

Friday, November 07, 2003

Survey says Las Vegas has lower assisted living Costs

By **Xazmin Garza**

Xazmin@LVPress.com

A recent survey shows that Las Vegas' assisted living costs are below the national average, but still higher than nearby competitive cities.

The 2003 MetLife Market Survey of Assisted Living Costs reveals that on a nationwide level the average monthly cost a senior citizen pays for assisted living is \$2,379. Las Vegas comes in with an average monthly cost of \$2,014.

The figures were determined through telephone surveys conducted last July that found a base rate high of \$3,550, locally, and a low of \$1,000.

"Las Vegas is probably less because the cost of living here is lower compared to larger, metro areas," says **John Restrepo**, principal in Las Vegas-based **Restrepo Consulting Group**.

Survey results indicate a trend with much higher rates the further east that the assisted living facility is located. Chicago, Washington D.C. and New York City all topping the list at over \$6,000 for base rate highs and average monthly costs at or just below the \$4,000 level.

Although local costs are, on average, less than the amount that seniors in cities across the nation are paying, San Diego, Salt Lake City and Phoenix all produced figures that fall significantly under Las Vegas' average rate.

San Diego, with a low base rate of just \$875 shows an average cost of \$1,992 and Salt Lake City comes in at just below that with \$1,770. Phoenix, a city with traits very similar to Vegas in terms of retirement appeal because of the climate and the low cost of living, averaged out with costs of \$1,536 -- a difference of more than \$400.

Restrepo credits the lower costs in these cities to a more stabilized retirement population.

"On a regional level we may be higher, but that's because we've experienced such a rapid population growth with people 65 and over," he says. "Those cities have more of a supply because they've been established as retirement areas longer so their supply demand balance is better. We have a supply constraint, a function of rapid growth."

With a state-wide senior citizen population that has, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, already expanded by 72 percent since 1990, it is only expected to continue to grow. Between 2000 and 2015, Nevada is expected to see an additional 60 percent growth within this demographic, and Clark County will account for the great majority of that figure.

High estimates for future growth translates to more resources for seniors, which would mean more assisted living centers.

"Large operators are looking at Vegas as a high demand area," says **Restrepo**. "With enough of a pent-up demand, it will be the draw for operators to look at us closely."

Restrepo also sees this sort of growth as largely influencing the city's handling of issues with a direct impact on seniors, such as healthcare, housing, retirement and transportation.