EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As populations age across the globe, the World Health Organization (WHO) has called on communities around the world to become more “age friendly.” Seattle officially joined this movement in 2016, receiving our “age-friendly community” designation and crafting an action plan to meet the needs of older adults in our region. We made steady progress on those goals: even while pivoting to meet emerging needs during the COVID-19 crisis, we advanced 27 of the 29 distinct goals we originally set out to accomplish.

As the pandemic wanes, we now build on these efforts to continue improving Seattle’s age-friendliness. We know that our older adult population is growing and becoming increasingly diverse, and that people are aging into and living with disabilities for longer. Creating a welcoming city where everyone can thrive will require consideration of our built environments—the physical structures in which people live, work, shop, and maneuver every day—as well as our social environments. The pandemic shone new light on our need for human connection, and we strive to ensure people of all ages and cultures can engage socially and avoid isolation.

This 2022-2027 Strategic Framework will serve as our roadmap for the next five years. It is grounded in a set of values that will guide our goals, strategies, and actions:

1. **We will lead with race**, recognizing many older adults of color face deep inequities caused by a lifetime of structural racism.
2. **We will prioritize inclusivity and equity**, acknowledging Seattle’s increasingly diverse older adult population.
3. **We will recognize the intersectional nature** of issues impacting older adults.
4. **We will continue to do this work in partnership** with community members, organizations, and government partners.
5. **We will seek and listen to community input**, use data to inform our work, and stay open-minded and nimble.
Underpinned by these values, this strategic framework is organized around our theory of change: that maintaining continuity while aging supports higher life satisfaction, and that financial, health, and social resources are key to maintaining continuity. For the next five years, Age Friendly Seattle will focus on helping older adults retain these critical resources by pursuing the following 16 goals: (add Venn diagram graphic?)

**Section I: Economic Security**

1. Older adults have increased access to affordable housing options.
2. More housing stock meets accessibility needs.
3. Transportation options meet the needs of older adults.
4. Older adults can plan financially for retirement and elder financial abuse is decreased.
5. Businesses and workplaces are more age-friendly.

**Section II: Health and Wellbeing**

1. Ageism and stigma against older adults and aging is reduced.
2. Physical activity and exercise is increased for older adults.
3. Caregivers are supported.
4. Brain health is improved and people experiencing memory loss are supported.
5. The number of falls has reduced.
6. Safety is improved for older adults.

**Section III: Social Connectivity**

1. Access to arts and entertainment is increased.
2. The impacts of hearing loss are mitigated.
3. Older adults are engaged in volunteer and civic opportunities.
4. Programming aimed at reducing social isolation is successful.
5. Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.

To achieve these 16 distinct goals, we outline 44 corresponding strategies (for comparison, the 2017-2021 Age Friendly Action Plan listed 29 goals and 87 related actions). Because this framework is intentionally built to recognize the intersectionality of issues facing older adults, several goals and strategies support multiple priorities, as noted in the charts below.

Older adults are not a monolith and while we hope to benefit all Seattleites, we also understand that systemic injustices compound over a lifetime: in Seattle, older adults of color are more likely than white older adults to experience poor health and have limited economic resources, both of which are risk factors for social isolation. It is critical to evaluate each of our actions through an equity lens to ensure we are advancing racial equity.
and not inadvertently servicing only some segments of our community. For this framework, we challenged ourselves to identify race and social justice considerations related to each one of our goals. This will help guide our prioritization of strategies and actions throughout the year and ensure equity is at the forefront of our minds when determining allocation of time and resources.

This framework is intended to provide guidance and assist with prioritization of efforts over the next five years. Rather than dictate each action we will take, it serves as a menu of possibilities from which the Age Friendly Seattle team will select on an annual basis according to community need, potential impact, and available resources. As 2020 taught us, being nimble is important. We have set clear direction for ourselves while allowing for continual learning and adapting as we find new ways to make Seattle a friendlier place to age.

The goals and strategies included in this Strategic Framework were derived using information from a range of sources, including an initial 2017 community needs assessment surveying older adults, recommendations from subject-matter experts, related plans and initiatives, available research, and the lived experiences older adults have shared. This is reflected in the context and rationale provided for each goal and related strategy. Indicators tied to each goal will be monitored internally on a regular basis to help us understand the progress being made. We commit to reviewing our actions annually to hold ourselves accountable to our guiding principles and spot opportunities for continual improvement.

We are deeply grateful to the older adults, community partners, government colleagues, and subject-matter experts who have informed this framework and whose work impacts the lives of older adults across Seattle. We are proud to support these collective efforts as we all strive to make Seattle a great place to grow up and grow old.
Age Friendly Seattle 2022–2027 Strategic Framework

FULL FRAMEWORK

The Need for Age-Friendly Communities

Around the globe, populations are aging. The United Nations has declared 2021-2030 the Decade of Healthy Aging, and the World Health Organizations (WHO) has called for communities around the world to become more “age friendly” in order to meet the growing needs of older adults. Here in the U.S., 1 in 4 people is projected to be over age 60 by the year 2050 and starting in 2034, the number of older people is expected to outnumber children in our country. In the Puget Sound region, the percentage of older adults is anticipated to grow by 85% between 2020-35. As people live longer, many will age with or into disabilities. Communities must prepare to address the health, economic, and social needs of an aging population.

Age Friendly Seattle aims to support people’s ability to not only live longer, but to thrive. Since receiving our official “age-friendly community” designation in 2016, we have been working to make our city a great place to grow up and grow old. An age-friendly community is one in which people can age with ease. The WHO determined specific environmental, economic, and social factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults, and Age Friendly Seattle has steadily been addressing these through our first 5-year action plan and now with this 2022-27 strategic framework.
Aging in Seattle-King County

Demographics

Like elsewhere in the country, Seattle and King County are aging. The Washington Office of Financial Management estimates that between 2020 and 2040, King County’s population of people aged 60 and above will grow by 44%, from approximately 456,000 to 658,000. Within this, the number of older adults 85+ is expected to grow by an even larger percent: from 37,000 to nearly 102,000 people, an increase of 175% that represents our increased longevity. About 12% of the population of Seattle was aged 65 or older in 2020, a slight uptick from the 2010 census and a trend that is likely to continue as the “baby boomer” generation ages. While longer, healthier lifespans are to be celebrated, this also means that cities need to be thinking about how to accommodate an increased number of older adults, for more years.

In addition to becoming older, we are also increasingly diverse. While most of today’s Seattleites are white (66%), only 49% of people aged 18-24 are white. As younger generations age, older populations will likely become increasingly multi-racial. Reflecting this growing diversity is the fact that 1 in 5 people between ages 65-74 in King County are foreign-born, as are nearly a quarter of those aged 75+. Approximately 13% of people over age 65 have limited English proficiency. These percentage increases are sharpest in areas of King County outside Seattle, suggesting that older adult immigrants and refugees may not be able to (or are choosing not to) make Seattle their home. Being an “age friendly” city will require considering the varied needs of all older adults.

Over 17% of people in King County are living with a disability as of 2020. In Seattle, this is 13.9%. The likelihood of having a disability greatly increases with age: only 15.3% of people 18-24 in King County report a disability, compared with 45.3% of people aged 75 and older. Longer lives most likely means more years lived with disabilities, and the environments we build today will have far-reaching impact on the aging populations of the future.

Economic Security

While Seattle has experienced strong economic growth in recent decades, not all people are benefiting equally. Over 11% of people age 65+ in Seattle live in poverty; across King County, over 18% of people aged 55-74 and nearly a quarter of those 75+ are living below 200% FPL. Slightly more women (20.1%) than men (17%) of all ages experience poverty, and there are deep disparities by race and ethnicity as systemic injustices compound over a lifetime: nearly half of all American Indian and Native Alaskan people and over 40% of Black people live below 200% FPL, while this is true for only 13.5% of whites. Sixty percent of foreign-born residents live below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Just over 18% of households in Seattle receive social security income, and 13.5% receive other retirement income (not mutually exclusive). The average social security income is $22,095/year; this is less than the average annual cost of housing in Seattle ($23,088).

Housing has become a major economic stressor for many people. This issue was a priority for older adults when Age Friendly Seattle conducted our initial needs assessment in 2016 and continues to be a major concern voiced today. Of those aged 60 and older, 23.1% of homeowners and 45% of
renters are housing-burdened, meaning they spend more than a third of their income on housing. In their Livability Index, which is based on a periodic review of communities’ policies and metrics, AARP scores Seattle just 53/100 when it comes to housing for older adults. This factors in accessibility (zero-step entries), cost, and availability of multi-family and subsidized options as well as policies designed to protect owners and tenants. Living on a fixed income while cost of living increases can be a challenge and sadly, older adults constitute a growing percentage of people experiencing homelessness around the U.S.

Older adult survey respondents told us in 2016 that they felt Seattle lacked employment opportunities for older adults. This is echoed again in AARP’s 2022 Livability Index score giving Seattle a 50/100 for “Opportunity,” which measures income inequality, jobs per worker, and local minimum wage, among other things. While Seattle has embraced an influx of younger tech industry workers in recent years, it is important to also consider the needs of older adult workers—in the tech industry and beyond.

Economic security has health impacts, and income is highly correlated with mental distress: 27.2% of people of all ages earning less than $15K experienced frequent mental distress, while only 9.1% of those earning $75K and above do. Of note, significantly more LGBTQ people reported mental distress (25.9%) than did heterosexual people (10.7%) on average between 2016-2020. Interestingly, mental distress in King County seems to decrease with age. While 1 in 5 people aged 18-24 reported experiencing frequent mental distress, less than 1 in 10 people over age 75 did.

Health

Medical advancements and public health improvements have extended lifespans in most places across the globe. The average life expectancy in Seattle is 83.3 years, which is two and three years higher than the averages for King County and Washington State, respectively. We know from our initial survey that most older Seattleites feel they have good access to quality health care services, and AARP gives Seattle a health index score of 74/100 based on factors like smoking and obesity prevalence, access to exercise opportunities, healthcare workforce, preventable hospitalization rate, and patient satisfaction.

While many people over age 60 report being in good or excellent health, there are wide racial disparities: only 46% of Alaska Natives/American Indians say they are in good health while 82% of whites and 83% of Asians report being healthy. Similar disparities exist in the prevalence of chronic disease: fifty percent of Asians and 64% of whites experience chronic illness, compared with 72% of Latinos and 76% of Black people. Income, too, can be a driver of health outcomes and behaviors. For example, incomes in King County are correlated with likelihood to get enough exercise, with higher income earners more likely to exercise than people with lower incomes. Only 1 in 4 older adults in our region are getting enough exercise (26% of people age 64-74 and 20% of those 75+).

Social Connectivity

A growing body of research underscores the importance of social connectivity and the impact of loneliness on our health. While no consistent metric measures this across Seattle, several factors provide insight.
In 2017-2018, the number of older adults 60+ in King County who reported receiving the social/emotional support they need was about 78% but this varied widely across races, with over 80% of white people and just 36% of Latinos saying they feel supported. While we don’t yet have post-pandemic numbers for comparison, COVID-19 and related prevention measures did restrict social engagement and increase the isolation of many, including older adults who are most vulnerable to the virus. Online platforms became the gathering spaces for family, friends, and coworkers, but this requires access to the internet, devices, and digital know-how. Most older adults are wired and tech-savvy: as of 2018, 99% of people aged 60-69 reported having a device to connect to the internet with, as do 96% of people 70-79 and 91% of those 80 and older. However, comfort with technology decreases with age: on a scale of 0-120, people aged 60-69 reported an average comfort level of 90, people 70-79 reported a score of 81, and those 80 and older reported a score of just 48. Twenty eight percent of people 80 and older did not know how to use the internet.

AARP gives Seattle a score of 63/100 for Engagement, based on factors like opportunity for civic and social involvement and the presence of cultural, arts, and entertainment institutions.

**Overall Livability**

Overall, Seattle currently receives an AARP livability score of 60/100. This reflects a slight dip from 63 between 2016 and 2022, due in part to increased housing costs and rising healthcare workforce shortages. A key aspect of a livable community is the ability to get to key destinations safely, including work, home, school, and services, and Seattle’s AARP Neighborhood Score of 69 indicates a fairly strong network of walkable and connected neighborhoods. Similarly, our Transportation score of 69 reflects investments in frequency, affordability, and accessibility of transit. We know from our 2016 assessment survey that older adults in Seattle deeply value our parks system, which provide opportunities for exercise, meditation, and socializing.

Although Seattle consistently ranks above average across all of AARP’s indexes, we have room for improvement. We can home in on our shortcomings and leverage our strengths. We can be responsive to external factors like climate change that pose unique risks to older adults and continue to learn about the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people as they age. Using an equity lens, the City of Seattle can advance our community’s age-friendliness and create a place where all people can age with dignity and joy.

**The Role of Age Friendly Seattle**

As a citywide initiative, our role is to ensure that the needs of older adults are recognized and prioritized. We do this by administering some of our own programs—such as age-friendly discounts and events—as well as by exercising our role as connector, convenor, advocate, and educator. That might include informing transportation or housing plans, hosting a cross-disciplinary educational forum on accessibility, or encouraging stakeholder collaboration around emergency preparedness for older adults. We are positioned to help spot gaps and opportunities, raise questions, and support colleagues and community partners to understand and better address the needs of our aging population, both now and in the future. This role is reflected in our strategic framework; many of our strategies “assist,” “help” and “support” plans and programs spearheaded by other community and government partners.
In our 2016-2021 Action Plan, we outlined a wide range of activities aimed at making our city a friendlier place for all. Even while pivoting to meet emerging needs during the COVID-19 crisis, we advanced 27 of the 29 distinct goals we originally set out to accomplish. Early on, we focused on improving our neighborhoods’ walkability by organizing sidewalk audits and holding wayfinding forums; we advocated for increased accessibility in homes through adoption of visitability standards and a Universal Design demonstration held at the Seattle Design Festival; and we sparked ideas for ways to better meet older adults’ transportation needs by holding a Hack-A-Thon. Later, we turned our attention to improving the accessibility of meetings and events, producing a widely distributed guide. When the pandemic necessitated social distancing, we hosted twice-monthly online events that served as gathering spaces for older adults to receive critical information about COVID-19 and to connect with other community members and government officials.

The partnerships we have built through these efforts are invaluable and provide a strong foundation on which to grow. As the pandemic wanes, we look forward to collaboratively creating a welcoming city where built and social environments enable people of all ages and abilities to thrive.

Our Guiding Principles/Values

Our 2022-27 Strategic Framework is grounded in five values that will guide our goals, strategies, and actions in the coming years. These fundamentals are not listed as “goals” or “strategies” because they underpin all our work. To hold ourselves accountable, we review our actions annually and examine if and how they reflected these values.

1. We will lead with race. Racial injustices compound over a lifetime, and many older adults of color face deep inequities caused by structural racism.
2. Seattle’s seniors are increasingly diverse, and we will view our plans and efforts through a racial and social justice lens that prioritizes inclusivity and equity, including language access.
3. We recognize the intersectional nature of issues impacting older adults. A “great place to grow old” describes somewhere older adults can thrive in all aspects of life.
4. We will do this work in partnership. We will be more successful in creating an age-friendly city if we engage a range of City and community partners, and when we are informed by the older adults who live here.
5. We will seek and listen to community input, stay open-minded and nimble, acknowledge that aging happens throughout life, and use data to help inform our goals, strategies, actions.
Our Theory of Change

The Seattle Human Services Department’s mission is to create a city where all people can thrive. We asked ourselves, how we would know if an older adult was “thriving?” This is a difficult thing to measure, so we selected “life satisfaction” — which is more measurable and well-researched — as a reasonable proxy for thriving. The next step was determining which factors increase life satisfaction among older adults.

Our theory of change draws upon continuity theory, which contends that older adults experience higher life satisfaction when they can maintain continuity in many aspects of life. This might include ongoing participation in sports and hobbies, aging in their own home, and staying connected to friends and family. However, maintaining continuity can be challenging as a person ages. Bodies do wear, and life circumstances change. Fortunately, research suggests there are some key resources that can help older adults maintain as much continuity as possible: physical resources, economic resources, and social resources.

For example, when someone remains physically healthy, they have a greater likelihood of continuing to engage in activities they enjoy. Maintaining financial resources can help someone afford to age in their own home. Social resources like regular contact with friends and family provide continuity of relationships, traditions, and hobbies. Of course, these resources are intersectional and can exacerbate each other positively or negatively. For example, having the resources to age in place means a greater likelihood of maintaining social relationships with local friends and neighbors, which in turn helps to avoid loneliness and promote good health, making it easier for someone to continue their hobbies. Conversely, economic instability can force someone to choose between paying rent and filling a prescription, leading to poorer health, which can cause a person to become increasingly homebound and isolated. Based on this understanding, the Age Friendly Seattle strategic framework is oriented toward helping older adults maintain their economic security, health and well-being, and social connectivity. We believe that by retaining these resources, older adults will experience better continuity as they age and, in turn, enjoy higher life satisfaction. In essence, “thrive.”

This approach is a departure from our initial 2017-2022 Action Plan, which outlined goals and actions pegged specifically to each of the 8 “domains of livability” set forth by the World Health Organization. While each of these domains is still very much addressed under our new framework (as noted in the following charts), we are striving for a format that better acknowledges the intersecting nature of issues impacting older adults and is grounded in our theory of change.

Race and Social Justice Commitment

Older adults are not a monolith, and the population in Seattle is diverse in age, race, culture, language, income, interests, housing status, health needs, and social connections. One of the most challenging things about the Age Friendly Seattle initiative is understanding which communities we serve. We hope to benefit all Seattleites, and we also understand that racial and systemic injustices compound over a lifetime: in Seattle, older adults of color are more likely than white older adults to experience poor health and have limited economic resources, both of which are risk factors for social isolation. It is critical to evaluate each of our actions through an equity lens to ensure we are advancing racial equity and not inadvertently servicing only some segments of our community.
For this framework, we challenged ourselves to identify race and social justice considerations related to each one of our goals. This will help guide our prioritization of strategies and actions throughout each year. The considerations in the charts below do not reflect a complete or definitive list, but serve as touchstones to ensure equity is at the forefront of our minds when determining allocation of time and resources. In addition to completing Seattle’s Race and Social Justice Toolkit at the outset of this framework development, we remain committed to reviewing our actions annually to evaluate how we lived up to our commitment to racial justice and spot opportunities for continual improvement.

How to Read This Plan

This strategic framework offers a roadmap for the next five years of Age Friendly Seattle’s efforts. It consists of 16 distinct goals and 44 strategies for achieving those (by comparison, the 2017-2021 Age Friendly Action Plan listed 29 goals and 87 related actions.) It is organized into three sections: economic security, health and well-being, and social connectivity. The rationale for selecting each goal and related strategy is provided.

We have designed this framework intentionally to recognize the intersectionality of issues impacting older adults, and many goals and strategies support multiple priorities. We have indicated these connection points in the charts below while limiting redundancy between sections. Although we have moved away from organizing our plans strictly by the WHO’s eight “domains of livability,” our work will undoubtedly touch each of these, as noted below.

This framework is intended to provide guidance and assist with prioritization of efforts over the next five years, rather than dictate all actions we will take. It serves as a menu of possibilities from which the Age Friendly Seattle team will select on an annual basis according to community need, potential impact, and available resources. The aim is not to pursue each strategy every year, but to use our resources efficiently and effectively to advance the age-friendliness of our city. While this document does not detail every action we anticipate taking through 2027 (those are included in staffs’ individual workplans annually), we have provided examples of one potential action per strategy as a way of illustrating the type of activities Age Friendly Seattle engages in. Some tactics may take years to complete and have far-reaching consequences, others are easily more accomplished for immediate results. Almost all require the partnership and involvement of other partners like government agencies and community organizations.

As 2020 taught us, being adaptive and nimble is important. This strategic framework provides guideposts while allowing room for ongoing discovery of new ways to make Seattle a friendlier place to age.

Ongoing Community Feedback & Evaluation

The goals and strategies included are derived from a range of sources, including an initial 2017 community needs assessment surveying older adults, recommendations from subject-matter experts, related plans and initiatives, available research, and the lived experiences older adults have shared. We know there is more to learn. Further community input will be invited and incorporated on an ongoing basis, and we hope to conduct a new community needs assessment to capture input from Seattle’s older adults post-pandemic. Input will be used to drive priorities on an annual
basis. What we have heard thus far is that people deeply value Seattle’s parks and green spaces and our diverse cultural communities, but housing needs are not being met, transportation can be a challenge, and opportunities for older workers are slim.

Similarly, our evaluation of impact will be ongoing. In addition to yearly reports highlighting outputs, the Age Friendly Seattle staff will regularly review indicators to help us chart outcomes and monitor progress toward our goals. As we determine which efforts are successful and which are less so, as well as where community need lies and where gaps have been filled, we will use this information to prioritize our strategies and actions for the year ahead.

**Conclusion**

None of this work happens without partnerships, and we are deeply inspired by and grateful to the many older adults, community members, organizations, and colleagues who work every day to make our community a place where people of all ages can thrive. Addressing the needs of older adults means addressing a myriad of factors: housing, transportation, health, communications, inclusivity, accessibility, employment, and more. This is no singular person or team responsible for supporting our aging population; instead, it takes efforts from all sectors. Over the coming years, our population will continue to age and the forward-looking work happening now will have longstanding consequences. Ignoring the needs of older adults today can have devastating consequences for our community in the future. This framework takes Age Friendly Seattle through 2027, but the work does not end there. It is the ongoing, collaborative efforts made by multiple people, organizations, and institutions that will make Seattle an increasingly great place to grow up and grow up.
SECTION I: ECONOMIC SECURITY

Helping older adults retain Financial Resources

The ability to have and retain financial resources while aging is critical. Financial insecurity can lead to poor nutrition and untreated health problems, unsafe living conditions or relocations, and reduced social connectivity. Seattle has enjoyed a booming economy for many years but not all residents have benefitted equally: many older adults live on fixed incomes and rising costs of living—especially housing—has created financial strain and pushed many low-income people outside the city. Our state's aging population is mostly lower income: 54% have incomes below $50K, and one in five older adults relies on social security as their only form of income. Should someone require long-term care and supportive services in their later years, the cost can be catastrophic for older adults and their families. Age Friendly Seattle aims to support older Seattleites' ability to maintain the economic resources necessary to age in their communities and enjoy healthy and fulfilling later years. Because economic stability can determine someone’s ability to afford medication, eat nutritional foods, and enjoy outings with friends; we expect that by supporting the financial security of older adults, we will also improve their health and social connectivity.

WHO Domains of Livability addressed in this section include Housing; Transportation; Social Participation; Health and Community Services; Outdoor Spaces and Buildings; Civic Participation & Employment; Respect & Inclusion

Goals in this section are:

1. Older adults have increased access to housing options and affordability.
2. More housing stock meets accessibility needs.
3. Transportation options meet the needs of older adults.
4. Older adults can plan financially for retirement and elder financial abuse is decreased.
5. Businesses and workplaces are more age-friendly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Race &amp; Social Justice Considerations</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Older adults have increased access to affordable housing options.</td>
<td>Homeownership is a tool for building generational wealth, but people of color have faced historical barriers to this: in Seattle, 26% of Black and Latinx people own homes, compared with 51% of white people. Black people are disproportionately more likely to live in Seattle or King County public housing authority buildings, and households of color are more likely to be rent-burdened than white households. Because people of color are less likely to own homes than white people, they are less likely to benefit from programs aimed at supporting homeowners such as property tax exemption or weatherization resources. As we prioritize efforts, it will be important to include renters’ needs as well as consider pathways and barriers to building home equity. Development models can impact displacement, which primarily impacts communities of color. Additionally, some housing models may not be equally available: language barriers might prevent someone from home-sharing (18% of Seattle residents are immigrants, and the public school district reports 150 languages spoken), and implicit bias may influence co-housing decisions.</td>
<td>1a. Encourage the expansion of housing options that meet the needs of older adults.</td>
<td>Provide input on City plans and policies to encourage the expansion of “missing middle” housing options</td>
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<td>I.2. More housing stock meets accessibility needs. Emphasizing accessibility in home design can have a positive impact on development decisions. An increased number in new homes constructed with accessibility in mind will result in more choices for older adults and less competition for slim inventory.</td>
<td>1b. Educate older adults about available housing assistance programs, including property tax reductions, home repair, eviction prevention, and more.</td>
<td>Conduct mailing to discount card holders age 60+ about property tax relief</td>
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<td>1c. Explore and promote innovative housing models and support systems aimed at allowing people to age in place.</td>
<td>Develop and make public a comprehensive list of existing and emerging local models and considerations</td>
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Additional goals/strategies supporting this:

<p>| 2. More housing stock meets accessibility needs. | People of color, renters, and people with lower incomes are more likely to experience disabilities as they age that can make it difficult to safely stay in homes not designed for accessibility. People are also living longer, and therefore aging into and living with disabilities for a longer amount of time. <a href="https://www.datatool.kingcounty.gov/saferouthub/long_term_care">The most recent BRFSS data for King County indicates that 27% of people aged 65-74 have a hearing, vision, or mobility impairment.</a> | 2a. Educate and engage industry stakeholders in efforts to build homes that are more accessible for people experiencing disabilities now and in the future. |
| | Implementing principles like Universal Design helps people of all ages and stages of life enjoy their home safely and for many years. It can help reduce fall risks, avoid costly retrofits, more easily incorporate future assistive technologies, and encourage social engagement by making homes easy to get in and out of. Funders, developers, architects, builders, designers, product vendors, and others can all play a role in advancing these principles in practice. | Support the community-led Northwest Universal Design Council in having a presence at building tradeshows |
| | 1d. Help older adults benefit from subsidized housing options, including supportive services. | Support a pilot project to better coordinated the provision of health services in affordable housing buildings where older adults live. |
| | Senior housing exists in Seattle, including SHA buildings, 202 housing, and other Housing Levy-funded residences. WA benefits from a Medicaid waiver that allows health care services normally provided in clinical settings to be administered at home, and many eligible people reside in subsidized housing units. We can support efforts to ensure the maximum number of people benefit from this and can better age in place. | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>3. Transportation options meet the needs of older adults.</strong></th>
<th><strong>People of color, people with disabilities, and people with lower incomes are more likely to rely on and use public transit like King County Metro.</strong> It will be important to consider where efforts are prioritized geographically, as well as language needs for signage and information dissemination (18% of Seattle residents are immigrants, and 150+ languages are spoken). Older adults of different races, genders, and</th>
<th><strong>2b. Educate consumers and encourage them to address accessibility needs before they become urgent.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Promote enrollment in the CAPABLE program for home modifications</strong></th>
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<td>It is important that older adults have access to transportation that fits their mobility needs and their budget. Many older adults choose to drive into their later years, but others chose to stop driving due to vision or mobility loss, medications that interfere with functions.</td>
<td>Accessibility is often weighed against cost implications on housing prices, which can potentially negatively impact these same communities. People of color are more likely to spend a large portion of their income on housing: 2 out of 3 Black and Native Americans in Seattle are rent burdened. Renting households (disproportionately people of color) may lack the power and/or means to invest in renovations to improve accessibility, while homeowners (largely white) are better positioned to retrofit. The significantly greater wealth held by white households makes investing in retrofits and assistive technologies easier than for BIPOC families (in Seattle, 41% of households of color live in liquid asset poverty and the median white household income is over 2x higher than Black households).</td>
<td>Most people avoid planning for older age, including making the home modifications they may need until an injury occurs or daily functions are severely hindered. By anticipating need, people can avoid falls, ease daily life, and avoid unnecessary expenses and stress.</td>
<td>Encourage affordable housing developers to build with consideration to Smart Home technologies that can support Assistive Technologies in the future.</td>
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<td><strong>2a. Help make retrofitting, home repairs, weatherization, and in-home assistive technologies more affordable and easier to adopt for people of all incomes.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>As people’s needs evolve, their home may need to change, also. Programs exist to offset the financial cost of renovations and modifications, and some older adults are already taking advantage of these (the majority of people who access Seattle Office of Housing’s weatherization assistance are 60+). New homes can be built to anticipate needs, including uses of Assistive Technologies that can make aging, living with a disability, and/or caregiving easier. Community feedback has indicated many older adults have difficulty locating and vetting reliable home repair vendors.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2c. Help make retrofitting, home repairs, weatherization, and in-home assistive technologies more affordable and easier to adopt for people of all incomes.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Help lead guided tours through urban environments so design and building professionals understand potential barriers to mobility.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3a. Advance the age-friendliness and walkability of Seattle’s streets and neighborhoods.</strong></td>
<td>**Avoiding traffic collisions is critical, as older adults experience worse outcomes from accidents than younger people. People 70+ have higher crash fatality rate deaths when they are in the car, and pedestrians 75+ have a more than 2x fatality rate as younger people. Factors such as vision, hearing, and cognitive decline, delayed decision-making, and decreased mobility make older adults vulnerable as pedestrians. Falls, a leading cause of</td>
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needed for driving, cognitive decline, personal financial decisions, and other reasons. Public transportation is critical to being able to get to work, medical appointments, social outings, and shopping. Having access to reliable transportation is an important part of remaining independent, but on-demand services like taxis and ride shares can be cost prohibitive and don’t always meet the needs of people with disabilities. 40% of people with disabilities and 16% of people 55+ report using KC Metro for all or most of their transportation needs, and between 45-52% of KC Metro riders each quarter are 55+. Transportation also includes walking, rolling, and biking, physical activities that are known to improve health and support staying socially connected.

cultures may have experiences with racism and microaggressions that may impact their comfort levels using public transit or walking on the streets. People with disabilities can face different barriers when trying to navigate transit providers, and when walking, rolling, or biking between stops or as a primary mode of transportation.

dea for older adults, can be prevented through design and maintenance of streets and sidewalks. Safe walking, biking, and rolling routes allow older adults to get to public transit stations, and to safely exercise and socialize. Safer streets benefit people of all ages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3b. Help grow rider knowledge about available transportation options, including discounts and special needs transit.</th>
<th>15% of King County Metro’s ridership already access the Regional Reduced Fare Permit available to those 65+. Given the ridership’s large percentage of older adults overall, it’s possible more people qualify than are currently benefiting. A patchwork of special needs transportation services exists in our region and navigating this can be challenging for riders.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participate in and support group rider trips to help familiarize older adults with public transit options.</td>
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<tr>
<th>3c. Help improve ridership experience for older adults using public transportation.</th>
<th>While older adults are more satisfied with King County Metro’s services than any other age group (44%), some older adults have expressed concerns about safety and suggested this as a reason they avoid public transit. KC Metro reports that about 1 in 5 riders of all ages have concerns about personal safety, and these are greater during nighttime hours than daytime hours.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct audit of lighting at transit stops near where older adults reside</td>
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<tr>
<th>3d. Help increase availability, accessibility, and affordability of transit, including special needs transit.</th>
<th>Transit in Seattle is geared toward commuters (51% of King County Metro riders use it to commute to/from work) and older adults often need transportation during the middle of the day. People with disabilities must navigate a patchwork of programs and operators in order to find an option that meets their needs, which can be a barrier to getting to and from places as needed.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support launch of online app for riders to book special needs transportation</td>
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</table>
4. **Older adults can plan financially for retirement and elder financial abuse is decreased.**

Many older adults struggle with rising costs of living, increased health care bills, limited or no savings or investments, and reduced and fixed incomes. Fear and stigma can prevent individuals and families from planning ahead and avoiding financial stress. Unfortunately, incidence of elder financial fraud and abuse is rising; an estimated 5M+ older adults are impacted nationally each year. WA State's Adult Protective Services has seen steep increases in the number of reports filed. Several factors put older adults at increased risk, including "stringed relationships," social isolation, and cognitive decline.

**Additional goals/strategies supporting this:**

- **III.5. Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.** Improving digital literacy can reduce the risk of online scams and assist in money management and financial planning.

- **Entire Section III: Social Connectivity.** Being socially isolated is a risk factor for financial fraud and abuse. It increases vulnerability to romantic scams and other financial exploitations.

4a. **Help educate consumers about how to plan for retirement and meet their financial goals, and how to protect themselves and others from fraud and abuse.**

Communities of color have been historically marginalized and discriminated against by financial and governmental institutions. This may impact someone’s willingness to share information, report a crime, or be receptive to certain messengers. People of color, women, immigrants, and LGBTQ+ people are also less likely to have accumulated wealth from savings and investment income, and less likely to have had jobs offering retirement benefits. The gender pay gap—which is worse for women of color—compounds over a lifetime and women receive less social security income than men. Efforts to support financial planning should be sensitive to these different economic realities.

Education and support can help people address financial fears, set and reach realistic goals, and prevent being victimized by scams and abuse.

4b. **Help educate families, caregivers, banks, and other institutions to spot red flags.**

While the majority of financial abuse cases sadly involve a trusted relationship, family members and caregivers can also play an important role in identifying and reporting abuse. Bankers often have visibility into irregular spending patterns and can also help alert people to potential abuse.

Distribute tips sheet to middle-aged people via PTA groups.

Hold Civic Coffee events focused on this topic.
5. Businesses and workplaces are more age-friendly.

Older adults are working longer, yet many still fear negative impacts from ageism in the workplace. There are many opportunities beyond ADA requirements to make environments accessible and friendly to all people so that older adults can more easily work, shop, and socialize.

Additional goals/strategies supporting this:

- **II.1. Ageism and stigma against older adults and aging is reduced.** (Section II, Goal 1) The number of age discrimination complaints and lawsuits is on the rise, with companies paying out millions to victims nationally. 62% of workers aged 55+ believe older workers face discrimination due to ageism. Ageism can limit opportunities for promotions and training and can create a negative work environment that can lead people to leave the workforce earlier than preferred.

6a. Grow business participation and consumer utilization of Gold/FLASH card discount program.

Offering discounts to older adults can help conserve their economic resource and a robust network of diverse participating businesses can help ensure all older adults can benefit, whether they are shopping for necessities or exploring entertainment, and no matter where in Seattle they live, work, and play.

6b. Educate businesses about ways they can better meet older adults’ needs.

Being considerate of mobility, lighting, sound and other needs can reduce barriers for older adults to shop, attend events, and participate in activities. Businesses can benefit by becoming "age-friendly," as older adults are the fastest-growing population in the United States with 1 in 5 Americans predicted to be 65+ by 2030. We have already created some tools to support businesses.

6c. Support training, work placement programs, and part-time work opportunities for older adults in the workforce

Continued income from working in older years can be an important component of economic stability. Workplaces also benefit from the experience and skills older adults offer. However, the 2017 AFS survey revealed nearly 1 in 3 older adults feel Seattle lacks equal access to work opportunities regardless of age, jobs adapted to people with disabilities, job training for older adults, and/or a range of flexible job opportunities. Many older workers also act as caregivers for aging parents or spouses, and flexible schedules can help accommodate this.

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In addition to the above, several goals listed elsewhere in this framework also pertain to Economic Security in other ways:

- **All of Section II: Health & Wellbeing:** Health costs often increase with age, and maintaining good health can help someone avoid expensive medications, treatments, and care. When a loved one does require care, family members—often older adult spouses—may be forced to...
reduce their hours or leave the paid workforce entirely, adding financial strain to families. Efforts to improve health will also support stronger economic security for older adults and their families.
SECTION II: HEATH & WELL-BEING

Helping older adults retain Physical Resources

Aging and illness do not have to go hand-in-hand, and it is possible to experience minimal health complications while growing older. Being healthy, mobile, and free from pain allows older adults to continue doing the hobbies they love, enjoying social activities, participating in the workforce, and living in their home. Preventative measures, environmental factors, access to health care services, and social connectivity can all play a role in enabling people to thrive physically and mentally in their later years. However, many older people do experience a range of health challenges and medical expenses can be a serious burden on older adults, particularly those living on fixed incomes. In Seattle, the average life expectancy is over 83, more than 7 years longer than the nationally average, though stark racial disparities exist. People of color are also more likely to live with a chronic illness and report poorer health in general than white people. Forty-five percent of people 75+ in King County live with a disability, and there is a strong correlation between income and disability: over half of people earning under $15,000/year report a disability, while only 10% of those earning over $75,000 do. Age Friendly Seattle can help create accessible environments and connect people to available resources. We expect that by supporting the health of older adults, we will also enhance people’s ability to remain economically stable and socially connected in their later years.

WHO Domains of Livability addressed by the following goals include Health & Community Services; Social Participation; Civic Participation & Employment; Outdoor Spaces & Buildings; Respect & Inclusion; Communication & Information

Goals in this section are:

1. Ageism and stigma against older adults and aging is reduced.
2. Physical activity and exercise is increased among older adults.
3. Caregivers are supported.
4. Brain health is improved and people experiencing memory loss are supported.
5. Falls are reduced.
6. Safety is improved for older adults.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Race &amp; Social Justice Considerations</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example Action</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Ageism and stigma against older adults and aging is reduced.</strong></td>
<td>Ageism can compound with other “isms,” including racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism. The effects of these injustices accumulate over a lifetime, and it is important to consider the many layers of discrimination an older adult may have—and may still be—experiencing. Ageism often goes hand-in-hand with ableism. Views on aging and older adults can vary across races and cultures: in some communities, age may be celebrated while in others it is feared. Women and men may also experience ageism differently.</td>
<td><strong>1a. Improve City of Seattle employees' understanding of ageism and how we can best serve older adults.</strong></td>
<td>Create and disseminate an anti-ageism training available to City of Seattle staff.</td>
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<td><strong>The WHO calls ageism a global challenge,</strong> as it contributes to poor health, social isolation, economic insecurity, lower quality of life, and even pre-mature death. Ageism accounts for 6.3M cases of depression globally. It impacts the workplace (especially tech, which is a major industry in Seattle), social settings, and healthcare environments. Internalized ageism is responsible for poorer health outcomes and higher costs to the healthcare system, as people who have negative views on aging are less likely to engage in healthy behaviors like medication adherence, exercise, and good nutrition. Although people start receiving ageist messages in childhood and those are reinforced over time, it is possible to reduce ageism through policies, educational interventions, and intergenerational contact.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other goals/strategies supporting this:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1b. Reach mid-life and younger people with information about aging readiness</strong></td>
<td>Host a forum on aging readiness aimed at mid-life adults.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- <strong>Ill.1a. Increase accessibility of event venues and programming, including arts, entertainment, educational, and cultural events.</strong> Designing events to</td>
<td><strong>1c. Promote intergenerational activities.</strong></td>
<td>Help market jobs to older adults so that workplace teams are more intergenerational.</td>
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meet the needs of all reduces the ageism ingrained in our society and makes it easier for older adults to engage socially, which has health benefits.

- **III.1e. Encourage buildings and structures (bus stops, hotels, restrooms, parking lots, theaters) to use Universal Design standards.** Designing physical spaces to meet the needs of all reduces the ageism ingrained in our society and makes it easier for older adults to engage in all facets of life, including social participation, exercise, and health services. Universal Design can help reduce fall risks and send the message that all ages are welcome and valued.

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<tr>
<th>1d. Expand the Age Friendly Seattle discount directory and increase consumer utilization.</th>
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<tr>
<td>A recent survey of older adults participating in the Age Friendly Seattle Gold Card discount program revealed that people who accessed the discounts felt much more supported by their city than those who did not. This suggests that expanding utilization will reduce perceived ageism. Older adults who do not access discounts commonly cite a lack of vendors as the reason. Expanding the number and type of participating businesses will address this.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1e. Reframe messaging and narratives about aging and older adults.</td>
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<td>Messaging is a powerful tool and can either create or reduce stigma. There are many internal and external opportunities to influence and adjust messages to reduce fear and stigma.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2d. Physical activity and exercise is increased among older adults.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Seattle, neighborhoods with more people of color experience worse health outcomes, including higher rates of diabetes, obesity, kidney disease, and self-reported poor mental and physical health. Racial bias in the healthcare system can result in lower quality of care for people of color and serves as a</td>
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<tr>
<td>2a. Support and encourage use of parks and other outdoor spaces.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Older adults in Seattle rank the park system as one of the best features of our city. Evidence suggests that spending time outdoors can boost mood and encourage healthy behaviors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target solicitations to businesses in the areas older adults report most interest in (ex: arts, culture, and entertainment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct a photo shoot capturing non-stigmatizing images of older adults; encourage use of these citywide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create and distribute a calendar featuring Seattle parks and special features to visit each month</td>
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dementia, and slow the symptoms of Parkinson’s Disease and other chronic diseases. 73% of older adults in King County report living with a chronic disease, and chronic illnesses are among the leading causes of death, disability, and hospitalization in King County. Less than 25% of those 65+ in King County engage in activities that meet aerobic and strengthening guidelines. According to King County Public Health, 49% of all people in Seattle are at increased health risk due to being overweight and/or obese.

Additional goals/strategies supporting this:

- **I.3a. Improve the walkability and age-friendliness of Seattle’s sidewalks and neighborhoods.** The CDC highlights that even limited exercise is better than none, and walking as part of daily errands and activities can contribute to this.

**3. Caregivers are supported.**

It is estimated that $271.6 billion worth of unpaid caregiving is done by family and friends each year in the U.S. In WA alone, Alzheimer’s caregivers contribute about 429 million hours of unpaid care annually. Family caregivers comprise an essential component of health care for many older adults, whether that’s helping to arrange medical appointments and travel, manage medication reminders, offer household help, or prove daily support with dressing, eating, and other functions. Caregivers may be older adults themselves, and many face the dual pressures of raising children and caring for aging parents. There is a growing shortage of paid caregivers, and family caregiving responsibilities may be deterrent to accessing care for some BIPOC communities. Exercise is one tool for staying healthy and deterring the need for chronic disease management, yet the ability to exercise may be dependent on one’s access to safe streets, local parks, and free time. Because 18% of Seattleites are immigrants and 150+ languages are spoken, culture relevance and language access needs should be factored into programming, as well as geographic diversity. The needs of older adults experiencing disabilities such as mobility or memory loss should also be considered.

**2. Support the availability of exercise programs for older adults.**

Walking groups and other ongoing programs can encourage routine exercise while also promoting social connectivity and volunteer leadership opportunities.

**2b. Support the availability of exercise programs for older adults.**

Support relaunch of Seattle’s Sound Steps walking program

**2c. Help instill healthy habits in younger people.**

Being healthy and staying healthy early in life increases the likelihood of good health in later years.

**3. Caregivers are supported.**

People of color are more likely to be family caregivers and are also more likely to maintain fulltime employment while caregiving. 75% of caregivers are women, and female caregivers tend to do more work than male caregivers (though for spousal caregivers over 75, it is equal). LGBTQ+ people may face unique caregiving support needs due to limited family networks. Cultural attitudes about caregiving and familial responsibilities can differ, and it is important to consider the diverse perspectives and needs of families throughout Seattle, including the relevance of giving and receiving care by

**3a. Expand access to training and support programs.**

Although caregivers play an essential role, many are untrained and shoulder heavy responsibilities without much respite. Increasing access to support and training can help caregivers feel confident in the care they provide, get connected to helpful resources, find a community of support, and avoid burn-out.

**3b. Support the expansion and adoption of assistive technologies.**

Many assistive technologies can aid caregiving. For example, AT can remind someone when to take medications and help them perform daily activities. Mobility monitoring may be helpful to people caring for a loved one with dementia.

- Support health programming for youth and families led by other City teams and seek opportunities for intergenerationa l elements.

- Vet new training programs and support their availability to Seattle residents.

- Feature Assistive Technologies at community events where people can learn more about their uses.
increase if current healthcare workforce trends continue: by 2030, nearly 77,000 home care aides will be needed to serve Medicaid clients, but data trends show that shortages will worsen over the next 20 years, including in WA.

Other goals/strategies supporting this:

- **I.2. More housing stock meets accessibility needs.** Accessible homes can help people stay independent and perform daily tasks for longer, reducing the reliance on caregivers. When support is required, accessible homes can make caregiving easier.

- **I.5. Workplaces and businesses are more age-friendly.** Many family caregivers also work full or part-time paid jobs to maintain economic stability. Flexible employment can be helpful and allow for fluctuating responsibilities.

**4. Brain health is improved and people experiencing memory loss are supported.**

Alzheimer’s disease is not a normal part of aging, but as people live longer, the risk of developing a form of dementia increases. It is estimated that someone develops the disease every 65 seconds in the U.S. As our population ages, this will likely accelerate—by 2050, the number of people living with Alzheimer’s is projected to double. Dementia is the cause of 1 in 3 senior deaths nationally, and Alzheimer’s is the 3rd leading age-adjusted disease in WA. In WA, an estimated 120,000 people live with dementia, supported by nearly 300,000 family caregivers. In King County, the number of people 65+ living with dementia is 12x as likely to develop Alzheimer’s as white older adults; more than 1 in 5 Black Americans over age 70 is living with Alzheimer’s. Latinx and Native people also have nationally higher rates than white people though currently in King County, whites have the highest rates of Alzheimer’s (AAA update). LGBTQ+ older adults may be more vulnerable to the impacts of Alzheimer’s disease because they face disproportionate social isolation and stigmatization, which can make it difficult to access support and exacerbate cognitive decline.

- **3c. Support the financial stability of family caregivers.**

Caregiving can be time and energy consuming, and family caregivers often reduce their hours in the paid workforce to accommodate new responsibilities. WA State has some existing infrastructure to support caregivers: family members can become the Individual Provider and be paid for caregiving, and the MAC and TSOA programs exist to offer some free services to unpaid caregivers.

- **3d. Support healthcare workforce development.**

A growing aging population is now coupled with a healthcare workforce shortage, putting pressure on family caregivers and straining resources (as of June 2021, there were 3M+ open nursing jobs in the US). The median age of a nurse in the US in 2021 was 52. Additional workers will be needed to provide care and avoid burn-out of paid and unpaid caregivers.

- **4a. Reduce stigma around memory loss and dementia.**

Stigma around memory loss can prevent people from accessing the support and care they need. It can lead to isolation, which may then accelerate memory loss. It can also contribute to the underreporting of financial fraud and abuse, as people avoid admitting victimization when they fear others will interpret it as a sign of cognitive decline.

- **4b. Support innovative approaches and efforts to preserve brain health.**

As more is known about brain health and a growing number of people experience memory loss, several innovative interventions are underway. These include walking tours to spark reminiscence, music listening...
expected to be 48,300—a 60% increase from 2018. Luckily, there are known risk factors that can be addressed, and communities around the world are working to become more "dementia-friendly" (including WA State). With support, people experiencing Alzheimer’s and their families can continue enjoying and contributing to our community.

Other goals/strategies supporting this:

- **All of Section III: Social Connectivity.**
  Social isolation is a risk factor for memory loss.
- **III.3c. Encourage the availability and utilization of art classes and programming for older adults.**
  Participatory art can have a positive effect on older adults' cognitive function and memory.
- **1.4b. Help educate families, caregivers, banks, and other institutions to spot red flags for financial abuse.**
  People experiencing memory loss are especially susceptible to financial fraud and abuse, and increasing awareness amongst their support network may help reduce risk.
- **II.3 Caregivers are supported.**
  Supported caregivers are better able to care for their loved ones and avoid burn-out.

5. **Falls are reduced.**

Injuries from falls are extremely common: about 1 in 4 older adults fall annually in the U.S., and Washington State has one of the highest fall rates in the nation at over 31%. Falls are the leading cause of fatal injury and the most common cause of non-fatal trauma-related hospital admissions. Once someone is injured in a fall, they may have difficulty returning home to age in place and 

Some risk factors, like diabetes and cognitive impairment, are more common in older adults of color than in older white adults. People of color are less likely to own their homes in Seattle (26% of Black and Latinx people own homes, compared with 51% of white people), and so may be less able to make necessary home modifications. The CDC recommends focusing on reaching sessions, and more. There is opportunity to share learnings and best-practices amongst organizations engaged in this work.

5a. **Educate older adults, mid-life adults, and caregivers about fall risk factors and how to mitigate them.**

The CDC points out that many people don't know what the risk factors are but reducing them can have serious positive impact; many mid-life adults provide support to their aging parents and can help spot and reduce fall risks if made aware of what to look for.

Remind Gold Card applicants that a Fall Risk assessment is covered in annual Medicare visit

listen to music together
instead need to be discharged to skilled nursing facilities. Many people need to spend over a year recovering from a fall and often fear another one, both of which can increase social isolation. Once people fall, they fall again: 2 in 3 will fall again within six months. In 2020, there were 199 fall-related deaths of people 65+ in King County.

Other goals/strategies supporting this:

- **II.2. Physical activity and exercise is increased among older adults.** Exercise is one of the key strategies for avoiding falls, as it can improve balance and strength.
- **I.2. More housing stock meets accessibility needs.** Home or environmental hazards are a factor in 50-70% of all falls. Home environments can also delay people’s discharge from health care settings. Safer home environments can reduce falls, promote recovery, and prevent re-injury.
- **II.6b. Support emergency preparedness.** Slippery surfaces caused by snow and ice create risk and becoming excessively hot or cold can lead to dehydration and disorientation, increasing the likelihood of falls. Preparing older adults for inclement weather can help reduce falls.

### 6. Improved safety for older adults.

Older adults have expressed concerns about their personal safety. This has ranged from feeling unsafe in housing buildings where drug use is happening, to experiencing theft and assault, to vulnerability to online scams and financial fraud.

**Additional goals/strategies supporting this:**

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<tr>
<th>6a. Understand and communicate appropriate safety risks to older adults.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Older adults of color experience the compound effects of racism and ageism, and may face unique safety concerns (for example, aggression toward people of Asian descent increased during the pandemic). &quot;Safety&quot; can be a broad umbrella and encompass things like physical safety as well as emotional safety; for example, some LGBTQ+ older adults who have disabilities and/or are more socially isolated have greater fear of crime than other people.</td>
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**Hold Civic Coffee events that focus on personal safety, including available resources such as community escorts**
II.1. Ageism and stigma against older adults is reduced. Stigma against older adults can contribute to abuse and discrimination. Ageism can also increase older adults' isolation, which can exacerbate fear of crime.

I.3c. Improve ridership experience on public transportation. Safety concerns are cited as a reason some older adults avoid public transit.

I.2c. Support home weatherization efforts. Properly weatherized homes can help prevent adverse effects of extreme heat and cold.

II.5 Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults. Digital literacy can reduce the risk of being victimized by online scams.

- Adults may feel unsafe being openly queer in a new environment like assistive living. Non-English speakers may be reluctant to fill out police reports, and crime impacting some communities may be underrepresented.

- People of color are more likely to live in areas with higher environmental risks and vulnerability to climate change. In Seattle, people of color are also less likely to own their home (26% of Black and Lantinx people own homes, compared with 51% of whites) and therefore do not have as much control over weatherization and modifications. LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and people with language access needs may face unique barriers when trying to access shelters or heating/warming sites.

II.6b. Support emergency preparedness and response that recognizes the unique needs of older adults, including impacts from extreme weather.

Climate change is causing more extreme weather events in Seattle, and this will likely increase in the years to come. Older adults are often the most adversely affected population during extreme weather emergencies, including cold and heat. For example, Vancouver’s 2021 heat wave caused 569 deaths, and 79% of those were people 65+. Equipping older adults and providers to be ready for emergencies can help reduce safety concerns during events when normal operations may be disrupted (ex: transit, police response)

Coordinate with King County and other partners to align on information gaps and messaging in case of emergencies.

In addition to the above, several goals listed elsewhere in this framework also pertain to Health and Wellness in other ways:

- All of Section III: Social Connectivity. Research increasingly demonstrates that social isolation and loneliness have adverse physical, cognitive, and mental health impacts. Efforts to improve social connectivity will also lead to better health outcomes for older adults.

- The impacts of hearing loss are mitigated (Section III, Goal 2): Many older adults experience loss of hearing with age. This is a health issue that can have impacts on a person’s social connectivity.

- Older adults have increased access to affordable housing options (Section I, Goal 1) & More housing stock meets accessibility needs (Section I, Goal 2): People are living longer and therefore aging into and living with disabilities for more time. Homes that are built and designed for accessibility can prevent in-home accidents like falls, enable someone to live independently for longer, and reduce caregiving burdens.

- Transportation options meet the needs of older adults (Section I, Goal 3): Transportation has been deemed a social determinant of health. Not only is it required for accessing medical care, but transportation modes like walking, rolling, and biking are physical activities known to improve health. Older adults are especially vulnerable to accidents involving cars, and safe streets help reduce collisions.
Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults (Section III, Goal 5): Older adults as well as caregivers can benefit from virtual health care and information access, and assistive technologies can help people adjust to health needs as they age. This all requires internet connectivity, devices, and know-how.
SECTION III: SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

Helping older adults retain Social Resources

The COVID-19 pandemic shed new light on an existing challenge: the unmet need for social connectivity. This affects people of all generations, though older adults face unique circumstances that make isolation common. Mobility challenges can make leaving the home difficult, the loss of spouses and friends may cause depression and reduce social networks, and hearing impairments can make socializing harder. Research has shown that some people are especially vulnerable to social isolation, including immigrant and LGBTQ older adults who may face language barriers, stigma, and discrimination. Ageism is another factor contributing to isolation. For example, accessibility may be an afterthought when designing spaces, and this can limit older adults’ ability to enjoy entertainment and socializing venues. Internalized ageism can lead someone to believe that they no longer have a role in their community, and therefore become increasingly isolated. Social isolation often leads to loneliness, which research has increasingly shown is a driver—not a byproduct—of poor health outcomes including memory loss and dementia. By helping older adults retain and even increase their social resources, we expect to also have a positive impact on their health.

WHO Domains of Livability addressed in this section include Social Participation; Respect & Inclusion; Community & Health Services; Communications & Information; Civic Participation & Employment; Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Goals in this section are:

1. Access to arts and entertainment is increased.
2. The impacts of hearing loss are mitigated.
3. Older adults are engaged in volunteer and civic opportunities.
4. Programming aimed at reducing social isolation is successful.
5. Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.
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<th>Goal</th>
<th>Race &amp; Social Justice Considerations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Access to arts and entertainment is increased.</td>
<td><em>There is a growing body of evidence pointing to the positive impacts of arts and entertainment for older adults.</em> Participatory art can have powerful physical and mental health benefits and create regular opportunities to connect with other people. Attending a performance can help create social bonds and shared experiences, and access emotions that one might not experience daily.</td>
<td>1a. Increase the accessibility of programming, including at arts, entertainment, educational, and cultural events. Many older adults experience disabilities such as hearing loss and mobility challenges that may prevent them from entering a space and enjoying content. Language-access is also commonly needed for older immigrants to participate fully in events. Inaccessible spaces or content can cause older adults, especially those with disabilities, to forgo participation. Conversely, spaces and events that are designed for people of all abilities create a welcoming environment that can promote social participation and reduce stigma around aging.</td>
<td>Hold a forum for entertainment and hospitality professionals on best practices in sound and lighting design</td>
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<td>1b. Expand the age-friendly discount directory to include more arts, entertainment, and cultural opportunities. Older adults have told us they’d like to see more discounts related to arts and culture. Making these opportunities more affordable may help encourage social outings.</td>
<td>Conduct targeted business outreach to entertainment vendors</td>
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<td>1c. Encourage the availability and utilization of art classes and programming for older adults. Increasing evidence suggests that participatory art has positive effects on older adults physical and mental health, including less doctor’s visits and medications, reduction in falls, better morale and less depression, and improved cognitive function and memory. Artists and City-run programs help provide an infrastructure for older adults to access these opportunities.</td>
<td>Promote art classes to new audiences of older adults</td>
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<td>1d. Encourage buildings and structures (bus stops, hotels, restrooms, parking lots, theaters) to use Universal Design standards.</td>
<td>Provide staff support to the work of the Northwest</td>
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</table>
### Universal Design principles are intended to make all spaces fully accessible to as many people as possible. UD benefits older adults, parents with young children, people with permanent and temporary disabilities, and others. There is already a strong group of advocates for UD in Seattle, and we can support their community-led efforts.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age Friendly Seattle 2022–2027 Strategic Framework</th>
<th>Universal Design Council</th>
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#### 2. The impacts of hearing loss are mitigated.

The National Institute of Health reports that nearly 1 in 3 people between 65-75 have hearing loss, and this increases with age. Loss of hearing can cause people to become withdrawn and lead to depression and social isolation. People with hearing loss also have a higher likelihood of developing dementia.

Hearing loss is more prevalent in white people than in Black people (nearly 2x as high). Consider the location of OTC device outreach efforts. Consider the racial composition of typical audiences at venues where hearing loops are encouraged.

- **2a. Educate consumers about available assistive-listening devices and support affordable access to these.**
  - New technologies and policies continue to advance the accessibility of these devices, including a new category of OTC hearing aids for mild and moderate hearing loss. Studies have shown less cognitive decline amongst people who use hearing aids versus those who do not. Continual education is needed to help consumers take advantage of resources available.

- **2b. Promote the use of assistive technologies at events and in gathering spaces.**
  - Hearing loops can improve people’s ability to hear by reducing background noise, but this requires venues to have the right infrastructure installed and participants to have hearing aids. Other assistive technologies can help, too, such as closed captioning on videos or noise-cancelling insulation at restaurants.

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<th>Provide ongoing reminders about OTC options at Civic Coffee and other events</th>
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#### 3. Older adults are engaged in volunteer and civic opportunities.

Some research suggests that there are health benefits for older adults who volunteer, including better psychosocial.

Many volunteer opportunities may not be available in languages other than English, and this may limit opportunities for non-English speakers (Approximately 13% of people over age 65 have limited English proficiency in King County). Older adults of color are more likely to be family caregivers and provide kinship care than older white adults, and therefore may have

- **3a. Share information about volunteer opportunities, including Boards and Commissions, and support efforts to recruit older adult volunteers.**
  - Opportunities exist around Seattle, and we can help inform older adults about these. Organizations may not know how to reach older adults, and we can support them to do so.

- **3b. Promote the use of volunteer opportunities at events.**
  - Establish regular feature in monthly e-blasts highlighting local volunteer opportunities.
outcomes. Additionally, including older adults in decision-making spaces and community leadership roles helps ensure the needs of aging people are represented in policies and priorities.

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<tr>
<th>3b. Create opportunities for older adults to connect with elected leaders.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Older adults bring unique and important perspectives, and Boards and Commissions are often looking for new members to contribute.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging older adults in the civic process helps elected leaders understand and address their needs.</td>
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Less time to volunteer. Not all older adults may be eligible to vote. Decision-making bodies and other spaces that have been historically white, male, or heterosexually dominated may not feel welcoming to older adults of color, women, or LGBTQAI+ people.

3a. Create opportunities for older adults to connect with elected leaders.

Older adults who have immigrated to Seattle may be especially isolated due to language barriers, cultural differences, and limited family and friend networks. Caregiving responsibilities can lead to social isolation, and older adults of color are twice as likely to be caregivers than white people. The needs and time and resource constraints of caregivers must be considered. Older adults of color are more likely to experience poor health as well as economic insecurity, both of which can limit participation in certain activities.

4. Programming aimed at reducing social isolation is successful.

A wide range of interventions have been piloted in attempts to reduce loneliness and social isolation. Evidence suggests some effectiveness, and pursuing diverse approaches thoughtfully can likely help older adults stay socially connected as well as grow the collective understanding of successful measures.

4a. Disseminate information about current available programming to older adults.

Older adults bring unique and important perspectives, and Boards and Commissions are often looking for new members to contribute.

4b. Research and share ideas for effective programming and available funding sources.

Programming should consider accessibility from multiple perspectives.

Several community-based organizations around Seattle offer various programs, and we can help ensure people know how to access them.

Hold townhalls with elected representatives focused on aging issues

Add a well-organized section on our website listing resources

Convene a network of people working and researching this topic to share learnings, ideas and opportunities
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<tr>
<th>5. Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assistive technologies can help people hear better and improve their mobility, two factors that influence a person’s social connections. Day-to-day activities now rely on the internet, devices, and technical know-how. Older adults can benefit from virtual health care, information access, online shopping, and connecting remotely with friends and family. Several assistive technologies are now available to help older adults age in place, adhere to medication routines, and support caregivers. The right tools and knowledge are necessary for accessing these benefits. Seattle’s Digital Equity Initiative suggests that closing the digital gap requires device and technical support, greater internet connectivity, and skills building.</td>
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Skills training and coaching should be accessible in-language, to meet the diverse language needs of Seattle’s older adults. Outreach efforts should consider geographic ranges as well as in-language marketing materials. BIPOC people in Seattle are more likely to be low-income than white people, and this may affect access to devices and internet.

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<tr>
<th>5a. Support efforts to expand broadband access.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Without broadband access, older adults cannot benefit from virtual opportunities or many of the assistive technology devices available. Many older adults cite cost as a reason they don’t use the internet (15% of those 60-69, 22% of those 70-79, and 20% of those 80+).</td>
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Alert age-friendly discount applicants about vouchers and other discounts for broadband access.

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<tr>
<th>5b. Support education and skills training.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Most older adults have at least one device used for accessing the internet (99% of those aged 60-69, 96% of those 70-79, and 91% of those 80+). However, lack of skills and comfort may prevent people from using these devices: on a scale of 0-120, people 60-69 reported an average comfort level of 90, those 70-79 reported a score of 81, and those 80+ reported a score of 48. Comfort level decreases with age, and 28% of those 80+ share that they don’t know how to use the internet. Adoption of assistive technology often requires ongoing training and acquired comfort.</td>
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Connect older adults with local community organizations serving as digital navigators.

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<tr>
<th>5c. Support distribution of devices (ex: hotspots, webcams, digital assistants, etc.)</th>
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<tr>
<td>While most older adults have at least one device used for accessing the internet (99% of those 60-69, 96% of those 70-79, and 91% of those 80+), they might benefit from specific devices that meet their needs such as webcams to communicate with friends and health care providers, or assistive technology devices to support medication adherence and support caregivers.</td>
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Work with housing authority staff to identify people who could benefit from these devices.
In addition to the above, several goals listed elsewhere in this framework also pertain to Social Connectivity in other ways:

- **Older adults have access to affordable housing options** (Section I, Goal 1) & **More housing stock meets accessibility needs** (Section I, Goal 2): Aging in place allows older adults to retain social ties with neighbors, friends, and family. When older people are forced to move in search of more affordable or accessible housing, they lose these familiar connections. The neighborhood, too, loses opportunities for intergenerational interaction, which is beneficial to people of all ages.

- **Transportation options meet the needs of older adults** (Section I, Goal 3): Maintaining social ties and participating in social, entertainment, educational, and civic events often require travel. Modes like walking, biking, and rolling can be social activities enjoyed with friends and neighbors.

- **Businesses and workplaces are more age-friendly** (Section I, Goal 5): Workplaces can be avenues for social connectivity, including intergenerational engagement. Making workplaces more welcoming for older adults can prevent pre-mature retirements that unnecessarily reduce social networks.

- **Brain health is improved and people experiencing memory loss are supported** (Section II, Goal 4): Maintaining cognitive function can prolong participation in hobbies and social activities. Reducing stigma around memory loss decreases barriers to social participation faced by people with dementia face and their caregivers, many of whom are older spouses.

- **Reduction in falls.** (Section II, Goal 4): Falls can cause significant injury that require a year or more of recovery. This loss of mobility and time spent away from home can increase social isolation.