

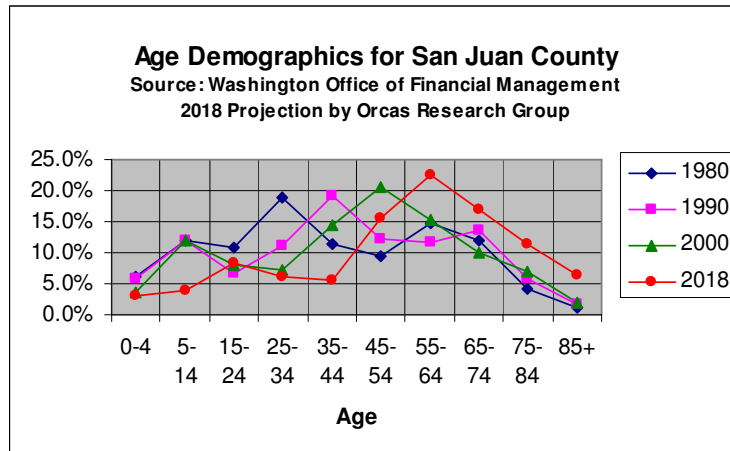
Background: The Orcas Research Group is an informal group of people who come together to apply their skills to solve island problems. We focus on economic issues and do the background research needed to support other island organizations. We have been doing this for six years.

About two years ago we started a project about meeting the needs of seniors on Orcas Island.

In what follows, we will describe the challenges facing us over the next decade and describe a proposed solution. Hopefully, we will stimulate your interest and motivate you to become part of this project.

Most importantly, we need your critical review of the ideas developed so far AND your participation in bringing your ideas forward.

Our Population is Growing Older



We have been tracking Orcas Island age demographics for several years now and it will come as no surprise that we have an aging population. In this graph, we can see the dramatic trend of a peak in our population moving steadily older. Today our seniors comprise twice the percentage of seniors on the mainland. Within ten years this will double.

There are two implications of this. First, as our population ages, the demand for services increases. Second, the number of people in the workforce who can provide these services is declining, not only in percentage, but in absolute numbers.

Three Problems

- Our geography places many seniors at a distance from services.
- The number of seniors needing services is increasing.
- The workforce needed to provide services is declining.

But, there is an additional problem. The geography of our island places many seniors a half hour away from critical services. In our love affair with beauty and privacy, the number of seniors who are settling at the end of a gravel road at the far ends of the island is increasing.

This is not likely to change in any significant way. Our roads will not improve much beyond their current condition and the cost of transportation will increase.

These three problems are at the center of any solution to the issue of how we will serve our seniors over the next decade.

Within 10 years...

- 2000 Seniors over the age of 65 on Orcas
- S1 - Healthy, fit, but starting to slow down (600-1200)
- S2 - Reduced abilities, unable to perform some functions (400-650)
- S3 - Needing assistance for basic functions including personal hygiene, getting out of bed, mobility, etc. (150-200)

Age is not the only or even the best measure of what services are needed.

We defined three categories of seniors based on the level of assistance needed.

Category S1 needs are met by the business community at large and the Senior Center also provides general services for this group.

Category S2 includes seniors who are still able to live independently, but need additional assistance with transportation, meals, and other part time help.

Category S3 needs are largely unmet on Orcas Island and are the focus of our initial efforts.

Options for S3

- Abandon local personal network of friends and family
 - Convalescent Center on San Juan Island
 - Nursing home on the mainland
- Employ in-home elder-care
 - Very Expensive!
- A promising alternative...

The primary option available to S3 seniors is to leave the island. This is a heart wrenching decision since it often means leaving everything that is familiar, especially one's support network of friends and family. We know that life expectancy goes down quickly and that the very quality of life suffers. It is small wonder that many seniors postpone this decision as long as possible.

There is an alternative...



<http://www.edenalt.org/>



- Founded by Dr. William Thomas in 1991
- Based on the core belief that aging should be a continued stage of development and growth, rather than a period of decline.
- Dedicated to eliminating the plagues of loneliness, helplessness, and boredom that make life intolerable in most of today's long-term care facilities.
- Have trained over 15,000 elder care providers.

We ran across the work of Bob Thomas in our search for solutions that might work for Orcas Island. He has focused on approaches which can replace the institutional atmosphere of nursing homes.

The Green House Project



- “A Place to Call Home”
- 2002 Grant from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Replication goal, 100 Green Houses Nationally
- 33 Already in operation
- <http://www.ncbcapitalimpact.org/default.aspx?id=146>

The Green House Project is one specific approach that Bob Thomas developed. These are small scale facilities which create a pleasant family environment. Each facility can house 6-12 residents and costs are similar to larger institutions. Capital Impact has assumed responsibility for replicating Green Houses nationally, provides low interest loans to qualified organizations, and has completed 33 so far.

The approach seems ideally suited to our small community.

Adult Family Homes

- Washington State -- Chapter 70.128 RCW
- Community-based long-term care facilities
- Two to Six Residents
- Flexibility in level of care including specialized care.
- Relatively easy to license

Washington State has specific legislation that is well suited to the Green House approach. These small facilities are suitable for care of the S3 senior population and are relatively inexpensive to build and operate.

There is presently one Adult Family Home on Orcas Island which can accommodate only four residents. It is presently full and has a waiting list. This is Orcas Loving Care, operated by Daphne and Tim Tyree.

A Strategy for Orcas

- Build a Network of Care Providers
- Adult Family Homes Provide Focus for Outlying Regions (Deer Harbor, Doe Bay, Orcas Landing)
- Emphasize Affordable Housing for Care Providers to reduce labor costs.
- Coordination with other Agencies (Fire Department, Senior Center, Local Health Providers, Hearts & Hands Volunteers)

We see Adult Family Homes as a way to incrementally build a network of care providers. Since these are zoned as residential, they are relatively easy to build and can be replicated as the need grows. Most important, they can be built anywhere. We envision the possibility of several Adult Family Homes forming a focus for the outlying regions of the island, providing skilled professionals close to the seniors in locations like Deer Harbor, Doe Bay and Orcas Landing.

As this network is created, we also foresee opportunities to coordinate plans with other agencies. Here in Deer Harbor, for example, there are already plans to locate an ambulance in the new Fire Station and there is a possibility of staffing the station with emergency medical personnel.

The network also provides opportunities for sharing skilled labor. Joyce Rupp at the Senior Center has suggested that the county's need for occasional care givers would benefit from shared employment of workers in the Adult Family Homes.

Lahari



An Organization and a Resource

This brings us to a fortunate series of meetings with the Lahari board. Originally conceived as a hospice, the facility is presently underutilized due to the expansion of in-home hospice care.

Could this beautiful facility be expanded to create our first Adult Family Home?

An emphatic YES! We have been working with the Lahari board to expand their mission to include addressing the need for senior assisted living on Orcas Island.

We have completed the preliminary work and are now ready to expand the board around their new mission.

The mission? To provide a network of assisted living alternatives for the aging population of Orcas Island featuring small, intimate and loving residential environments that respect and promote privacy, dignity and independence.

A Plan for Lahari

- Phase I
 - Reconstitute mission, by-laws, board
 - Create business plan for existing facility
 - Add six rooms to existing facility
 - Begin operation as Adult Family Home
- Phase II
 - Expand operations to increase scope
 - Additional Adult Family Homes
 - Possible expansion into Independent Living

In very rough terms, we have the opportunity to make a beginning in this beautiful place and with this beautiful facility. We also have an opportunity to build upon the existing non-profit, to build upon their compassionate good work, to expand their vision, and to put in place an organization that will meet the needs of our senior citizens.

We hope that you will join with us to add your energy and experience to this new project.