Early History

1921 — The Seattle Community Fund streamlines fundraising efforts among Seattle’s charitable health and welfare agencies.

1929 — A stock market crash triggers The Great Depression, lasting two decades.

1935 — The Social Security Act is signed into law, helping to address burdens of old age, poverty, and unemployment.

1947 — Tallmadge Hamilton House, the first senior activity center in the Pacific NW and possibly the first west of the Mississippi.

1956 — The Seattle-King County Council on Aging is created—an outgrowth of the Department of Aging in the Health and Welfare Council of the Seattle Community Chest (an organization pre-dating United Way of King County).

1958 — The University District Kiwanis Club founds Tallmadge Hamilton House, the first senior activity center in the Pacific NW and possibly the first west of the Mississippi.

1965 — The federal Older Americans Act is signed into law.

1965 — Medicare and Medicaid are added to the federal Social Security Act.

1966 — The United Good Neighbor Fund of King County and the Council on Aging publishes a landmark study called “Seattle’s Older Population.”

1967 — Senior Services of King County is founded.

1967 & 1969 — Reauthorizations of the Older Americans Act provide funding for nutrition, model demonstration projects, foster grandparents, volunteer programs, multipurpose senior centers, and senior employment was established. Attention focuses on services for vulnerable older adults and independent community living. States are given responsibility for designating Area Agencies on Aging.

1970 — Mayor Wes Uhlman—at age 34, the youngest mayor of Seattle ever elected—takes office.

1970 — The United Indians of All Tribes Foundation is founded, providing activities for Native elders.

1971 — Mayor Uhlman creates a Division on Aging in the Office of Human Resources.

1972 — The Chinese Information & Service Center is founded to help non-English speaking elderly in the community.

1972 — The City of Seattle, King County, and United Way form a Council on Aging, responsible for planning and coordinating the distribution of resources for older adults in King County.

1973 — Area Agencies on Aging are established.

1973 — Asian Counseling & Referral Service is created to serve Asian Pacific Americans at risk of misdiagnosis and inappropriate care.

1975 — Mayor Uhlman creates a Senior Information Center, the predecessor to Seattle’s Mayor’s Office for Senior Citizens.


1978 — King County Executive John Spellman establishes an Office on Aging to serve the fast-growing senior population in suburban and unincorporated King County.

1978 — Sea Mar establishes a clinic in Seattle’s South Park neighborhood to provide community-based, comprehensive health care, including services for elders.

1983 — Area Agencies on Aging streamlines fundraising efforts among Area Agencies.

1984 — The Council on Aging’s name changes to the Seattle-King County Advisory Council on Aging.

1990 — The Americans with Disabilities Act is signed into law by President George H.W. Bush.

1995 — New health care reforms include a long-term care benefit for functionally disabled persons of all ages and income levels, allowing Area Agencies on Aging to serve Medicaid beneficiaries age 18 and up.

1997 — Mayor Norman B. Rice creates the African American Elders Project, providing in-home care, housing, day care, counseling, shelters, legal assistance, mental health services, meals, volunteer chore, emergency services and referrals.

1998 — The Social Security Administration names the Office of Disability Policy.


2002 — DSHS launches Washington’s Medicaid Integration Project

2004 — Catholic Community Services of King County is selected as the community-based sponsor of the African American Elders Program.

2007 — The Older Americans Act Reauthorization expires.

2011 — The Older Americans Act expires.

2015 — Aging Information Network organizations throughout the nation call on Congress to reauthorize the Older Americans Act and to fund OAA programs to keep pace with the increasing numbers, needs, and diversity of the senior population.

“Revolution is in its infancy. A revolution not of the young, but of the old. A revolution led not by the SLA or the George Jackson Brigade, but by the Gray Panthers; the Elder Citizens Coalition; AARP; retired teachers; and other men and women who have crossed the line into retirement.” — Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman (March 16, 1976)