



PETALUMA

SONOMA COUNTY
CALIFORNIA-USA

AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN 2023



The City of Petaluma is enthusiastically embracing a new initiative to increase awareness and engagement for Age-Friendly community improvements. The priorities articulated in this Age-Friendly ACTION PLAN include efforts currently underway as well as new multi-sector opportunities. While direct funding is limited, the potential for action is significant through alignment with community partners and programs.

OUR VISION IS TO VIEW EVERYTHING WE DO AS A PETALUMA COMMUNITY THROUGH AN AGE-FRIENDLY LENS.

THE FOCUS OF OUR AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN IS TO:

- Identify priorities and efforts underway
- Outline reasonable, achievable next steps
- Build teams and identify champions
- Seek funding
- Monitor progress closely

HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS ACTION PLAN

Our Age-Friendly Action Plan framework is informed by a priority-setting community workshop conducted on June 2, 2023 following the creation of a comprehensive, community-engaged, **Age-Friendly Needs Assessment Report***. We invited already-involved partners, stakeholders, as well as potential impact-makers for discussion about the Age-Friendly infrastructure we've built, the policy we've already set into motion, and the opportunities that a formalized plan provide to help our community further advance this initiative together. A summary of short-term next steps is included at the end of this document.

In January of 2020, the Petaluma City Council voted to join the Age-Friendly movement originated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and managed in North America by AARP as the Age-Friendly Network. Petaluma's Needs Assessment includes a survey of over 900 community residents, City staff, and key nonprofit leaders. While delayed by Covid, it was completed in 2022.

[*cityofpetaluma.org/agefriendlyneedsassessment](https://cityofpetaluma.org/agefriendlyneedsassessment)

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

TWO ISSUES WERE IDENTIFIED ACROSS TOPICS THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP:

- The need for more **information and support** for accessing care, services, and resources for healthy living. For details on the issue of information and support, see *Communications, Technology and Information below*.
- The expansion of the already robust senior volunteer culture into a **Modern Elder Brigade** (formal name to be determined) would address the following:
 - Provide an on-ramp for community engagement and connectedness.
 - Support health benefits shown to accrue to older volunteers.
 - Begin to change the narrative about older adults as a burden to a community resource.
 - Activate a motivated labor force to address community needs.
 - Help facilitate efforts of older adults who want to join/rejoin the paid workforce.

EXAMPLES OF HOW MODERN ELDERS MIGHT VOLUNTEER INCLUDE:

- Serving as adult volunteers for our walking school buses and in our schools (note: superintendent is now spearheading developing seniors volunteering in schools...)
- Staffing information and referral programs
- Helping others to plan for healthy aging
- Assisting local non-profits to meet their mission-driven goals

*For more information on a Modern Elder Brigade, see *Social/Civic Engagement below*.

COMMUNICATIONS, TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION

Better access to comprehensive information that supports independence, access to resources, and social engagement.

ACTIONS FOR BETTER ACCESS TO INFORMATION INCLUDE:

- A **Single Information Portal**, probably online, that not only directs users to existing resources for older adult care services (with the County’s 565-INFO line at the core) but delves deeper into local Petaluma resources from access to free food, to early bird restaurants, to music and events and opportunities to volunteer and connect. Live links to existing transportation planning, City news, and community organizations would also be provided.
- **Technology support and equipment** to help the majority of older adults access this this single portal and other resources themselves.
- **Development and distribution of accessible information** for those not on the Internet.
- **Walk-in capabilities for 1-1 assistance**, ideally in public libraries or a more centralized community or senior center. 1-1 assistance might also be provided in a centralized location by trained older adult volunteers – part of a “Modern Elder Brigade” as described below.
- **Greater/improved publicity about Age-Friendly resources that already exist.** This includes information about the lack of income guidelines for such services as iRides, public bathrooms, food, low and no-cost social and volunteer activities.

PRIORITY LEVEL: Immediate

NEXT STEPS:

- Learn more about 565-INFO, what it really offers and volume it can support.
- Explore publicity opportunities with the County.
- Expand technology support programming.
- Contact Petaluma Library to explore collaboration for walk-in and phone assistance provided by librarians or trained volunteers.

POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS/PARTICIPANTS:

- County
- Petaluma schools (teens providing support?)
- Library
- Existing technology programs and infrastructure providers
- City



HOUSING

Advance and build upon early success of current programs. Petaluma is making impactful progress by focusing on greater diversity of the housing supply city-wide. The goal is to bring prices down, provide more affordable senior housing, broaden the continuum of supported housing available, promote implementation of the Visitability Ordinance, and provide downtown housing for seniors to facilitate walking access to resources. (The city’s commitment to support 15-minute neighborhoods is Age-Friendly.)

HOUSING ADVANCEMENT INCLUDES:

- **A fuller continuum of supported living opportunities** that include in-home supports, low-touch residential settings, intergenerational housing, and “middle housing” as well as higher intensity settings. This would address affordability for middle-income seniors as well as low income.
- **Unhoused prevention/early intervention** to plan for situations when current housing may no longer be an option.
- Developing a land trust to **preserve affordability of senior mobile home parks.**
- **Support for downsizing** (finding alternatives, decluttering, packing, moving).
- **Revising rules that restrict live-in caregivers** in some rental settings.
- **Develop home-share opportunities** (both for among seniors and intergenerational).

PRIORITY: Highest priority/ Long term

NEXT STEPS:

Develop a clearer understanding of housing efforts currently in/nearing entry into the development pipeline. Establish relationships with potential developers to explore filling needs where gaps are greatest. The updated general plan will include recommendations.

POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS/PARTICIPANTS:

- Rebuilding Together
- City of Petaluma
- COTS
- All low-income, senior, and other housing and supported living developers interested in expanding the continuum and supply of housing for older adults



STREETS, TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNITY SPACES

Maintain momentum for greater impact. With federal and state funds, the City has made great progress to create a safe, walkable, multi-modal community focused on accessibility for all ages and abilities.

ADDITIONAL AGE-FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- **Improved access to personalized options** – Ideas include shuttles (cross-town, electric, shopping), micro-transit and transit-on-demand, affordable options for getting to medical appointments outside of Petaluma, broader awareness of resources that do exist like iRides and Paratransit, and bike sharing.
- **Better walking and biking environment** – Safer sidewalks in residential as well as commercial areas, prioritizing walking/biking safety for all ages throughout the community, 15-minute neighborhoods, locating more senior housing within walkable distance to shopping and resources.
- **Additional public bathrooms** (one is currently in planning stages.).
- **Senior hub(s)** in a more central location in addition to the current senior center with more resources – a one-stop service and gathering center. This could also fit into other community activities with a location at the Fairgrounds, or at a school, and could offer resources to the community of all ages.
- **More gathering spaces for intergenerational use.** Possible use of vacant downtown buildings.
- **Use the Kmart facility** for social/day programs.

PRIORITY: Longer term. While a lot of this is underway, significant funding is needed for new activities.

NEXT STEPS:

- Communications: Better publicize existing transit options, new free public transit, location of public bathrooms, age friendly way-finding signage, etc.
- Continue to develop the concept of more centrally located gathering space(s) for intergenerational and/or specifically for senior use.

POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS/PARTICIPANTS:

- The City
- PPSC
- Other providers of personalized transportation such as Village Network, regional transit providers, and paratransit



HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Foster vitality and longevity for aging community members by providing education and access to resources that can be easily used by older adults and their caregivers.

EASY-TO-ACCESS EDUCATION AND RESOURCES INCLUDES:

- **Stronger Communications/Linkages about existing Care and Supports** – Need for a single information system that uses the existing County 565-INFO but builds on that to include linkages to localized social, political, events, transportation, free food, etc. Additional outreach, written materials and 1:1 support as previously described. Multi-lingual, culturally sensitive.
- **A multi-pronged educational effort for caregivers and those serving older adults** – This might be wrapped up into a 3-pronged “Caregiver Institute” but in any event would address:
 - **Caregiver 101** – In-person or video education for family members stepping up for the first time to care for a loved one who may be in crisis. Include vocabulary, lay of the land for services, specific contacts for help within Sonoma County for a range of types of help.
 - **Working with Seniors 101** – For allied health providers (e.g.: nutritionists, medical assistants) about working/communicating effectively and respectfully with seniors at all levels of ability.
 - **Workforce Development** – Training for paid and family caregivers on how to provide care at home. This would include a certification for paid caregivers and ideally, bonding.
- **Additional caregiver supports** – Including more and more affordable respite care, and day programs for both socializing and respite with adequate square footage and a centralized location
- **More programming aimed at prevention and early intervention** for healthy aging, as well as efforts to prevent crises before they occur. This includes:
 - More opportunities for upstream planning/engagement for healthy aging and to prevent homelessness
 - More affordable support for middle income seniors before they slide into crisis and into the crisis system of care (including homelessness)

PRIORITY: High priority for communications. Publicity about what exists, longer term for those projects requiring funding.

NEXT STEPS:

- Stronger information campaign.
- Seek champions and funding for larger projects.

POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS/PARTICIPANTS:

- The City
- The County
- Care management and care provider organizations
- SRJC Petaluma Campus

SOCIAL/CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Engage with passionate people. Petaluma is home to an already-involved civic community. Let's build on this readily available involvement.

PEOPLE-POWER FOR AN AGE-FRIENDLY PETALUMA INCLUDES:

- The expansion of the already robust senior volunteer culture into a **Modern Elder Brigade** (name to be determined) with some paid oversight (perhaps paid senior jobs in the future) to make things happen in town. Their activities might range from group gardening, to staffing information stations (for seniors or community as a whole), they can provide the adult supervision needed for walking school buses for children and volunteering in schools, they might conduct outreach to frail and homebound seniors for social connection and to help link them to services.
- **More culturally diverse** and intergenerational activities (including LGBTQ)
- **Stronger outreach and engagement** (in-home/online or in community) of those who are isolated and/or homebound, on or off the Internet.
- **Offer a wide range of social artistic, and educational opportunities** at affordable cost across the community.

PRIORITY: High priority to reach homebound/isolated seniors with healthful information, engagement, help to get online, etc. Longer term: Modern Elder Brigade may eventually require leadership and probably funds to manage, but could be highly decentralized at the start. Development of lifelong learning and community engagement needs to continue across all sectors and simple methods for sharing those opportunities needs to be developed – possibly with a single resource for information as outlined earlier.

NEXT STEPS:

- Explore and publicize existing senior volunteer opportunities
- Explore and publicize available community activities and lifelong learning in an easy to access format
- Look for opportunities/funding to develop and manage a more robust Elder Brigade
- Continue to expand identification and outreach to isolated and homebound seniors, offering supports both in the home and externally.

POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS/PARTICIPANTS:

- County 211 and 565-INFO
- PPSC
- Food banks
- Blue Zones
- Village Network
- Santa Rosa Junior College

SUMMARY OF NEXT STEPS

- Create an Age-Friendly Planning Committee and meet quarterly in the first year to support development of momentum.
- With an eye on alignment with the Governor's Master Plan on Aging, seek County, State and other funding for key priorities listed in this Plan.
- Begin with the following key Action Items:
 - Establish lines of communication and leaders to monitor funding potential in the public and private sectors.
 - Create an Information Campaign to increase awareness of resources that currently exist and the income guidelines (or lack of) where appropriate.
 - Boost housing preservation and prevention of homelessness through increased collaboration among providers, increased communications to seniors on what is available (while seeking additional funds).
 - Approach library for collaboration/assistance with information and referrals.
 - Approach SRJC for collaboration/assistance with caregiver training (paid and family).

PLANNING SESSION PRIORITIES AS VOTED ON BY PARTICIPANTS

Votes Section
Total

COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES

- More support to identify needs and connect people with services through a centralized written/electronic mechanism and live assistance ranging from live linkages to case management 7
- Expansion/strengthening of all aspects of in-home supportive care including availability of caregivers, training, living wage pay, and support for family caregivers..... 5
- More access to healthy and prepared food for a broad range of income levels - not always an income issue. Can be specialized diet, can be ability/safety to self-prepare..... 3
- More actively seeking out and serving our most isolated seniors 3 **20**

HOUSING

- Prevention and early intervention against becoming unhoused..... 6
- Affordable housing for seniors..... 5
- A more complete continuum of supported living options..... 5
- More accessible and appropriate to support independence at all income levels..... 3 **19**

STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION

- Cross-town connections/shuttles to facilitate shopping, getting to medical care, socializing 6
- More and more personalized public transit options..... 3
- Prioritize pedestrians over cars 3 **14**

COMMUNICATIONS, TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION

- A single, easy-to-access source for information on both senior resources and activities in the community - again, not just services 7
- Focused efforts to reach those most isolated and not on the Internet..... 5
- More low cost or free Internet training..... 2 **14**

SOCIAL/CIVIC PARTICIPATION

- A single, accessible resource to learn what is going on around town - not just services... 4
- More culturally diverse (including LGBTQ) and intergenerational activities..... 3
- Outreach and in-person and on-line offerings for those who are isolated and/or homebound..... 3 **13**

OUTDOOR AND COMMUNITY SPACE

- Safer sidewalks..... 4
- More bathrooms..... 3
- More community gathering spaces for older adults and intergenerational activities..... 3
- Think of active older adults, not just frail..... 2 **12**

OTHER

- Resource Centers, and Blue Zones (potentially) - Integration of efforts 4
- All efforts possible to prevent/mitigate the impact of climate change 3
- Who is here - only decision makers, feels like like-minded people only 2 **9**

EMPLOYMENT

- Jobs adapted for older adults and people with disabilities..... 2 **2**