

JEWISH RETIREMENT RESIDENCE SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2014, the Board of Directors of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa approved a plan for the development of a Tamir project, an Integrated Living Center (ILC) for clients to be built on campus lands.

In taking a broad and strategic look at future needs in the community, the Canadian government's national household survey (2011) indicated that Ottawa's population of Jewish seniors 65+ has grown by 25% as a percentage of Ottawa's overall Jewish community since 2001.

In June 2014, Federation approved a new 5-year strategic plan (2014-2019), identifying 5 broad goals, including "*foster greater cooperation and partnership among community agencies and organizations*". A specific goal for 2014/15 in the strategic plan's annual work plan was to conduct a feasibility study on whether a seniors' retirement residence can be part of the Integrated Living Centre.

The juxtaposition of these three issues:

- Approval for Tamir's ILC
- The need to address the growing requirements of seniors
- Implementation of Federation's strategic plan

resulted in the creation of a working group to examine whether or not construction of a Jewish retirement residence ought to be considered as part of the ILC.

Federation, in partnership with AJA50+, Jewish Family Services, and Tamir formed a working group to explore the issue of building a Jewish seniors' retirement residence. The committee, chaired by Lewis Leiken included: Sarah Beutel, Sarah Caspi, Andrea Freedman, Harvey Goldberg, Estelle Gunner, Kathi Kovacs, Mark Palmer, Jack Shinder, Hartley Stern, Mark Zarecki, Richard Zucker. To date the committee has met four times. After receiving a generous grant from Federation's Innovation Fund for capacity building, the committee hired noted demographer, Charles Shahr to conduct a Jewish Retirement Residence Survey.

As the results are lengthy, we are pleased to provide you with an executive summary. For those interested in the complete survey results, please visit <http://jewishottawa.com/giving/reports>. The working group is currently exploring next steps and recommendations. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Sarah Beutel at sbeutel@jewishottawa.com or 613-798-4696, ext. 253.

METHODOLOGY

Jewish residents of Ottawa who were 55+ years were administered a survey to gauge public interest in a Jewish retirement residence. Three methodologies were used to administer the survey:

- Telephone interviews were conducted from a sample drawn from telephone lists of two Jewish organizations.
- Several individuals were interviewed in the Russian language after the questionnaire was translated.
- A general online survey was made available to individuals 55+ years who were not interviewed by telephone. Synagogues and other community organizations were asked to distribute the survey to broaden the reach.

A total of 460 individuals participated in the survey which included 175 individuals who were interviewed by telephone, 10 respondents who were interviewed in the Russian language, and 275 individuals who completed the online survey.

Please go to <http://jewishottawa.com/giving/reports> to review a full description of the sample, methodology, and research design.

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

- More than half 54.6% of respondents said they might be interested in living in a Jewish retirement residence, and about a quarter of the sample, (27%) said they were definitely interested in living in a Jewish retirement residence. Less than one in five respondents (18.4%) expressed no interest in living in this type of residence.
- Those who were more inclined to consider living in a Jewish retirement residence were in the middle of the age cohorts (65-74 years), and had a generally lower income (less than \$150,000), than those who would not consider living in such a residence.
- A majority of respondents (71.1%) would only consider living in a Jewish retirement residence in more than 10 years. A smaller percentage (21.2%) would consider living there in 5-10 years, and only 7.8% would consider living there in less than five years.
- For respondents who would consider living in a Jewish retirement residence, the most important factor in deciding where to live in their senior years was "affordability" (mean rating = 8.92, on a 1 (not important at all) to 10 (extremely important) point scale). Also gleaning high ratings in respondents decision about where to live were "attractive apartment" (mean 8.58), "attractive building and common areas" (mean 8.44), and "variety and quality of food that meets my needs" (mean 8.41). Jewish aspects ranked much lower in questions related to residence characteristics.

- There was support among respondents to live in a retirement residence integrated with Tamir residents. About half the sample (49.2%) said it would be fine if Tamir residents resided throughout the retirement residence; 35.8% expressed a preference that Tamir residents live in a separate section of an integrated residence, and 15% preferred not to reside in an integrated residence. The survey's demographer has issued a cautionary note that a deeper understanding on this issue is required.
- Three major issues or themes, tended to predominate in the open-ended responses of respondents: (1) Whether the residence would serve well-seniors or if there would be an assisted living component as well; (2) the extent to which the residence is affordable for people of lesser financial means, and (3) how "Jewish" or religiously-oriented the residence would be.
- The most common reason by far why respondents would not consider living in a Jewish retirement residence was that they wanted to stay in their current home for as long as possible (94%). More than a third (38.8%) said they were not old enough to consider a retirement residence at this time.

CONCLUSIONS

A majority of respondents expressed at least some level of interest in living in a Jewish retirement residence. Additionally, the themes expressed by respondents in their open-ended responses, were generally positive and enthusiastic about living in an integrated residence.

The survey results and the expressed level of support are encouraging, but they are not without some limitations. In particular, the data related to the following issues identifies the need for a cautionary interpretation at this time:

- The Jewish aspects of a retirement residence were ranked as less important to respondents;
- There was a wide disparity in price point, accommodation type and health needs among respondents;
- According to the demographer, the survey methodology may have under-estimated, to some unknown extent, the ambivalence of seniors' interest to live in an integrated residence with Tamir residents.

In summary, further action appears warranted to assess the operational and financial feasibility of an Ottawa Jewish community retirement residence. Additional efforts are needed to determine if there is sufficient commonality among users and demand for a fully integrated Jewish seniors' living center. Accordingly, the working group will continue to analyze the survey results, and plans to seek input from industry experts as part of the assessment exercise. It is expected that the working group will be in a position to make specific recommendations to Federation's board in late Fall 2015. The recommendations will then be shared with the community.