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# OC Projected to Face Senior Population Boom in the 2040s

By: City News Writer



*Photo courtesy of Alzheimer's Orange County/Facebook*

Orange County's elder population is expected to grow exponentially as soon as the 2040s and will continue to increase in the following years, according to [local and state research](#).

People aged 65 years and older account for [14.3%](#) of OC's current population, a proportion that is expected to increase to 17.3% by 2045. OC Healthcare Agency officials [predict](#) that approximately one in four county residents will be a senior citizen by 2040.

Nearly 5% of residents will be older than 85 years of age. The U.S. Census Bureau [reported](#) that this age ratio will also apply to the rest of California.

OC officials [face insecurity](#) regarding the county's readiness to support this demographic shift, despite the projects that have been launched since the

[enactment](#) of the Older Americans Act of 1965 and the Older Californians Act of 1980.

OC community leaders initially addressed concerns such as healthcare and transportation services through the [Orange County Strategic Plan for Aging](#) (OCSPA).

[OCSPA](#) is a county-wide initiative designed to establish long and short-term strategic plans to prepare for OC's unprecedented rapid growth in senior population. The plan seeks to protect independence in elderly age.

Over [60 organizations](#) have joined forces to collaborate on this project. OCSPA formed subcommittees with specific objectives, and they met or surpassed all of their goals in their first set of goals spanning 18 months.

Among OCSPA's accomplishments include reducing food insecurity for 1,000 seniors, creating a public transit resource guide and bringing together all county-wide visiting volunteers. The subcommittees have since begun work on a new set of [goals](#) for the next 18 months.

Alzheimer's OC President and CEO James McAleer, a contributing community leader to OCSPA, hopes the plan will address current inadequacies in areas such as funding.

"Many nonprofit and county agencies that have been serving older adults are feeling the impact of funding that is either staying the same or decreasing, while there are more individuals entering into the 60 and over category and living longer than ever before," McAleer [said](#).

CEO of the Coalition of OC Community Health Centers and CalOptima Board Director Isabel Becerra echoed McAleer's statements, commenting on the lack of adequate transportation services for elderly citizens.

"I often drive around Anaheim, Santa Ana and Garden Grove for personal reasons, like shepherding kids around town, and the one thing I always see is elderly ladies wandering about, crossing streets, carrying ten shopping bags out of Northgate Market," Becerra [said](#).

Statewide initiatives have also addressed the senior boom, including California's Master Plan for Aging (MPA), created as a result of an executive order [signed](#) by Gov. Gavin Newsom in June 2021. Newsom and community leaders aim to establish a blueprint for an age-friendly California.

The [MPA](#) consists of five ambitious goals and 23 strategies to prepare California for all ages by 2030. The plan also features a data dashboard to track progress, in addition to a local playbook to encourage partnerships that will promote joint community efforts.

Agencies across the administration have promised to implement [123 action-ready initiatives](#) for 2021–2022.

“The state is really engaging in a purposeful and well-rounded initiative that’s bringing together stakeholders from business, health care, academics and service providers,” Cal State Fullerton Center for Successful Aging Director and OC Healthy Initiative team Co-Chair Debra Rose [said](#).

Funding for these initiatives is monitored by [legal reports](#) that must be submitted to the California Department of Aging every four years.

These [Four-Year Area Plans](#) must include local priorities and objectives for which the state will provide services. In OC, they must address nutrition, transit, legal aid, familial caregiver support, long-term care defender and healthcare insurance consultation.

Though federal funding for aging has been stagnant for years, legislative plans may increase it. A 2016 report from the OC Grand Jury, “[Gray Matters](#),” determined that financial aid for the Office on Aging from the OC General Fund has not kept pace with the increase in the senior population.

Prior to the economic recession in fiscal year 2005–2006, the OC General Fund contributed \$2.20 per senior per year. This number was reported to have decreased to \$1.32 per senior per year a decade later in fiscal year [2015–2016](#).

“There is so much that we need to do in the state of California to make life better for older adults,” Rose [said](#).

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