Recreation Foundation. In the last eight years, the Foundation has raised \$2 million in private dollars which was leveraged for over \$7 million in public grants for new park projects.⁴

Access to Green Space and Public Facilities

- Providing green spaces provides safe routes for walking and cycling, physical activity, and social interaction. These spaces are also important to mental health. Having access to green spaces and social outlets can reduce health inequalities, improve well-being, and aid in treatment of mental illness.⁵
- Protecting and bettering public facilities and open spaces throughout the community is a priority. As the population grows and availability of vacant land decreases, the opportunity to meet recreation and open space needs becomes an increasing challenge.⁶
- La Mesa's land use policies encourage growth and infill near established transportation corridors in order to reduce unnecessary sprawl in suburban and rural areas, and provide for the maintenance and enhancement of recreation and open space amenities.
- La Mesa has been actively working to improve community open space and buildings as a part of community plans. The 2012 General Plan and the 2012 Parks Master Plan are examples of plans that include implementable strategies for improved open space, recreation, and civic opportunities throughout the City.

What we will do: Through the Livable La Mesa Age-Friendly Initiative, we will address identified gaps, ensuring the safety of all residents when using the City's open spaces and buildings, as well as addressing concerns and providing amenities supportive of a comfortable and enjoyable experience.

Goal 1.1: Offer safe and maintained public gathering spaces across the city.

Objective 1.1.1: Assess the level of information provided to residents about public safety precautions and measures in-place.

Objective 1.1.2: Encourage the routine use and maintenance of public spaces.

Objective:1.1.3 Include more Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) training for maintenance staff and include in design of new public spaces

Objective 1.1.4: Inform the public on the progress of policies related to older adults in the General Plan.

Goal 1.2: Fund and expand upon the availability of public spaces across all City-owned facilities to accommodate future growth.

Objective 1.2.1: Include the public in the implementation of pedestrian-oriented improvements.

Objective 1.2.2: Include sidewalks as a part of what is defined as "public space" in La Mesa.

Objective 1.2.3: Add more art to the City landscape.

⁴ <http://www.cityoflamesa.com/DocumentCenter/View/2496/La-Mesa-Parks-Master-Plan-2012-optimized?bidId=>.

⁵ <https://www.who.int/sustainable-development/cities/health-risks/urban-green-space/en/>

⁶ <http://cityoflamesa.com/DocumentCenter/View/2505/6--Draft-Recreation-Open-Space-03-12-OPT?bidId=>

Domain 2: SOCIAL & CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Social & Civic Participation focuses on access to leisure and cultural activities, including opportunities for all residents to socialize, engage with their peers, and participate in paid work and volunteer activities.

Vision: A city that fosters and embraces resident interaction through active participation in a range of intergenerational activities, events, civic engagement opportunities, and employment and volunteer positions.

What we heard:

Residents place high value on activities and events that promote connectivity and inclusion. Gender specific outreach and inclusion needed to help decrease isolation in older men. Residents have interest in learning about issues that affect them and how to get involved. No specific improvements were suggested for work and volunteer opportunities.

Social Interaction

- Programs for seniors saw a 5% increase in importance and the quality and variety of programs increased since 2017 (2019 Community Opinion Survey). Specific suggestions for expanded or additional activities include: more activities, game nights, moderated social discussions on topical issues such as homelessness and more educational opportunities in general (Community Conversations).
- Gender specific outreach and inclusion needed to help decrease isolation in older men.
- There was a 6% increase from 2017 to 2019 in satisfaction with special events, such as community festivals (Community Opinion Survey). Generally, residents feel it is important to continue having these events, and that the City is doing a good job in providing them (2019 Community Survey and Community Conversations). However, ongoing attention is needed to maintain high quality and low-cost events (Community Conversations).
- Provide a broader range of programs in locations other than the downtown Village. (Community Conversations)
- Some older adults stated they felt unsafe at night using mass transit, around trolley stations, and around persons unfamiliar to them, i.e., some youth, some homeless adults, etc. (Community Conversations).
- La Mesa residents want intergenerational activities and events that accommodate age-specific needs and also attract multi-generations.
- The library was noted as a hub for social interaction (Community Conversations). Sometimes programs are duplicated there with Adult Enrichment Center's activities.

Civic Engagement

- Civic and social involvement scored slightly below average for La Mesa (AARP Livability Index 2018). La Mesa residents have interest in learning about issues that affect them and how to get involved (Community Conversation).

Work and Volunteer Opportunities

- This element was rated as less important in part due to the perceived adequacy of existing opportunities, and in part due to the relatively high socioeconomic status of respondents. No specific suggestions for improvement were made in this area.

What we know:

There is a broad range of opportunities for social interaction already in place, and the City is open to increasing variety. Likewise, there are planned civic engagement opportunities in place that could be expanded. Employment and volunteer opportunities are available and well publicized.

Social Interaction

- The Adult Enrichment Center promotes healthy, active aging through creative and extensive programs (events, daily lunch, day trips, legal services, information and referral, health screenings, exercise, dance)
- Municipal finances are directed to City facilities in order to safely provide services (General Plan 2012—PSF Vision, Goal 2).
- The City provides a range of recreation services (General Plan 2012, PSF Goal 7: Community Services).
- The City seeks to maintain and improve the Downtown area as a central place for community activities (General Plan 2012, PSF Vision).
- The Community Services Commission is a 7-member commission that advises the City Council on matters related to administration of the City's parks, recreational programs, facility usage, and human services.
- The Community Services Department has responsibility for recreational services, educational, cultural events, facilities rentals, and facilities planning for City parks. Although there are a number of programs and classes which are offered on a continual basis, the Department is flexible in providing new or expanded programs as the interests of La Mesa residents change. Many of these programs are supported by fees.
- Additional facilities in the area that provide opportunities for recreation and social activities for adults include Oasis, the YMCA and the Kroc Center.

Civic Engagement

- The City Council appoints residents to serve on various advisory boards and commissions. These Board members and commissioners investigate and report on a variety of issues related to City operations, can hold public hearings and make decisions on issues (General Plan 2012, PSF Page 10).

- The Community Relations and Veterans Commission is a 9-member group that address the needs and concerns of senior adults, the disabled, veterans, and the community-at-large.
- Annually the City Council hosts Town Hall meetings at local schools to allow residents to ask questions and/or express concerns directly to the Council and staff.
- In addition to archiving Council meetings on the City's website, the meetings are live on FaceBook to allow residents to watch and comment without needing to attend the meetings.

Work and Volunteer Opportunities

- La Mesa engages in sound economic development practices aimed at retaining and attracting successful businesses in order to provide job opportunities and a sound revenue base to cover city operations (General Plan 2012).
- La Mesa has a volunteer program that offers residents an opportunity to take an active role in the community (La Mesa Website). Volunteers have provided thousands of hours of service per year, thereby providing a higher level of service to City residents, while creating community pride and ownership among the volunteers.

What we will do: Through the Livable La Mesa Age-Friendly initiative, we will build on existing efforts, develop a process to assess and respond to changing needs timely, build capacity for civic engagement, and increase awareness of volunteer opportunities.

Goal 2.1: Build on and expand opportunities for social participation.

Objective 2.1.1: Continue to provide high quality intergenerational activities and events across the City.

Objective 2.1.2: Increase visibility of opportunities for social participation.

Goal 2.2: Increase social connections to reduce social isolation.

Objective 2.2.1: Build neighborhood interactions and connectivity.

Objective 2.2.2: Develop gender-specific engagement strategies.

Objective 2.2.3: Empower residents to work or volunteer as they desire.

Goal 2.3: Build capacity for civic engagement.

Objective 2.3.1: Train and develop additional citizen leaders.

Objective 2.3.2: Increase opportunities for the community to access and participate in public meetings.

Domain 3: COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Community Information is the distribution of information, person-to person communication, printed information, media, access to and use of technology and the Internet.

Vision: A city that enables residents to be informed about and engaged in community programs, services, and activities through a variety of accessible formats.

What we heard:

1. Residents want to maximize utilization of existing resources.
2. Use additional channels of communication to increase visibility of community information.

Usability of Resources

- Navigation of the City website and other online resources was mentioned multiple times throughout the community conversations
- Respondents mentioned an under-utilization of certain information hubs resources (library) in the dissemination of community information.

Visibility of Information

- Increasing the modes of communication through paper (newspaper, flyers) and online (City's website and social media) was often brought up. Residents want the City to identify untapped communication channels and make access to information clearer and easier.
- Some residents indicated feeling unsafe at night, and around persons unfamiliar to them. In an effort to dispel any misperceptions it was suggested to offer continuing education and public information outreach as a method of informing and educating residents on safety matters important to them.

What we know:

1. The City of La Mesa offers multiple hubs for information dissemination including the La Mesa Library, City facilities and City website and social media.
2. The City of La Mesa also utilizes several different mediums to keep its constituents informed.

Usability of Resources

- The La Mesa Library, a branch library of the County of San Diego, has multiple technology offerings including a 3D printer, wireless internet, laptops, 18 public computers, and a color printer with scanning capabilities.
- La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center (AEC) strives to promote healthy, active aging through creative and extensive programs. The AEC helps to facilitate access to many community resources and agencies serving seniors in addition to providing a broad range of individual and group services and activities for active mature adults.

- Oasis is a partner resource for disseminating City information
- The City created the Livable La Mesa webpage (<https://cityoflamesa.us/939/Livable-La-Mesa>) as the landing page for age-friendly resources.

Visibility of Information: The City of La Mesa utilizes several different mediums to keep its constituents informed, including:

Social Media:

- Social media such as Facebook (over 1,800 followers), Twitter (over 2,200 followers) and Instagram (over 1,000 followers)
- In 2018, La Mesa began live streaming City Council meetings on Facebook and website
- Applications such as Next Door is used by Community Services, Public Works and the Police Department

Online Resources:

- La Mesa online newsletter
- La Mesa offers multiple E-Government tools including Nixle, YourGov, OpenGov and Notify Me
- Additional website resources include Capital Improvement Program, Traffic Calming map, City Infrastructure map and Interactive Zoning map

Print Media:

- Adult Enrichment Center Brochure and Community Services Brochure; La Mesa Courier; and Union Tribune

Media Displays:

- Park kiosks, community boards at City Hall, Reader events and civic center LED marquis sign

Overall, sixty-two percent (62%) of residents surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with the City's efforts to communicate with residents through newsletters, the Internet, or other means. However, this is down from the 2006 survey when 80% indicated that they were generally satisfied with the City's efforts (Community Opinion Survey). With the number of information sources and channels available to the public continually, it is important to assess what methods residents regularly turn to for their information and adapt the City's communication strategy accordingly.

What we will do: Through the Age-Friendly initiative, we will address identified gaps, allowing residents of La Mesa to remain informed while increasing communication access.

Goal 3.1: Increase public visibility and access of the City's plans, programs, and resources.

Objective 3.1.1: Broaden the public's access and visibility by employing a multi-media and multi-level communications approach.

Goal 3.2: Maximize the use and impact of technology throughout the City.

Objective 3.2.1: Ensure the City's communications strategy uses updated and existing communication tools and methods.

Domain 4: HOUSING

Housing looks at the availability of home programs for aging in place as well as a range of age-friendly housing options.

Vision: La Mesa has safe, affordable, and accessible housing options for all residents to comfortably age in place and live in a community-oriented environment throughout their lifetime.

What we heard:

La Mesa residents want safe and affordable housing that is situated for health and wellness, including social connections within reach.

Accessibility and Safety

- Facilitate safe and accessible housing that allows residents to age in place as they face physical mobility challenges.
- Facilitate a wider variety of housing options within walking distance of community resources, such as the grocery store, restaurants, community centers, etc.
- Create a walkable community that embodies the “village concept.”⁷

Affordability

- Provide and approve more affordable living options for older adults who have limited income.
- Support the development of smaller housing opportunities, such as accessory dwelling units (ADU) to downsize and make space for growing families.
- Explore shared housing options, such as the Elderhelp model, that provides referrals to co-housing in a single-family home settings.

Actions suggested to address these issues include offering a variety of housing types that provide affordable living options, and the ability to downsize to a smaller living environment, as well as providing housing options that are a part of the livable community structure with access to local resources and activities.

What we know:

The need for safe, affordable housing for older adults is increasing and will soon outpace the available housing options.

Population and Housing Need

- In 2010, La Mesa had a population of 57,065. Since 1990, the average annual rate of population growth has remained relatively consistent, ranging from 3% to 5%.

⁷ Villages are walkable, bicycle-friendly, transit-oriented, mixed-use neighborhoods that can provide both housing and jobs, environmental benefits, and quality of life improvements for a city’s residents and the surrounding region. (<https://www.greenbelt.org/blog/what-is-an-urban-village/>)

- The City has approximately 25, 954 housing units which are 95% occupied. Of these units, 42.6% single-family detached homes and 45.6% multi-family homes.⁸ La Mesa, much like other California cities, is facing a housing shortage, and the older adult population is a group that relies heavily on affordable housing options. La Mesa has a proportionally greater number of senior citizens than most San Diego County jurisdictions⁹ with 11.1% of adults over the age of 65 with an income under the poverty level.¹⁰

Low Income Housing Options

- The City includes two affordable housing developments, specifically for low-income older adults (62+) and those with disabilities. Guava Gardens and La Mesa Springs provide 210 affordable units combined, offering studio and 1-bedroom living options.¹¹
- In February 2019, City Council adopted an ordinance to simplify the process for implementing ADUs, and providing additional affordable housing options.
- Older adults in La Mesa are also interested in shared living options, as well as smaller units that allow them to downsize.

Adult Living Facilities

- In addition to low income housing options, there are also several privately owned older adult living facilities, for a variety of needs and ability levels. These facilities include senior living centers, respite and memory care centers, and hospice. A certain number of older adults who live in their private residences also depend on local programs to access community resources.
- Shared housing situations provide a safe and social living environment for residents to maintain a well-balanced quality of life.

Accessibility of Housing

- Housing that is accessible to transportation and local resources are important for a thriving, livable community. Much like affordability, access to destinations via walking, transit, and other alternative modes of travel, is highly valued amongst residents when selecting a place to live.
- The Housing Element of the 2012 General Plan recognizes these priorities through the implementation of Policy HE-3.1.2: Encourage the development of housing for seniors and persons with disabilities by offering density bonuses and other zoning incentives, such as reduced parking requirements, and encourage such housing to be located within close proximity to community facilities and transportation services.¹²

What we will do: Through the Livable La Mesa Age-Friendly initiative, we will address identified gaps, evaluate housing options available for residents of all ages and plan for safe, affordable, and accessible living opportunities.

⁸ <http://www.cityoflamesa.com/431/Demographics>

⁹ <http://www.cityoflamesa.com/431/Demographics>

¹⁰ <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

¹¹ http://www.cityoflamesa.com/DocumentCenter/View/6392/Affordable-Housing-Projects-Located-in-La-Mesa_Updated-020514?bidId=

¹² <https://www.cityoflamesa.us/DocumentCenter/View/6193/12LaMesaGPHousing-CD?bidId=>

Goal 4.1: Provide safe, accessible housing and neighborhoods to allow all residents to age in place.

Objective 4.1.1: Inform the public on the progress of the Housing Element that relate directly to the concerns of older adults.

Objective 4.1.2: Implement strategies to protect the comfort and safety of all residents.

Goal 4.2: Grow the affordable housing stock in La Mesa and offer alternative housing models for current and future generations.

Objective 4.2.1: Provide more education about affordable housing strategies.

Objective 4.2.2: Work with homeowners/private property owners to offer alternative housing options, especially near transit.

Objective 4.2.3: Keep La Mesa a vibrant community by providing home-buying opportunities for all.

Goal 4.3: Create livable neighborhoods within walking distance to local amenities.

Objective 4.3.1: Improve walkability and access to transit to create “complete neighborhoods”.

Objective 4.3.2: Encourage more community events to take place in the residential neighborhood setting.

Domain 5: TRANSPORTATION

Transportation focuses on safe and affordable modes of private and public transportation.

Vision: La Mesa is a city that strives for a carbon-free future and provides all residents with safe, reliable, and affordable mobility options.

What we heard:

Suggestions in this domain include greater coordination with public transportation agencies to improve comfort, perception of safety, and promote use; providing more public education about transportation policies being implemented through the City's Climate Action Plan and General Plan; and prioritizing the safety and comfort of pedestrians of various abilities in the design and implementation of all transportation projects.

Safety

- Address the speed and behaviors of vehicles, such as ignoring pedestrians in the crosswalk, and more enforcement to help reduce speeds and improve safety.
- Install more bike paths that are separated from the roadway as feasible to provide a safety buffer from vehicles and encourage more residents to bike.
- Install more pedestrian crossings with audio-visual cues and adequate crossing time to allow residents to safely cross the street without the stress for oncoming vehicle traffic.
- Implement safety measures at transit stops and on the trolley/bus to make public transportation use safer and a more feasible option.

Access

- Provide affordable and available public parking in the downtown area, transit areas (like Grossmont Transit Center parking garage), and other destinations
- Encourage transit authorities to offer transportation options for people of all physical abilities to access local resources and activities.
- Address the lack of / or poorly maintained sidewalks and ramps, which makes it challenging for older adults using walkers, people walking dogs, and for families with strollers.
- Encourage transit authorities to improve the accessibility of public transportation within walking distance of homes, including in neighborhoods such as the Lake Murray area and where public transit services are not currently provided.
- Provide more trainings about using public transportation with safety tips and how to navigate the system to get to desired destinations.
- Expand-the bicycle and pedestrian network to provide alternative transportation options to travel across the City and to adjacent communities.

What we know:

Alternative transportation modes help create a “complete” community. A holistic implementation plan is needed to align existing plans that address transportation.

Accessibility

- La Mesa is a centrally located community. Most regions of the County are within a half hour drive time and many destinations are easily accessible by the transit system.
- Within La Mesa, some forms of mobility are restricted by three freeways and two trolley lines that bisect the City. These regional transportation corridors combined with La Mesa’s topography create barriers to circulation between La Mesa’s neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are crisscrossed with arterials that lead to activity centers, and provide access to the freeway network, but present challenges to bicycle and pedestrian travel.¹³
- For older adults, access to alternative transportation provides mobility independence, and a connection to community resources, especially after they are unable to drive.

Alternative Transportation

- Alternative transportation modes, like walking, biking, and public transit, expand the mobility options that are available to residents of all ages and abilities, and helps build a “complete neighborhood” community.
- A “complete neighborhood” is an area where residents have safe and convenient access to goods and services they need on a daily or regular basis¹⁴, without having to rely on a vehicle. The City’s Bicycle Facilities and Alternative Transportation Plan and recently adopted Climate Action Plan focus specifically on this idea, and on expanding the alternative transportation network for the benefit of residents and the environment.

On-going Transportation Plans

- To address transportation concerns in a more holistic fashion, the City has committed to several plans that are addressing safety and accessibility concerns across the transportation spectrum. These plans, in addition to what is included in the 2012 General Plan, illustrate actions being made to provide a more inclusive transportation network throughout the City with a greater level of mobility access and choices for all residents.
- In July of 2018, the City adopted a Vision Zero commitment, which recognizes that everyone has the right to move safely in their community, and that system designers and policymakers share the responsibility to ensure safe systems for travel.
- The Climate Action Plan requires that the City of La Mesa make walking and bicycling more safe and accessible in order to reduce the need for additional car trips.¹⁵
- The City adopted the Bicycle Facilities and Alternative Transportation Plan in 2012 to promote a safe, convenient, and efficient environment for bicycle and pedestrian travel that encourages the use of public streets, off-street facilities and public transit¹⁶.

¹³ <http://www.cityoflamesa.com/DocumentCenter/View/2503/4--Draft-Circulation-Element-03-12-OPT?bidId=>

¹⁴ <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/?a=437441>

¹⁵ <http://www.cityoflamesa.us/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/3095?fileID=5339>

¹⁶ http://www.cityoflamesa.com/DocumentCenter/View/2477/Bicycle-Facilities-Final-Report-LaMesa_OPT_LowRes?bidId=

What we will do: Through the Livable La Mesa Age-Friendly initiative, we will address identified gaps, improving the visibility of transportation policies in City documents, while meeting the expectations of residents to expand mobility options, and prioritize transportation safety and accessibility across the City.

Goal 5.1: Provide greater opportunity for the community to become involved in active transportation planning and the development of improvements.

Objective 5.1.1: Increase education and opportunities for public participation in transportation planning.

Objective 5.1.2: Inform the public on the progress of the Circulation Element of the General Plan that relate directly to the concerns of older adults.

Objective 5.1.3: Create a branding strategy to advertise transportation-related work.

Goal 5.2: Expand mobility options within and around the City of La Mesa.

Objective 5.2.1: Increase City-wide bicycle ridership by providing safe, maintained, and well-connected bicycle facilities throughout the City.

Objective 5.2.2: Create and encourage transit authorities to establish a more accessible and safe public transportation experience for all City residents.

Goal 5.3: Create a safe travel experience for all mode types.

Objective 5.3.1: Enforce the speeds and behaviors for all roadway users.

Objective 5.3.2: Apply traffic calming measures to reduce traffic speeds and improve the pedestrian experience.

Objective 5.3.3: Implement and promote strategies to improve safety.

Goal 5.4: Increase information and education about alternative modes of transportation.

Objective 5.4.1: Provide more alternative transportation program education through workshops and other informational strategies.

Objective 5.4.2: Improve first-mile / last-mile connections for residents.

Objective 5.4.3: Support technological advances in the transportation sector.

Domain 6: HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health & Wellness focuses on actions that promote wellness and active living.

Vision: La Mesa is a community where all residents have the opportunity and access to live a healthy, active, and well life.

What we heard:

In terms of health and wellness, La Mesa residents value the following:

1. Conveniently located health clinics
2. Wellness pop ups at convenient community locations
3. Fitness activities for older adults
4. Food/grocery delivery services
5. Meal programs at convenient community locations
6. Community gardens

La Mesa residents indicated the first five items are important and the range of services/supports provided in La Mesa is adequate. However, for community gardens, residents rated it important but with a significant negative variance on the adequacy of the services/supports provided in the community.

What we know:

Health and wellness topics are important to individual and community wellbeing. La Mesa has two key partners in Grossmont Healthcare District and San Diego County HHS. Health and wellness services are high quality and accessible. Health conditions in La Mesa compare favorably to the national average.

Delivery of health and wellness services:

- The over 65 years old population in San Diego County is projected to double by 2030 from current 16% to 30% (LWSD).
- La Mesa residents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the quality of services provided by municipal staff (2019 Community Opinion Survey).
- La Mesa has a higher patient satisfaction rate for health care (73.0%) as compared to the median US neighborhood (71.3%) (AARP 2018 Livability Index).
- La Mesa has a lower rate of preventable hospitalization rate (44.4%) as compared to the median US neighborhood (48.5%)
- La Mesa has a higher percentage of residents who live within a half mile of parks and within a 1 mile of recreational facilities (96.1%) as compared to median US neighborhood (90.7%).
- La Mesa is not designated as a health care professional shortage area (AARP 2018 Livability Index).
- The social determinants of health impact both the quality and longevity of life.

Health conditions:

- Chronic diseases account for the majority of leading causes of death in east region of San Diego though most are preventable deaths (2012 General Plan).
- Nutrition, exercise and substance use are contributing factors to cancer, heart disease/stroke, type 2 diabetes and respiratory conditions (2012 General Plan).
- La Mesa has a lower prevalence rate of smoking (13.7%) compared to median US neighborhood (20.5%) (AARP 2018 Livability Index).
- La Mesa has a lower prevalence rate for obesity (19.0%) as compared to median US neighborhood (28.9%) (AARP 2018 Livability Index).

What we will do: Through the Livable La Mesa Age-Friendly initiative, will increase current and projected health and wellness for those who live and work in La Mesa.

Goal 6.1: Review current health-related data for La Mesa to identify areas of concern.

Objective 6.1.1: Assess multiple sources of health-related data.

Objective 6.1.2: Review and revise the La Mesa General Plan Health and Wellness Goals to identify the successes and remaining challenges.

Goal 6.2: Ensure the Citywide Communications Plan addresses the health and wellness domain.

Objective 6.2.1: Design and implement a Citywide Communication Plan highlighting “Livable La Mesa” health and wellness activities.

Goal 6.3: Provide health-related programs to expand upon the educational health resources available to all La Mesa residents.

Objective 6.3.1: Provide/facilitate programs on healthy eating, exercise, and active living at accessible locations.

Objective 6.3.2: Collaborate with key partners on how to prioritize and address the community-identified health and wellness issues.

Objective 6.3.3: Implement the Urban Trails Mobility Action Plan.

Call to Action

This Action Plan outlines the goals, tasks and timeframes to be accomplished over the next few years by elected officials, municipal staff, city residents and numerous community/civic organizations working together for a common goal; making La Mesa a Livable Community for all ages. Such wide spread community involvement, insights and initiative shows once again why La Mesa is the “Jewel of the Hills”.

With the approval of the Livable La Mesa Action Plan, we move from discussing and planning to collaborating and doing. In the coming months, we will begin to address the short term and medium term action steps listed in the plan. City departments and community organizations have been identified to work together on the different tasks, along with residents.

Please look for meeting announcements so you are informed and can participate. Announcements will be posted online on the City website cityoflamesa.us, via the City’s social media outlets, City Hall, the Adult Enrichment Center, Community Center and Library. If you cannot attend but have recommendations or input, please visit the Adult Enrichment Center or submit to recreation@cityoflamesa.us

Please share the Livable La Mesa Action Plan with your family, friends, neighbors and others. A Livable La Mesa for all ages benefits each and every one of us today, tomorrow and in the years to come.

The City of La Mesa actively promotes and supports livability for persons of all ages. Increasing livability will require dedication and contribution from everyone. The themes of livability most relevant for La Mesa include:

- **Health and Wellness** reflects the desire of La Mesa residents to not only optimize longevity, but do so with vitality.
- **Community Connections** for getting information out, but also neighbors interacting with each other as the key to linking formal and informal means of communication.
- **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings** have not only structural and operational considerations, but safety while enjoying public spaces and facilities is paramount.
- **Age-Friendly Housing and Transportation** go hand-in-hand to increasing access to health and wellness activities and support systems, and to social and civic opportunities to interact and influence decisions regarding livability.

The role of City staff and related partners is presented in this Action Plan. Residents of all ages are also called upon to take an active role in helping to shape a Livable La Mesa.

Appendices

- A. Livable La Mesa Action Plan
- B. Acknowledgements
- C. Partners and Resources
- D. 2018 La Mesa Policy Scan
- E. Livable La Mesa Online Assessment
- F. Livable La Mesa Progress Report (March 13, 2019)