



Age-Friendly San Rafael Strategic Action Plan 2020–2023

“An age-friendly community enables people of all ages to **actively participate** in community activities and treats everyone with **respect**, regardless of their age. It is a place that makes it easy for older people to **stay connected** to people who are important to them. And it is a place that helps people stay **healthy and active** even at the oldest ages and provides **appropriate support** to those who can no longer look after themselves.”

— *World Health Organization*

INTRODUCTION

Age-Friendly San Rafael Leadership Team

Chrisula Asimos, Marin County Commission on Aging

Caran Cuneo, County of Marin, Business Development and Employment (Ret.)

Gail Gifford, Senior Community Volunteer

Linda Jackson, Program Director, Aging Action Initiative; San Rafael School Board

Salamah Locks, Marin County Commission on Aging

Diana López, Marin County Commission on Aging; HICAP Counselor, Patient Navigator

Patty McCulley, City of San Rafael, Program Coordinator

Suzie Pollak, a founder of Marin Villages and CVNL

Sparkie Spaeth, Board Member, Marin Villages; Chair, San Rafael Village

Stakeholder Interviews

Susan Andrade-Wax, City of San Rafael, Library & Recreation Director

Henry Bankhead, City of San Rafael, Assistant Library & Recreation Director

Diana Bishop, City of San Rafael, Police Chief

Omar Carrera, CEO, Canal Alliance

Kate Colin, City of San Rafael, Vice Mayor

Christopher Gray, City of San Rafael, Fire Chief

Bill Guerin, City of San Rafael, Public Works Director

Nancy Masters, Jewish Family and Children's Services

Dr. Ruth Ramsey, Dr. Andrea Boyle, and Dr. Gina Tucker-Tighe, Dominican University

Others

Jennifer Golbus, Public Relations and Marketing Communication, Whistlestop

Nancy Frank, Survey Consultant

Catherine Quffa, Assistant Library & Recreation Director – Survey Support

Marin Aging & Adult Services, Age-Friendly Survey

Sami Mericle, Age-Friendly San Rafael Plan, Editor

Age-Friendly Marin Network

Special thanks for assistance with the Age-Friendly San Rafael Survey:

- San Rafael Public Libraries
- Albert J. Boro Community Center
- Terra Linda Community Center
- San Rafael Community Center
- Aldersley Retirement Community

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Age-Friendly San Rafael Leadership Team and Stakeholder Interviews	2
Letter from the Mayor	5
Message from Leadership	7
Introduction to the Plan	9
Community Profile	11
Action Plan	13
Domain 1: Housing	13
Domain 2: Employment	17
Domain 3: Civic Participation	23
Domain 4: Communication	25
Domain 5: Outdoor Spaces and Community Buildings	29
Domain 6: Community Preparedness	32
Domain 7: Respect and Social Inclusion	34
Appendix	36

LETTER FROM THE MAYOR



May 22, 2017

World Health Organization, Age-Friendly Communities
c/o AARP
150 Post Street, Suite 450
San Francisco, CA 94108

Dear World Health Organization, Age-Friendly Communities,

On behalf of the City of San Rafael, I am pleased to share our ongoing commitment to being an Age-Friendly City. We would like to request membership in the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. A citizen-led task force, named Age-Friendly San Rafael Task Force, is championing our local effort and working collaboratively with the City. Consequently, San Rafael is thrilled to submit our application to become designated as an Age-Friendly City.

The City of San Rafael has embraced the fact that our community is aging-in-place. Our middle age and older residents have become a larger proportion of the City's population since 2000. We have over 6,000 senior households (over one-half are 75 years and older) of which 73 percent are homeowners. As our community population ages, there is greater need for more supportive housing options and services. Acknowledging this need, the City's General Plan 2020 Housing Element includes policies that



reinforce senior housing and ageing-in-place assistance. With over 14 percent of the owner-occupied residential units, the City has made efforts to facilitate innovative ways for these residents to continue to live in their homes. In 2016, the City adopted a Junior Second Unit Ordinance, which offers a simple and affordable approach to re-purposing existing home space as a separate unit for the resident or a caregiver. In tandem with this effort, services such as Whistlestop’s “Meals-on-Wheels” help support aging in the home. The City has also strongly supported alternative housing options for seniors of all income levels and lifestyles; examples include Rotary Manor and San Rafael Commons, which provide low-income apartments for seniors, as well as full-service communities such as Villa Marin and Smith Ranch Homes.

San Rafael also has an active seniors’ program with 1100 members throughout San Rafael; including a Multicultural Program offered at the Al Boro Community Center in the Canal neighborhood. San Rafael Community Center in partnership with the County of Marin are congregate meal sites that provides both a healthy meal and a needed opportunity for people to socialize. The City also has a successful partnership with Whistlestop which provides support staff to help run the Multicultural Senior programs for Spanish and Vietnamese speaking participants. Special workshops are coordinated with other nonprofits in the community to help educate older adults about senior access, AARP, the Alzheimer’s Association, the SMART Train, Golden Gate Transit, Wellness Center, nutrition classes, exercise and much more. Older adults in the community also have access through the City of San Rafael to exercise classes, technology classes, swim programs, volunteering, card games, travel, special events and much more. The City of San Rafael provides a comprehensive community program so that older adults in the community can stay active, remain social and involved in their community.

We have developed a strong framework to build upon addressing the WHO eight domains that contribute to the health and quality of life for older adults. We look forward to joining this global network of communities dedicated to giving their older residents the opportunity to live rewarding, productive and safe lives.

Sincerely,

Gary Phillips
Mayor

MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

It is with a sense of pride, hope and gratitude that we submit our Age-Friendly Strategic Action Plan for the City of San Rafael. Our hope is that it helps San Rafael become a thriving intergenerational community; inclusive, accessible and collaborative.

Our journey began in early 2017, when several local leaders met with Mayor Phillips and Councilmember Kate Colin to share information regarding the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities as well as age-friendly efforts already underway throughout Marin County.

City leaders, well aware that close to 25 percent of the community is over 60 years of age, were interested in expanding, building on and complementing the City's successful services and programs. In April 2017, the San Rafael City Council resolved to become an Age-Friendly City. An application to become a member of the WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities was submitted in May 2017.

In early 2018, after recruiting additional community members for our Leadership Team, we began a two-year process of developing our Strategic Action Plan.

We were fortunate to receive \$10,000 from the City of San Rafael and the County of Marin to support our work.

In partnership with the City, we conducted an analysis of San Rafael's current status related to the Eight Domains of Livability that cities can address to better serve the needs of older people: transportation, housing, employment, civic participation, communication, social participation, respect and social inclusion, and outdoor spaces and buildings. Based on the needs of our community, we added a ninth domain, emergency preparedness.

We then engaged the Frameworks Institute to educate ourselves and others in the community who work with older people about the most effective strategies to design policies that address aging and ageism. This step — 'reframing aging' — was a critical foundational step for moving forward.

In 2019, we created a survey tool to gather baseline community data. The survey was sent out electronically in English and Spanish and hard copies were also distributed throughout the City. The data was analyzed by the Leadership Committee and shared with the City Council and the community.

Additionally, key informant interviews were held with various City Department heads and community nonprofit leaders. We planned to supplement our data by hosting focus groups in the community. Unfortunately, we were not able to hold in-person focus groups due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will solicit community feedback and input throughout the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan.

In early 2020, we were able to host a wonderful celebration for the members of the community who are 90 years old and better. We are very grateful for the City's support for this event and to the City and County officials who attended and helped us celebrate!

The Strategic Action Plan for Age-Friendly San Rafael was completed in 2020. The partnership and support from the City and the Age-Friendly Marin Network has been crucial to our success.

"Old age will only be respected if it fights for itself, maintains its rights and asserts control over its own to its last breath." - Cicero



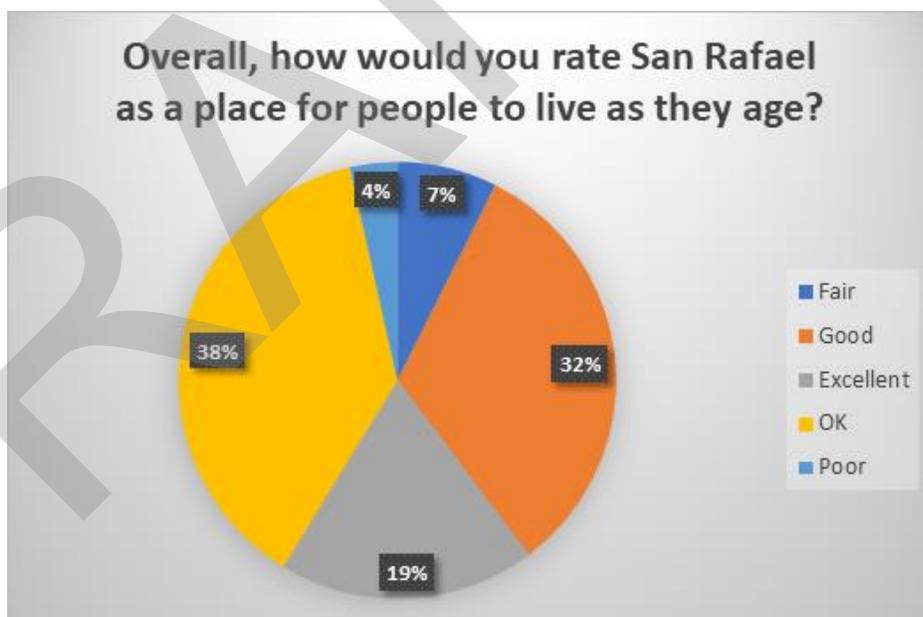
INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN

The San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force seeks to work with local government to make San Rafael a place where individuals who live and contribute so much to the community can continue to be a vibrant and essential part of its culture as they age. With a population of over 58,000¹, San Rafael is the largest city and the county seat of Marin, the most rapidly aging county in the state. The San Rafael community includes several unincorporated areas including Santa Venetia and Marinwood, whose residents are governed by County law but may still take advantage of city services such as libraries and recreation centers. 18 percent of San Rafael’s population is over the age of 65, and that number is rapidly increasing.² The largest number of Marin’s low-income seniors live here.

Overall, San Rafael’s older residents find it a decent place to age, with plenty of room for improvement. Eighty-nine percent of respondents to the San Rafael Age-Friendly survey replied that the city is an “excellent”, “good” or “OK” place for people to live as they age.³

Common challenges for residents include expensive housing and other costs of living, and suburban design patterns that promote traffic and can be difficult to navigate without a car. More than a third of respondents reported that it is “very important” for them to remain in San Rafael as they age.⁴

There is much to be done to meet the need for viable, affordable and safe senior housing. Roughly half of San Rafael residents are renters,⁵ including many older people, who face one of the most expensive rental markets in the



¹ United States Census Bureau, [San Rafael City](#) (2019)

² United States Census Bureau, [San Rafael City](#) (2019)

³ San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force, “San Rafael Age-Friendly Survey” (2019)

⁴ San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force, “San Rafael Age-Friendly Survey” (2019)

⁵ United States Census Bureau, [San Rafael City](#) (2019)

country. Meanwhile, many “house rich, cash poor” homeowners may not be able to afford needed retrofits for their homes as they age, and may feel isolated from their community, particularly if they are unable to drive. While there are several options for senior housing, spanning the range from independent retirement communities to skilled nursing facilities, affordable options are still lacking.

This plan particularly takes into account that while San Rafael is the most diverse city in Marin County, there are distinct racial inequities in income and health outcomes for both aging adults and the general population.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a disproportionate effect on members of our community who live in nursing homes and other congregate living sites as well as essential workers who live in multigenerational homes.

Another theme of this plan is the need to address the pernicious effects of ageism as a social determinant of health, a form of discrimination and an issue of social justice. Ageism can damage all aspects of an older person’s life, including in the workplace, family life, health care, overall health and civic participation. This plan makes the case for the City to adopt a strong anti-ageism stance through its messaging, services and policies.

Fortunately, there are many projects already underway to address these compound challenges. Numerous nonprofits provide opportunities for access to food, social interaction, on-going learning, mental health resources and much more. Whistlestop’s new healthy aging campus, soon to be under construction in downtown San Rafael, promises to be a hub of activities and services for older people, as well as providing 66 affordable housing units. Additionally, all three of San Rafael’s community centers include programming for older adults. The Marin Aging Action Initiative, funded by the County of Marin, seeks to coordinate these many efforts for service innovation, education and better advocacy on behalf of older people.

The San Rafael Age-Friendly team is part of the dynamic Age-Friendly Marin Network, which meets monthly to share updates and brainstorm ideas to help make every Marin jurisdiction an inclusionary place for older people to live. The County of Marin is currently hiring its first ever age-friendly coordinator, who will oversee the integration of the County’s own age-friendly plan and provide leadership to help the community-driven age-friendly efforts meet their goals.

SAN RAFAEL COMMUNITY PROFILE (2018)

AARP Age-Friendly Index

Total Index Score: 58%



The Age-Friendly Index summarizes data for each of the age-friendly domains. An age-friendly percentage score was created indicating the level of success in meeting a 50 percent minimum standard threshold of age-friendliness. Meeting or exceeding the 50 percent threshold does not indicate fulfillment of all requirements, but rather serves as a relative comparative measure.

Not all of the domains in the San Rafael Age-Friendly Action Plan are listed here.



Neighborhoods

Factors:

- Proximity to destinations
 - Grocery stores and farmers markets
 - Parks
 - Libraries
 - Jobs by transit
 - Jobs by auto
- Mixed-use neighborhoods
- Compact neighborhoods
- Personal safety
- Neighborhood quality

Age-Friendly Index Score: 67%



Transportation

Factors:

- Convenient transportation options
 - Local transit service
 - Walking
 - Congestion
- Transportation costs
- Safe streets

Age-Friendly Index Score: 56%





Civic Participation

Age-Friendly Index Score: 60%



Factors:

- Internet access
- Opportunity for civic engagement
- Voting rate
- Social involvement
- Cultural, arts and entertainment institutions



Employment

Age-Friendly Index Score: 42%



Factors:

- Equal opportunity
 - Income inequality
- Economic opportunity
 - Jobs per worker
- Educational opportunity
 - High school graduation rate
- Multi-generational communities
 - Age diversity



Housing

Age-Friendly Index Score: 45%



Factors:

- Percentage of housing units with zero-step entry
- Availability of multi-family housing
- Housing affordability
 - Housing costs
 - Housing cost burden
 - Availability of subsidized housing

ACTION PLAN



DOMAIN 1: HOUSING

Age-Friendly Index Score: 45%



Introduction:

Housing is essential to safety and well-being. There is a link between appropriate housing and access to community and social services that influences the independence and quality of life of older people. Housing that allows older people to age comfortably and safely within the community to which they belong is universally valued.⁶

Older adults are extremely vulnerable to the rising cost of housing. If the rising cost of housing (and other costs of living) are factored into calculations of poverty, statistics for the “hidden poor” emerge, revealing a large population of older adults living above the poverty line but below the Elder Economic Security Standard Index.⁷

The City of San Rafael is a strong supporter of accessory dwelling units. San Rafael is home to numerous quality senior residential and care facilities, and longtime homeowners create stability and are committed to our community.

For more information, see the Marin Commission on Aging Report, “[Older Adult Housing in Marin: Planning for 2030](#)” (2018).

Marin is one of the most segregated counties in the Bay Area. Sixty percent of its tracts have a similar proportion of white people to the county's population. On the other hand, for Latino, Asian, and Black people, those percentages are 15 percent, 29 percent and 7 percent, respectively.

A family of four with an income of \$105,350 per year is considered low-income in Marin — higher than Seattle, Boston and Los Angeles.

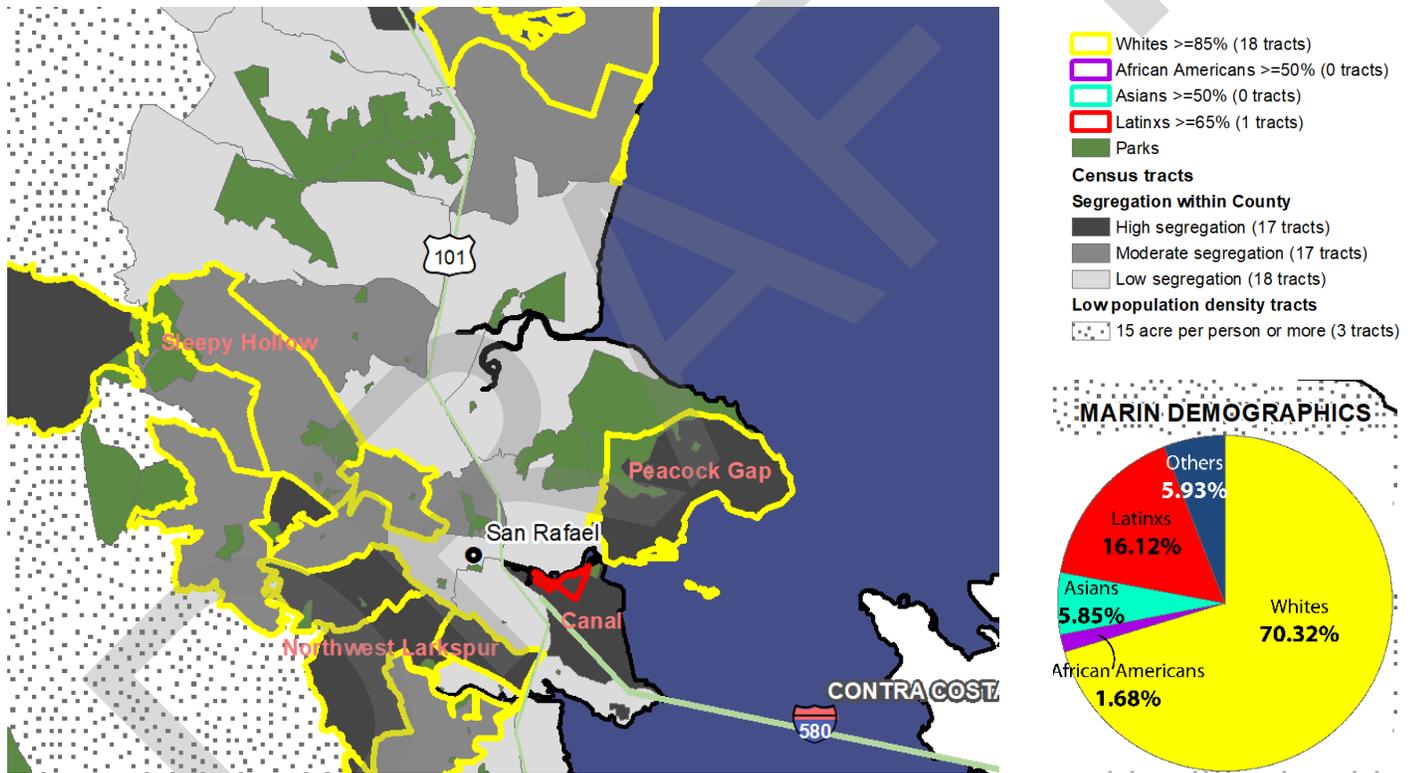
⁶ World Health Organization, [Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide](#) (2007)

⁷ Wallace & Padilla-Fausto (2016)



A neighborhood in San Rafael, as highlighted in the map, is the most segregated tract for Latinos in the entire Bay Area, where more than 90 percent of the population is of this group. Novato also contains a substantial number of Latinos, with a 19 percent Latino population.

Five of the 10 most segregated census tracts in the entire Bay Area for white people are located in Marin County, as is visible below. A small number of clustered public housing or affordable housing communities are home to many of the people of color in the county. Anti-development policies strictly regulate where new or affordable housing can be built, helping maintain patterns of racial segregation. As we will see in the next brief in this series, however, many people of color have left or been displaced from Marin County in recent decades. ⁸



Map from the Haas Institute⁹

⁸ John Powell, [“The Perils and Promises of Fair Housing”](#) (2020)

⁹ Stephen Menendian and Samir Gambhir, [“Racial Segregation in the San Francisco Bay Area, Part 1”](#) (2018)



Issue #1: Existing Homes

Existing homes no longer meet the needs of residents or the community.

Goal: Streamline retrofitting homes so people can stay in their homes safely and comfortably.

- **Action #1:** Explore opportunities to reduce cost and simplify permit process.
- **Action #2:** Work with contractors and retail businesses to secure discounts for goods and services related to retrofitting.
 - **Partners:** Local contractors and businesses such as Home Depot, Goodman’s Lumber, etc.
- **Action #3:** Educate residents about the benefits of retrofitting their homes.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, contractors, local businesses.

Issue #2: Residential Facilities

Residential facilities have availability but are not affordable.

Goal: Gain insight into the factors that make up the cost of Residential Care Facilities

- **Action #1:** Research what factors affect the monthly residential care charges.
 - **Partners:** County of Marin Social Services, Area Agency on Aging
- **Action #2:** Research how individual resident’s total monthly charges are affected by their health conditions and functional status.
 - **Partners:** County of Marin Social Services, Area Agency on Aging
- **Action #3:** Determine what services Medicare and Medi-Cal will pay for
 - **Partners:** County of Marin Social Services, Area Agency on Aging
- **Action #4:** Disseminate information to San Rafael residents
 - **Partners:** County of Marin Social Services, Area Agency on Aging

Issue #3: Affordable Housing

There is a dearth of affordable housing in San Rafael for people of all ages. Assembly Bill 1537, adopted in 2014, changed the designation of Marin County from “metropolitan” to “suburban” until 2023. This change requires fewer low-income units to be created.

Goal: Monitor viable options including city properties, churches, public/nonprofit and commercial sites for affordable housing.



- **Action #1:** Proactively support and promote affordable housing options for older people and their caregivers (workforce housing), including junior accessory dwelling units and land trust housing.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, housing advocates
- **Action #2:** Advocate for affordable housing
 - **Partners:** County of Marin, Marin Housing Authority, EAH Housing





DOMAIN 2: EMPLOYMENT

Age-Friendly Index Score: 42%



Introduction:

In *Elderhood: Redefining Aging, Transforming Medicine, Reimagining Life*, Louise Aronson writes:

“Working longer, even (perhaps especially) if we work different jobs or fewer hours in our older years than in our younger ones, is likely to increase our life satisfaction while decreasing our rates of chronic disease and disability. This is just one of the societal and public health interventions that, unlike disease treatments offered by medicine, might move us toward true compression of morbidity – in other words, toward lives that are longer and healthier.”

Aronson continues:

“Although older adults as a group hold a disproportionate amount of wealth, the average older adult of today, often no longer generating income, is not wealthy. While those in the upper income brackets tend to over save, people with less to begin with get poorer by the year. Both are working in increasing numbers, albeit for very different reasons, to the point where the so-called encore career may become the new normal. Recent studies show an increased risk of death in the two years after retirement for men in their sixties and that over 40 percent of older people, fitter than those of previous generations, are ‘unretiring.’”¹⁰

One of the key motivating factors for San Rafael to join the WHO and AARP Age-Friendly movement was the critical need to provide job



¹⁰ Louise Aronson, *Elderhood: Redefining Aging, Transforming Medicine, Reimagining Life* (2019)



opportunities for older adults who need and want to work.

The Marin Economic Forum’s recent Business Retention and Expansion Survey showed that 60 percent of the businesses surveyed state that their biggest challenge is hiring and retaining employees.¹¹

“More older adults want to continue to work,” said Nancy Masters, associate executive director of Jewish Family and Children’s Services, in a stakeholder interview.

San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force Survey results showed that 48 percent of respondents are working or looking for work and 62 percent of respondents are ‘very likely’ or ‘extremely likely’ to work for as long as possible rather than choosing to retire.¹²

It is essential to consider the impact of COVID-19 on working people to determine and provide what is needed, such as training and tech knowledge, to keep people employed.

Issue #1: Ageism

“A form of discrimination and prejudice, which limits the value of a person through definitions and stereotypes of old age.” – Carroll Estes, Aging A–Z¹³

For more information, check out the Gerontological Society of America’s [Reframing Aging Initiative](#).

Goal: Reduce ageism in the workplace

- **Action #1:** Foster intergenerational communication and teams
 - Market older adults as an integral, important and necessary component of a business
 - Highlight the importance of wisdom on a team.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, CareerPoint MARIN, Future of Work Commission

Issue #2: Many older adults must work in order to continue to live in San Rafael.

Consider the intersection of affordable housing public policies and employment.

¹¹ Marin Economic Forum, “Marin County Business Retention & Expansion Project” (2020)
¹² San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force, “San Rafael Age-Friendly Survey” (2019)
¹³ Carroll Estes, *Aging A–Z: Concepts toward Emancipatory Gerontology* (2019)



Goal: Reduce cost of living burdens for older people who cannot work full time

- **Action #1:** Advocate for senior affordable housing (see housing domain)
- **Action #2:** Provide and promote part-time work opportunities for those who are able.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, San Rafael Chamber of Commerce
- **Action #3:** Provide and promote tax cuts and grant programs for low-income older people to cover expenses such as rent and utility payments.
 - **Partners:** County of Marin, utility providers such as Marin Municipal Water District and Marin Sanitary

Issue #3: Employers think in terms of full-time jobs and career ladders.

Residents are thinking in terms of part-time, self-employment and 'gig' work.

The Future of Work Commission emphasizes the importance of creating 'high road jobs'.¹⁴

As stated by the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), the key components of 'high road' jobs are:

- "A living wage that supports a decent standard of living.
- A safe workplace.
- A benefits package, including health insurance, paid time off (i.e., sick time and paid vacation time) and a retirement savings plan.
- Access to training and professional development.
- Potential for upward mobility and wealth-building, so the employee can save to buy a home, send children to college and retire with security.
- Dignity, respect and agency."

REDF continues:

"The Federal Home Loan Bank, among others, have defined criteria for 'quality jobs' – let's provide procurement incentives and low-cost capital to employers/companies to create more. ... Make sure 'quality' employers provide job opportunities to the people served by social enterprise and that investments are made in social enterprise growth. We must view job quality through an equity lens to get to the right solutions.

- Enforce standards. Accountability/enforcement to meet current wage and other labor standards.

¹⁴ Carla Javits, Roberts Enterprise Development Fund, "The Future of Work Commission —A Bird's Eye View" (2019)



- Invest in worker training. Encourage and incentivize employers to see labor as an ‘asset’ worthy of investment and to share responsibility for training with other employers in their sector (GE, as an example, paid people 95 percent of wage during training).
- Job growth. Fighting climate change and ameliorating the disasters it is driving are job growth opportunities.”

Future of Work Commission Findings and Statistics

As is stated by the REDF:

“While skill building (e.g., job training, education, etc.) is essential for individuals to contribute their full range of talent and improve their incomes, it will not solve inequity or reduce poverty by closing the huge and growing gap between a small percentage of working people at the top of the income scale, and everyone else, nor fundamentally shift gender or racial inequities. To close the gap requires an all-out effort to raise wages across the board for front-line jobs and low-income workers.

- Today, 35 percent of California workers earn \$15/hour or less (half of Latinx workers; 35 percent of African Americans; 25 percent of whites) across many industries; 21 percent of them have an associate degree or bachelor’s degree, and 29 percent have some college.
- Between 1978 and 2018, worker productivity rose by 259 percent; but worker compensation rose by 11.6 percent.
- Comparative data definitively shows that the race and gender wage gap cannot be explained by differences in skills or education.
- Decisions by employers and policymakers on wages/working conditions matter and have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable/disadvantaged workers and those impacted by racial inequity.
- The median wage rose 1% annually pre-1973 but 0.2 percent annually since 1973. If it had risen at 1 percent, it would be at \$26/hour. This while a much higher percentage of the workforce now has college degrees than pre-1973.
- A Commissioner asked that we stop speaking about ‘low skill’ work, and instead name it as ‘low wage’ work which requires significant skill to do well (from hospitality to recycling to childcare).”¹⁵

¹⁵ Carla Javits, Roberts Enterprise Development Fund, “The Future of Work Commission —A Bird’s Eye View” (2019)



Goal: Ensure older workers in San Rafael are fairly compensated.

- **Action #1:** Consider raising local minimum wage to account for high cost of living, and reevaluate annually.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, Chamber of Commerce

Issue #4: Workforce Development

Training opportunities and job fairs can help older adults gain new skills and find suitable jobs.

According to Omar Carrera, CEO of Canal Alliance, workforce development is critical to providing economic opportunities for the residents of the Canal and the Bahia neighborhoods.

Employment Social Enterprise funding Roberts Enterprise Development Fund invests exclusively in social enterprises that employ and empower people overcoming barriers to work.

Special attention should be paid to immigrant workers. There is an opportunity to help promotoras — experienced community health workers — to move from volunteers into the paid workforce. Avionte, a Latino-owned, California staffing agency for the tech sector, could be a model for promotoras/community health workers.

Goal: Provide viable job opportunities

- **Action #1:** Define work environments that are suited for older adults.
 - Recognize that there are work environments that are not suited to older adults.
 - Define work environments that work for older adults.
 - **Partners:** Buck Institute, Marin Economic Forum
- **Action #2:** Job fair(s) for older adults
 - Develop ways to link older adults into existing job fairs.
 - Encourage ‘high road’ employers to participate in job fairs.
 - **Partners:** San Rafael Chamber of Commerce, City of San Rafael, CareerPoint MARIN
- **Action #3:** Collaborate with existing “Employment Hub” — a one-stop shop where people of all ages can go to learn about employers and jobs.



- Current job programs:
 - YWCA
 - CareerPoint MARIN – minimally funded, focus on the hardest people to employ.
 - Senior Community Service Employment Program
- Include mentoring program in which older adults mentor younger adults who are working in their area of expertise.
 - SCORE
- Leverage and use the current change in dynamics as a model; MDs, RNs and other professionals coming out of retirement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Technology training
- **Partners:** County of Marin Aging & Adult Services, San Rafael Chamber of Commerce, Marin Economic Forum

Notes:

- Marin County employers pay less than those in San Francisco.
- The Los Angeles Board of Supervisors developed a special classification for older employees that compliments rather than competes.



DOMAIN 3: CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Introduction:

Civic participation involves working to make a difference in the civic life of one's community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference.

Older adults can promote the quality of life in the San Rafael community through both political and non-political processes.

A high degree of civic participation was reflected in the survey conducted by the Age-Friendly San Rafael Task Force.¹⁶ Many residents of San Rafael attend community sponsored events, volunteer in the community, and/or participate in civic organizations.



The San Rafael Public Library sees itself as a “central place, like a watering hole,” said Henry Bankhead, assistant library and recreation director, in a stakeholder interview. “We’re like a naturally occurring group – all different kinds and types of people come to the library.” A new, combined library and community center is being planned, which offers an opportunity for older adults to engage in the planning process.

“Changing attitudes about aging and ageism is our future,” said Nancy Masters, associate executive director of Jewish Family and Children’s Services. Bankhead stated, “We are becoming aware of ways we discriminate against each other, including age. ... It seems to be harder to recognize and talk about. We get divided.”

Issue #1: Older adults may not know that their participation is welcomed in civic organizations.

San Rafael’s older residents have valuable insight and should be encouraged to participate in public planning processes and in the nonprofit sector.

¹⁶ San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force, “San Rafael Age-Friendly Survey” (2019)



Goal: Develop a local repository of civic engagement leaders and opportunities for civic participation.

- **Action #1:** Identify resources, e.g., City of San Rafael, Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership and other civic organizations, and codify them in a database that is easy to use and kept up-to-date.
 - Identify where the database will be housed and at what intervals will it be updated.
 - Explore opportunities to publicize and promote the repository, e.g., San Rafael Employment and Civic Participation Fair
 - Monitor for effectiveness
 - **Partners:** Age-Friendly San Rafael Task Force, San Rafael representatives to the Marin County Commission on Aging, City of San Rafael and County of Marin Volunteer Coordinators

Goal: In what way and how does the next generation want to participate?

- **Action #1:** Create a nexus for intergenerational civic participation.
 - Research available data
 - Explore potential for research partnerships with Dominican University and College of Marin
 - Identify gathering opportunities for intergenerational contact.
 - Use the data to create a nexus for intergenerational civic participation.
 - **Partners:** Age-Friendly San Rafael Task Force, San Rafael representatives to the Marin County Commission on Aging, City of San Rafael Volunteer Coordinator, Dominican University and College of Marin

Goal: Create a strong partnership with the San Rafael Library

- **Action #1:** Define the most effective way(s) to participate in the planning process.
 - Active engagement in the planning process is an opportunity for civic engagement for older adults.
 - Community-based organizations are integral to the planning process.
 - Ensure that program design has a multicultural, intergenerational focus.
- **Action #2:** Advocate for the representation of San Rafael older adults in the program planning process.
 - Meet with the library director and Susan Andrade-Wax to assess status and potential for involvement.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael



DOMAIN 4: COMMUNICATION

Introduction:

In order for the actions and services listed in this plan to be effective, it is critical that older residents are kept up to date on programs, services and meetings. Communications should be offered in several forms to be sensitive of different needs, including access to and comfort with technology, language barriers and visual or hearing impairments.

Public Sector

Currently, the City of San Rafael has a primary source of information, the Snapshot Newsletter, issued bi-weekly sharing highlights of City Council meetings and important community-wide announcements. Each City department has a unique interface with residents. Only one department, Library and Recreation, has services specific to older adults. Some, such as the police department, have programs for other ages and have expressed an interest in offering more for older adults.

San Rafael has three senior clubs: San Rafael Goldenaires, the Terra Linda Seniors and the Albert G. Boro Community Center older adult program. Two of the centers host a weekly congregate meal and other activities.

The County of Marin has an Information & Assistance phone line and website, 415-473-INFO, to help older people connect to resources.

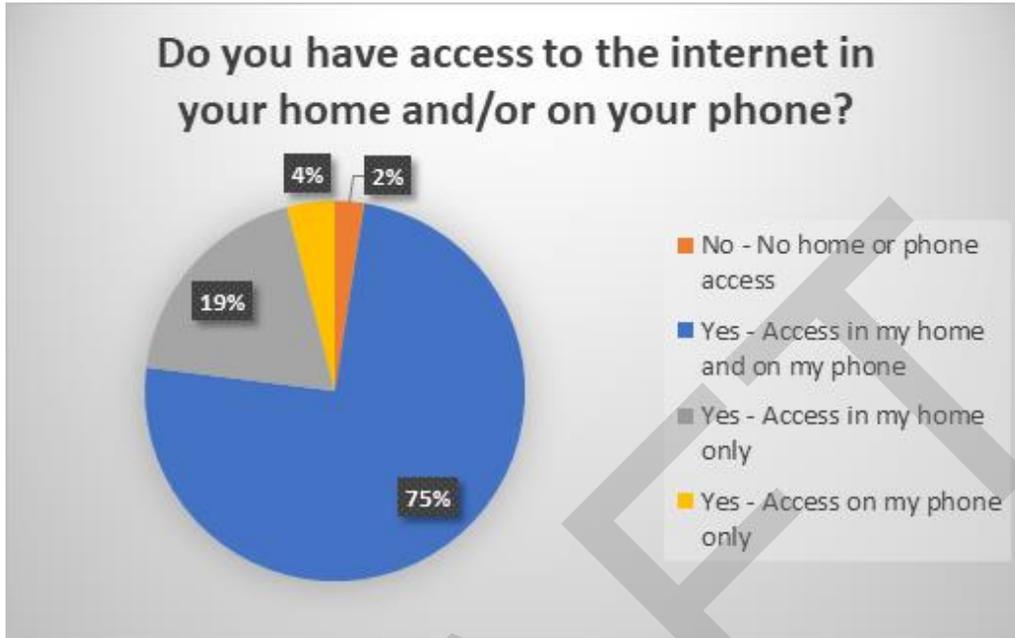
Nonprofit Sector

As the County seat, San Rafael is home to several countywide organizations providing essential communication to older residents. Whistlestop publishes a monthly activity and information guide called *Whistlestop Express*. Marin Center for Independent Living's Information and Referral program provides information on free disability-relevant community resources.





Communication and Tech



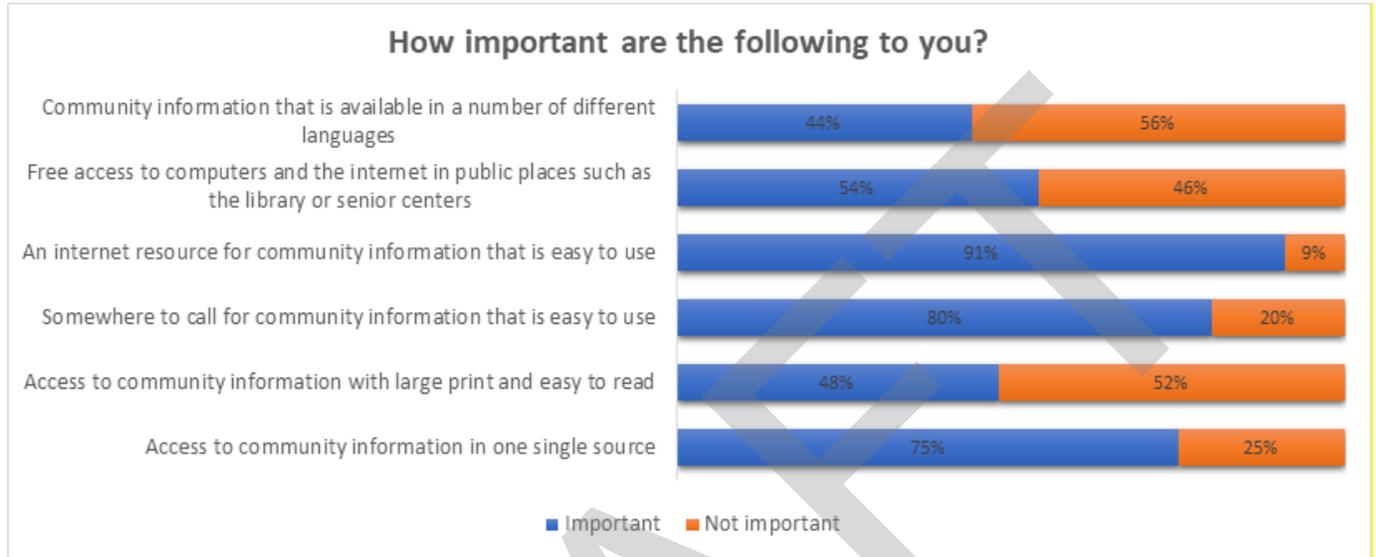
Of those who responded to the San Rafael Age-Friendly survey, 94 percent have internet in their home or their home and phone.¹⁷ Many older people in San Rafael are comfortable with technology, although changes in programs and systems may be challenging to keep up with over the years. In addition, parts of San Rafael, including the Canal neighborhood and other parts of San Rafael nestled in the hills, do not have adequate internet or mobile phone access.



¹⁷ San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force, "San Rafael Age-Friendly Survey" (2019)



People use the internet, family and friends for information. Other sources are Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Dominican University, Emeritus Students College of Marin at the community college, and online searches. There is room for the library to expand its services and better meet the information needs of older people.



Community survey results showed the need for a central location for information. There are a multitude of programs, events and activities in San Rafael; however, it can be difficult for older adults to find what they want or need. This is especially challenging when a change occurs in health when it's essential to quickly find help with meals or care.

A significant number of people would like to see information in languages other than English. In order to ensure quality communications with older people, information needs to be presented in a variety of methods (e.g., in print and online, using different social media outlets, etc.) and in ways that are accessible to older people and people with disabilities.

Issue #1: Communication

Despite an increase in the number of older people, there has been a decline in participation by them in City programs.

Goal: Ensure effective communications to older adults

- **Action #1:** Examine and refine citywide communications strategy to reach all audiences and identify stakeholder groups to improve engagement with older adults.
 - Make communication devices available and provide seating near speakers so seniors and others with hearing difficulty can participate in public meetings.



- Enhance the City’s Age-Friendly website so that it is the go-to resource about services, news, projects and activities in San Rafael. Look for ways to integrate information from the library and recreation department online communications to reach all older residents.
 - Develop a list of best practices for effective print and online communications with older people so they are not excluded due to lack of ability, skills or resources. Work with representatives of different populations (low income, immigrants, disabled) to ensure appropriate communication techniques. Ensure that all City communications follow best practices and standards for communication.
 - **Partner:** City of San Rafael
- **Action #2:** Research ways to expand broadband access for older adults in the community.
- **Partners:** City of San Rafael, utility providers, Digital Marin

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DOMAIN 5: OUDOOR SPACES AND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

Introduction:

People need public spaces to gather. Public parks and open spaces are important places for building a sense of community and social belonging. Accessible public spaces improve physical health, provide mental health benefits and enhance community connections for people of all ages. Recreation plays a key role in the well-being of older adults and in enhancing quality of life by increasing health and fitness and providing opportunities for socialization.¹⁸

Issue #1: Aging and inadequate infrastructure in public outdoor spaces

Build on San Rafael's strengths: With our moderate climate encouraging outdoor activities, 19 neighborhood parks and six community parks and a variety of multicultural services in community centers, San Rafael parks and open spaces are an important community asset, along with County and State parks located in San Rafael.

Goal: Expand opportunities for older adults to safely participate in outdoor community life through collaborative partnerships with the City and local neighborhood associations to repair, replace and improve existing infrastructure.

- **Action #1:** Expand partnership between the San Rafael's Department of Public Works and local neighborhood associations to support efforts to repair or replace aging infrastructure, which is often outdated and not accessible or welcoming.
 - Seek grant funding in partnership with the City.
 - Create shade structures and exercise equipment for seniors in parks and open spaces. Collaborate with the art community on this project.
 - Expand Sidewalk Repair Program with City as sidewalks and pathways, in and out of parks, are not always accessible or safe.
 - As park improvements are made, consider adding benches downtown and in parks that are designed to assist elders and people with disabilities get up more easily.
 - Assure that parks and community spaces have working water fountains.

¹⁸ Bhawana Singh and UV Kiran, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, "[Recreational Activities for Seniors](#)" (2014)



- Encourage neighbor walking partners and groups.
- Encourage the City of San Rafael to work with developers to continue to develop safe accessible outdoor spaces.
- Encourage participation in the development of the City-wide Parks and Recreation Plan.
- **Partners:** City, County and State Parks & Open Space, art community, Marin Center for Independent Living, other disability advocacy groups, developers

Issue #2: Concerns and perceptions that our parks, trails and open spaces are unsafe

The City of San Rafael has a lack of affordable housing for very low-income people, and several nonprofit organizations, primarily located in the downtown, provide services to adults experiencing homelessness. This often results in a higher visibility of homelessness in the parks and open spaces downtown and in surrounding areas.

Goal: Address perception of safety issues around people experiencing homelessness in our community.

- **Action #1:** Promote partnership with public safety personnel and the downtown business community to address perceptions around safety in parks and streets and address concerns about homeless encampments.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, nonprofit agencies, Chamber of Commerce

Issue #3: Lack of intergenerational programming

The three San Rafael community centers offer programming that support the unique cultures of their communities. None of the centers offer focused intergenerational programs.

Research shows that intergenerational programs offer benefits to all age groups. In the Age-Friendly San Rafael survey administered in 2019, 80 percent of respondents indicated that “activities mixing younger and older people” were very important and somewhat important to them.

Creating places, practices and policies that promote interaction across ages leads to increased: participation in services and opportunities to learn and contribute; connection and reduced isolation; and an increased sense of shared fate and shared responsibility. In addition to these short-term benefits, long-term outcomes have shown improved well-being of children, youth, older adults and families; increased capacity to address critical issues



from a multi-generational perspective; and responsive and comprehensive systems that support all generations.¹⁹

Goal: Develop and support intergenerational programming at the City’s community centers and libraries.

- **Action #1:** Encourage and support community center staff to promote best practices and planning around intergenerational and multicultural programming.
 - Age-Friendly Task Force members can educate and provide evidence-based practices from other successful intergenerational programs (referenced in other cities’ age-friendly plans).
 - Involve community members in program development related to the new Whistlestop Senior Center, which will provide opportunities to model and build best practices.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, Whistlestop, San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force



¹⁹ The Intergenerational Center at Temple University, “[International Community Building: Resource Guide](#)” (2012)



DOMAIN 6: COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

Introduction:

Considering recent and looming natural disasters like earthquakes, wildfires and pandemics in Marin County, emergency preparedness is a prominent concern and presents many challenges for all residents, especially older adults aging in place. As emergencies tend to force people to evacuate without much warning, this presents challenges for people with limited mobility as well as those who rely on durable medical equipment or have limited support networks. Hearing and vision limitations, as well as cognitive impairments, may also hinder one's ability to quickly respond to an emergency. Additional barriers to emergency preparedness for many older persons include lower income and geographic isolation.

Issue #1: Vulnerable elders in San Rafael face barriers and challenges regarding emergency preparedness.

To date, there are no well-established methods to identify special needs for the older adult population in our communities. Many neighbors do not know each other for purposes of checking-in. Some also live in isolated situations, often without cell phones, computers and unreliable air wave reception. Responses from our San Rafael Age-Friendly Survey indicated that 33 percent of respondents were not confident that members of their community would assist them if they required assistance.²⁰

Goal: Older persons are prepared for and safe during natural disasters, pandemics and emergencies.

- **Action #1:** Use census and other local data to identify and locate vulnerable persons.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, Emergency Medical Services, Neighborhood Response Groups, Community Emergency Response Teams
- **Action #2:** Continue to develop and distribute emergency GO kits and checklists giving priority to single occupant households, adults with disabilities and non-English speakers.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, San Rafael Village

²⁰ San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force, "San Rafael Age-Friendly Survey" (2019)



- **Action #3:** Collaborate with local community-based organizations to coordinate printed information related to emergency preparedness for the hard-to-reach communities.
 - **Partners:** Food banks, Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership, Marin Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, Marin Financial Abuse Specialist Team, colleges and universities, faith community, Marin Health & Human Services
- **Action #4:** In concert with San Rafael officials and neighborhood captains, recommend routine rolling community and/or neighborhood emergency drills and evacuation procedures.
 - **Partners:** Community Emergency Response Teams, San Rafael Fire Department, homeowner associations
- **Action #5:** Collaborate with face-to-face contactors in alerting all communities about episodic events, such as PG&E shutdowns and pandemic updates.
 - **Partners:** United States Postal Service, Meals on Wheels, San Rafael Village, emergency medical services





DOMAIN 7: RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Introduction:

Aging in place has its complexities with older adults. In some cases, older adults experience positive recognition and regard, while in other cases experience being dismissed, ignored or disregarded. This can occur in family matters or in community settings. Ageism, as this phenomenon is typically called, is more prevalent in some cultures than in others. There can be multi factors contributing to this generational disconnect including a lack of understanding about the aging process, changing societal norms, separation of the nuclear family with the accompanying generational divide, a society that values youth, physical compensation and economic stresses. Results from WHO surveys report that respect and social inclusion of older adults is also related to the extent to which older people participate in the civic life of their city.

How did we arrive at this generational split? ‘Senior citizens’ used to be sought after for their wisdom and experiences and were asked to weigh in on important life issues. Let us promote and support intergenerational activities which contribute to a sense of inclusion and better understanding of the differences and similarities of different generations.

Issue #1: Older adults are neglected and depreciated in many settings, causing serious effects on physical, mental and social well-being.

Goal: San Rafael’s older residents feel valued and do not face discrimination based on age.

- **Action #1:** Launch an age-friendly educational campaign, providing examples of what “age friendly” means for San Rafael and dispelling common myths about aging.
 - Include outreach to business owners to encourage offering





- special benefits to older adults, as well as promoting patience and respectful treatment of older customers.
- Recognize that aging exists, develop expertise and understanding of aging, and reframe perceptions about growing older in San Rafael.
 - Provide educational opportunities to improve the skills of older adults and service providers on best communication practices in print, electronic and social media.
 - Work with Dominican University and Osher Lifelong Learning to offer culturally diverse programs and gerontology courses to enhance a broader understanding of the aging process.
 - **Partners:** City of San Rafael, San Rafael Chamber of Commerce, Dominican University
- **Action #2:** Educate all city staff members on basic facts and myths about aging, and teach the most effective communication strategies.
- **Partners:** City of San Rafael

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APPENDIX

RESOURCES

FrameWorks Institute, "[Aging](#)"

San Rafael Age-Friendly SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force presentation to the San Rafael City Council

San Rafael Age-Friendly Task Force, "San Rafael Age-Friendly Survey" (2019)

UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, "[The Elder Index: Research and Data](#)" (2018)

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