



Age Friendly SEATTLE



Seattle
Human Services
Equity • Support • Community

2022-2027 Strategic Framework

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Executive Summary

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.

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, including the physical structures in which people live, work, shop, and maneuver every day, as well as our social environments. The pandemic shone bright 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:

- We will **lead with race**, recognizing many older adults of color face deep inequities caused by a lifetime of structural racism.
- We will **prioritize inclusivity and equity**, acknowledging Seattle’s increasingly diverse older adult population.
- We will **recognize the intersectional nature** of issues impacting older adults.
- We will continue to do this **work in partnership** with community members, organizations, and government partners.
- 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:

Section I: Economic Security

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.

Section II: Health & Wellbeing

6. Ageism and stigma against older adults and aging is reduced.
7. Physical activity and exercise is increased for older adults.
8. Caregivers are supported.
9. Brain health is improved and people experiencing memory loss are supported.
10. The number of falls has reduced.
11. Safety is improved for older adults.

Section III: Social Connectivity

12. Access to arts and entertainment is increased.
13. The impacts of hearing loss are mitigated.
14. Older adults are engaged in volunteer and civic opportunities.
15. Programming aimed at reducing social isolation is successful.
16. Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Forty-four corresponding strategies support these goals (for comparison, the 2017-2021 Age Friendly Action Plan listed 29 goals and 87 related actions). This framework recognizes the intersectionality of issues facing older adults, and several goals and strategies support multiple priorities.

Because systemic injustices compound over a lifetime, we have evaluated each of our proposed strategies through an equity lens. As we make decisions about the allocation of resources and efforts over the coming years, these considerations will help guide our prioritization and ensure we are advancing equity alongside age-friendliness.

This framework provides clear direction while allowing for continual learning and adapting as we find new ways to make Seattle more age-friendly. It has been crafted using feedback and insights from our original 2017 community needs assessment survey, recommendations from subject-matter experts, related plans and initiatives, available research, and the lived experiences older adults have shared. We have heard that people appreciate Seattle's parks and green spaces as well as our diverse cultural communities, but struggle with housing and transportation and are increasingly concerned about public safety. We are committed to inviting and incorporating community input on an ongoing basis, and to regularly evaluating and adapting our efforts to meet the needs expressed.

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

Strategic Framework

2022-2027

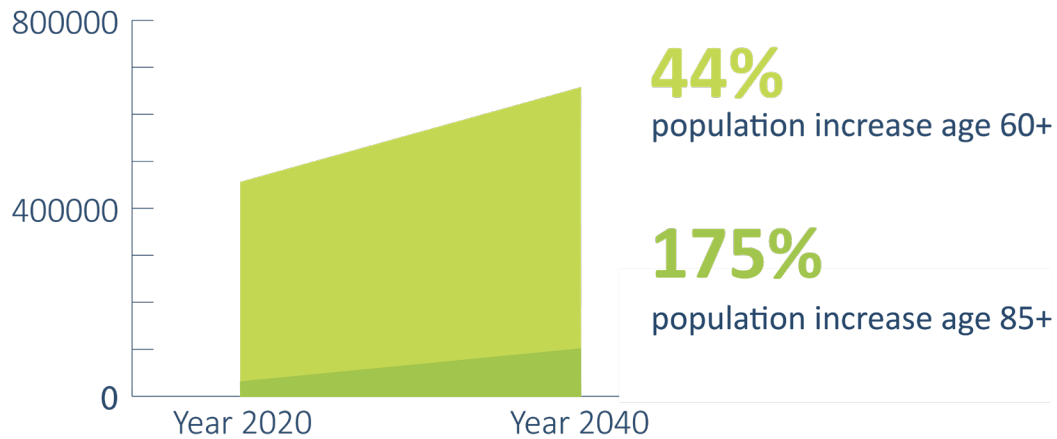


Around the globe, populations are aging. The United Nations has declared 2021-2030 the Decade of Healthy Aging¹, and the World Health Organizations (WHO) has called for communities around the world to become more “age friendly”² in order to meet the growing needs of older adults. Here in the U.S., 1 in 5 people are projected to be retirement age by 2030,³ and 2034 will mark the tipping point when the number of older people is expected to outnumber children for the first time⁴ in our country. In the Puget Sound region, the percentage of older adults is anticipated to grow to 18% of the total population by 2030, which is roughly double what it has been for the past several decades.⁵ 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 (AFS) 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

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 658,000.⁶ Within this, the number of older adults age 85+ is expected to grow by an even larger percent: from 37,000 to nearly 102,000 people, an increase of 175%⁷ that represents our increased longevity. As of 2022, about 13% of Seattle’s population is estimated to be age 65 or older,⁸ an uptick from the 2010 census and a trend that may 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 age 60+ are white (69% in 2020), only 45% of people aged 14-24 are white.⁹ 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 age 75+.¹⁰ Approximately 13% of people over age 65 have limited English proficiency.¹¹ 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.

Nearly 18% of adults in Seattle lived with a disability between 2017-2021.¹² The likelihood of having a disability greatly increases with age: only 15% of people 18-24 in Seattle report a disability, compared with 41% of people age 75 and older.¹³ 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



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 age 65 and older, 31% of homeowners and 61% of renters are **HOUSING BURDENED, meaning they spent more than a third of their income on housing on average between 2018-2022.²¹**

While Seattle has experienced strong economic growth in recent decades, not all people are benefiting equally. On average between 2017-2021, around 11% of people age 65+ in Seattle lived at or below the federal poverty line (FPL), compared with 10% of the total population.¹⁴ Across King County, 17% of people aged 65-74 and nearly a quarter of those 75+ lived below 200% FPL during the same timeframe.¹⁵ Deep disparities exist by race and ability: around 40% of all American Indian/Alaska Native and Black people in King County live below 200% FPL, while this is true for only 14% of white people between 2017-2021.¹⁶ During the same timeframe, people with a disability were twice as likely to live below 200% FPL as people without disabilities.¹⁷

In AARP's Livability Index, which is based on a periodic review of communities' policies and metrics, Seattle scores 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.²² In 2022, 17% of all people receiving homelessness services through the King County Regional Homelessness Authority were age 55+.²³

Approximately 18% of households in Seattle receive social security income, and this is true for 82% of people age 65 and older.¹⁸

U.S. Average social security income in 2022: \$21,048¹⁹

Average cost of housing in Seattle in 2022: \$21,595²⁰

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 score of only 50/100 for "Opportunity,"²⁴ 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.

HEALTH

Medical advancements and public health improvements have extended lifespans in most places across the globe. The average life expectancy in Seattle from 2017-2021 was 81.1 years, which is nearly 1.5 years longer than the state average of 79.7 years. 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 74/100²⁵ 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 65 reported being in good or excellent health between 2017-2021, there are wide racial disparities:²⁶

55% American Indian/Alaska Native people say they are in good health

65% Black people say they are in good health

78% Hispanic/LatinX people say they are in good health

81% Asian people say they are in good health

82% White people say they are in good health



Similar disparities exist in the prevalence of chronic disease: 50% of white people age 60+ experience a chronic health condition, compared with 72% of Latinx people, 76% of Black people, and 83% of American Indian/Alaska Native people.²⁷ Income, too, can be a driver of health outcomes and behaviors and is highly correlated with mental distress: between 2017-2021, 27% of adults earning less than \$20K experienced frequent mental distress, while this was true for only 9% of adults earning \$100K and above.²⁸ Incomes in King County are also correlated with exercise, with a higher percentage of higher earners more likely to meet the CDC’s physical activity recommendations than lower earners.²⁹ Only about 1 in 4 older adults in our county are engaging in the recommended levels of exercise,³⁰ and this varies widely across Seattle’s neighborhoods.

SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY



The initial Age Friendly Seattle community survey revealed that more than 16% of respondents go a week or more without any social interactions.³¹ During listening sessions post-pandemic, many older adults underscored the negative social impacts of COVID-19 and expressed a strong desire for increased human connection. A growing body of research underscores the importance of social connectivity and the impact of loneliness on our health, and while no consistent metric measures social connectivity 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 80% of white people and just 36% of Latinx people saying they feel supported.³² While we don't 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 at least moderately 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.³³

As of 2022, AARP gives Seattle a score of 63/100 for Engagement,³⁴ based on factors like opportunity for civic and social involvement and the presence of cultural, arts, and entertainment institutions.

OVERALL LIVABILITY

Overall, Seattle received a 2022 AARP livability score of 60/100.³⁵ 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 Neighborhood Score of 69³⁶ indicates a fairly strong network of walkable and connected neighborhoods. Similarly, our Transportation score of 69³⁷ 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 provides opportunities for exercise, meditation, and socializing.

Although Seattle consistently ranks above average across all of AARP's indexes, we have room to improve. We can tackle 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.



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, as many of our strategies “assist,” “help” and “support” plans and programs spearheaded by other community and government partners.

In our original 2016-2021 Action Plan, we outlined a wide range of activities aimed at making our city a friendlier place for all. 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 at the Seattle Design Festival; and we sparked ideas for ways to better meet older adults’ transportation needs by holding a hackathon. 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 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 2022-27 Strategic Framework is grounded in five values that will guide our goals, strategies, and actions in the coming years. These fundamentals do not appear as “goals” or “strategies” because they underpin all of our work. To hold ourselves accountable, we review our actions annually and examine if and how they reflected these values.

OUR VALUES



We will **lead with race**. Racial injustices compound over a lifetime, and many older adults of color face deep inequities caused by structural racism.



We will **prioritize inclusivity and equity**, including language access, to support Seattle’s increasingly diverse older adults.



We will 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.



We will do this work in **partnership**. We will succeed in creating an age-friendly city only if we engage a range of government and community partners.



We will **seek and listen to community input**, stay open-minded and nimble, and use data to help inform our goals, strategies, actions. Our work will be informed by the older adults who live here.

THEORY OF CHANGE

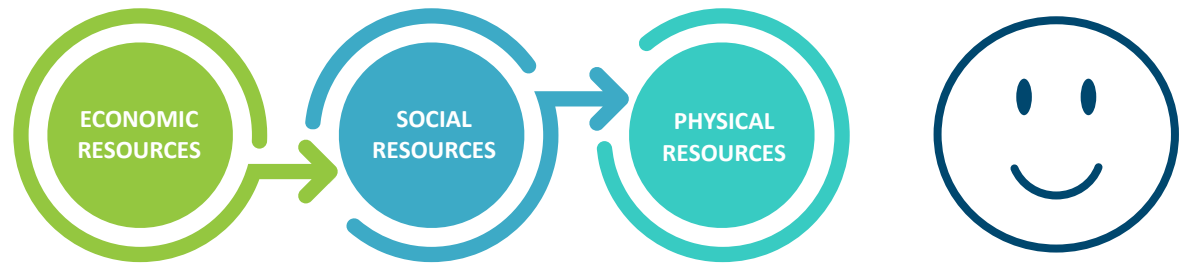
The Seattle Human Services Department’s mission is to create a city where all people can thrive. We asked ourselves, how will we know if an older adult is “thriving?” This is difficult to measure, so we selected “life satisfaction” — which is more measurable and well-researched—as a proxy. Then, we examined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

Our theory of change draws upon continuity theory of normal aging, which holds that older adults experience higher life satisfaction when able to maintain continuity in many aspects of life.³⁸ This might include aging at home in a familiar setting, ongoing participation in sports and hobbies, 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: **economic resources, physical resources, and social resources.**^{39 40} Maintaining financial resources can help someone afford to age safely in their own home. Remaining physically healthy allows people to more easily continue doing activities they enjoy. 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 financial 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 maintain good health, which makes it easier for someone to continue enjoying 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, we are striving for a format that is grounded in our theory of change and better acknowledges the intersecting nature of issues impacting older adults.

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 quality of life for all older adults 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. These considerations 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.



Ongoing Community Input & 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. This ongoing 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, opportunities for older workers are slim, and public safety concerns are on the rise.

Our evaluation of impact will also be ongoing. In addition to yearly reports highlighting outputs, the Age Friendly Seattle staff will annually review a list of pre-determined indicators to help us chart Seattle's progress as an age-friendly city. 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 tailor our strategies and actions accordingly.



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.



Section I: Economic Security

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 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.

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 all strategies every year, but



Section II: Health & Wellbeing

to prioritize our resources effectively. While this document does not detail every specific action we anticipate taking through 2027, we have provided examples of one potential action per strategy to illustrate the types of activity Age Friendly Seattle engages in. Some tactics may take years to complete and have far-reaching consequences, while others are more easily accomplished for immediate results. Almost all require partnership with government agencies, community organizations, or other sectors.

We have learned that 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.



Section III: Social Connectivity

SECTION 1:
ECONOMIC SECURITY



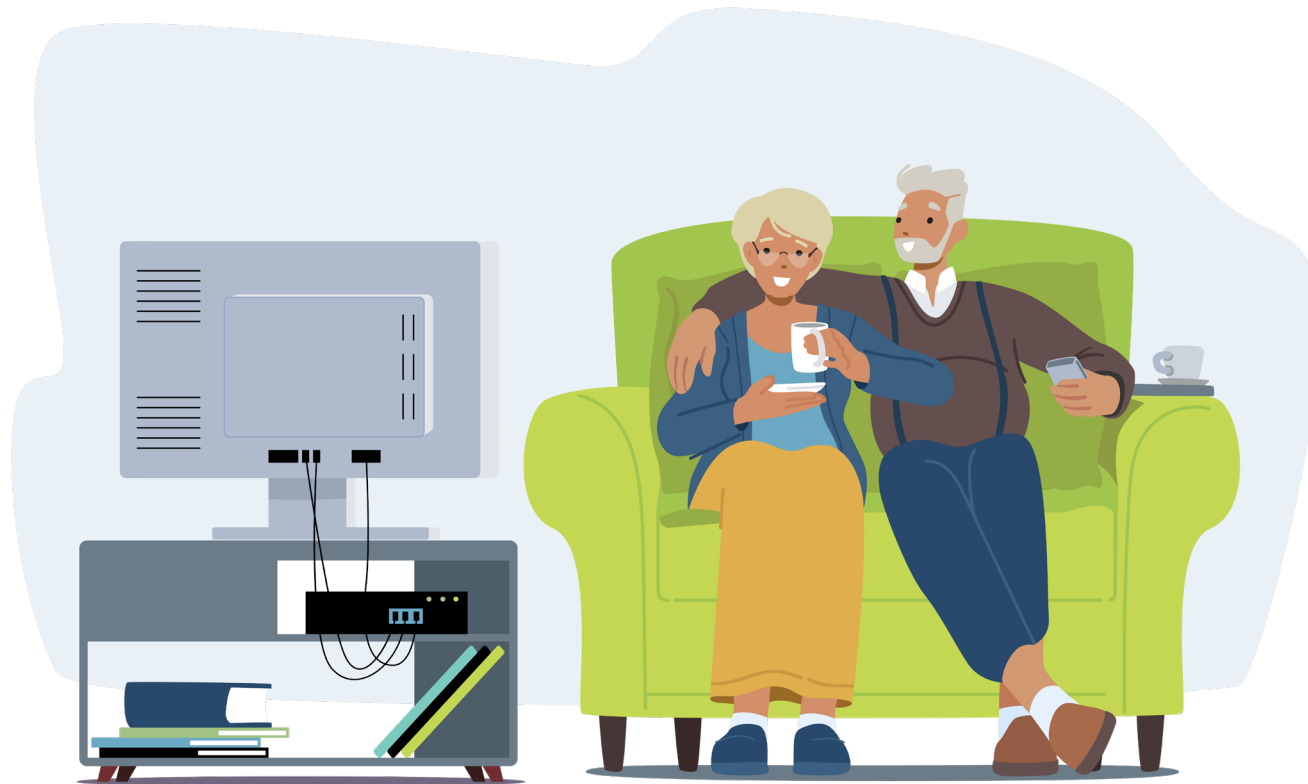
Helping older adults retain **FINANCIAL** resources

Having and retaining 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 interactions. 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: between 2018-2022, the median income for householders age 65+ was \$62,564,⁴¹ compared with the median income for all populations at \$90,325.⁴² One in five older adults relies on social security as their only form of income.⁴³ 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:

1. Older adults have increased access to affordable 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.



GOAL 1: Older adults have increased access to housing options and affordability.

Housing is a top concern for older adults. Home prices have risen steeply, and Seattle now ranks as one of the least affordable cities for renters. City analysis shows development is not keeping pace with growth, and what housing exists is becoming increasingly unaffordable.⁴⁴

This can force someone to choose between paying for housing vs. medication and food, or push someone out of their long-time residence. National trends indicate older adults are increasingly experiencing homelessness.⁴⁵ More housing options can help older adults find affordable homes suited to their needs, whether downsizing from a large single-family home, staying in an affordable rental in a preferred neighborhood, or moving into a nearby unit without stairs to accommodate a disability.

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 2: More housing stock meets accessibility needs.** Emphasizing accessibility in home design can have a positive impact on development decisions. An increased number of new homes constructed with accessibility in mind will result in more choices for older adults and less competition for slim inventory.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

Homeownership is a tool for building generational wealth, but people of color have faced historical barriers to this asset: in Seattle, 26% of Black and Latinx people own homes, compared with 51% of white people.⁴⁶ Because of this, people of color are less likely to benefit from programs aimed at supporting homeowners such as property tax exemption or weatherization resources. Not only are people of color more likely to be renters, but households of color are more likely to be rent-burdened than white households: 2 out of 3 Black and Native American renters in Seattle are cost-burdened, compared with 42% of white renters.⁴⁷ Black people are disproportionately more likely to live in Seattle or King County public housing authority buildings.⁴⁸ While necessary, development can cause displacement, which primarily impacts communities of color. As we prioritize efforts, it will be important to include renters' needs as well as consider pathways and barriers to building home equity and development solutions that do not disproportionately harm older adults of color.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>1a. Encourage the expansion of housing options that meet the needs of older adults. Much of Seattle is zoned for single family lots. Home values have risen, but it is hard for older adults to capitalize on this by selling because there are limited affordable and accessible places to down-size to. For example, multi-story condos may be more affordable than a large house, but they are not conducive to aging in place. Some models like Accessory Dwelling Units offer potential for revenue streams, caregiver lodgings, or multi-generational family living that support people of all ages, but not everyone has access to capital needed to build.</p>	<p>Provide input on City plans and policies to encourage the expansion of “missing middle” housing options.</p>
<p>1b. Educate older adults about available housing assistance programs, including property tax reductions, home repair, eviction prevention, and more. Older adults cite increases in property tax as a significant burden, especially in neighborhoods that have rapidly gentrified. Several programs do exist to support low-income homeowners with taxes and home repairs; 18,910 older adults and people with disabilities in King County took advantage of property tax exceptions in 2021.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, many people are unaware of these benefits; for example, more than 26,000 qualified seniors and disabled persons have yet to register for the Washington State exemption, and only 1 in 100 of those eligible for deferrals are currently enrolled.⁵⁰</p>	<p>Conduct mailing to discount card holders age 60+ about property tax relief.</p>
<p>1c. Explore and promote innovative housing models and support systems aimed at allowing people to age in place. In a space-constrained city, creative solutions to the housing crisis may be helpful, especially given the long wait times for senior housing. AFS could serve as a hub for people to get information about new options.</p>	<p>Develop and make public a comprehensive list of existing and emerging local models and considerations.</p>
<p>1d. Help older adults living in publicly funded affordable housing benefit from in-home supportive services. Washington benefits from a Medicaid waiver that allows some health care services normally provided in clinical settings to be administered at home, and many eligible people live in affordable housing residences. We can support efforts to ensure people receive this care so they are able to age in place and benefit from affordable housing.</p>	<p>Support a pilot project to better coordinate the provision of health services in affordable housing buildings where older adults live.</p>

GOAL 2: More housing stock meets accessibility needs.

Most older adults would like to age in place, in the homes and communities they know and love. People are also living longer, and therefore aging into and living with disabilities for a longer amount of time. The most recent BRFSS data for Seattle indicates that 27% of people aged 65-74 have a hearing, vision, ambulatory, or cognitive disability, while 41% of those 75+ do.⁵¹

Unfortunately, it can be difficult to safely stay in a home not designed for accessibility. Seattle recognizes the local housing shortage and is making plans for more development, creating opportunities to build intentionally for accessibility so that people can comfortably and safely age in place.

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 1: Older adults have increased access to housing options and affordability.** Increased housing stock that includes more accessible options at an affordable price will enable older adults to more easily relocate within their neighborhood of choice to a home that fits their evolving needs.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

There are higher rates of disabilities experienced among people of color than white people, among renters than homeowners, and among people with lower incomes than those with higher incomes (in Seattle, 34% of Black people reported living with a disability while 18% of white people did). LGB people are also more likely to have a disability (in Seattle, 24% of LGB people reported a disability while 18% of heterosexual people did).⁵² Therefore, efforts to promote accessible homes may especially benefit BIPOC, LGBTQAI+, and low-income people. Accessibility is often weighed against cost implications on housing prices, which can potentially negatively impact these same communities. The significantly greater wealth held by white households makes investing in retrofits and assistive technologies easier than for BIPOC families (in Seattle, significantly more households of color live in liquid asset poverty and the median white household income is more than twice as high than that of Black households).⁵³ Renting households (also disproportionately people of color) may lack the power to invest in renovations to improve accessibility, while homeowners (largely white) are better positioned to retrofit and can draw upon their home equity to do so. Advancing accessibility equitably will require considerations about types of housing to prioritize.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>2a. Educate and engage industry stakeholders in efforts to build homes that are more accessible for people experiencing disabilities now and in the future.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Support the community-led Northwest Universal Design Council in having a presence at building tradeshow.</p>
<p>2b. Educate consumers and encourage them to address accessibility needs before they become urgent. 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 avert unnecessary expenses and stress.</p>	<p>Promote enrollment in the CAPABLE program for home modifications.</p>
<p>2c. Help make retrofitting, home repairs, weatherization, and in-home assistive technologies more affordable and easier to adopt for people of all incomes.</p> <p>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. 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.</p>	<p>Encourage affordable housing developers to build with consideration to Smart Home technologies that can support Assistive Technologies in the future.</p>

GOAL 3: Transportation options meet the needs of older adults.

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 choose to stop driving due to vision or mobility loss, medications that interfere with functions 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.

33% of people with disabilities and 16% of people 55+ report using KC Metro for all or most of their transportation needs,⁵⁴ and between 45-52% of KC Metro riders each quarter are 55+.⁵⁵ Transportation also includes walking, rolling, and biking, physical activities that are known to improve health and support staying socially connected.



Race and Social Justice Considerations

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.⁵⁶ It will be important to consider where efforts are prioritized geographically, as well as language needs for signage and information dissemination (19% of Seattle residents are immigrants⁵⁷ and the public school district reports over 150 languages spoken), as needs assessments in King County have shown that limited English speakers have less information about transportation options than English speakers.⁵⁸ People of different races, genders, and cultures may have experiences with racism and microaggressions that may impact their comfort levels using public transit or walking on the streets, and harassment or fear of harassment can deter people from accessing transportation options. 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.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>3a. Advance the age-friendliness and walkability of Seattle’s streets and neighborhoods. Avoiding traffic collisions is critical, as older adults experience worse outcomes from accidents than younger people. This includes collisions with other motor vehicles and as pedestrians. In King County between 2017-2021, people age 75+ were more than twice as likely to be killed by motor vehicles than the county average.⁵⁹ 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 death 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.</p>	<p>Help lead guided tours through urban environments so design and building professionals understand potential barriers to mobility.</p>
<p>3b. Help grow rider knowledge about available transportation options, including discounts and special needs transit. 15% of King County Metro’s ridership already access the Regional Reduced Fare Permit available to those 65+, which reduces the economic burden on riders.⁶⁰ A patchwork of special needs transportation services exists in our region and navigating this can be challenging for riders.</p>	<p>Participate in and support group rider trips to help familiarize older adults with public transit options.</p>
<p>3c. Help improve ridership experience for older adults using public transportation. While older adults are more satisfied with King County Metro’s services than any other age group (44%),⁶¹ 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.⁶²</p>	<p>Conduct audit of lighting at transit stops near where older adults reside.</p>
<p>3d. Help increase availability, accessibility, and affordability of transit, including special needs transit. Transit in Seattle is geared toward commuters (51% of King County Metro riders use it to commute to/from work⁶³) and older adults often need transportation during the middle of the day. People with disabilities must navigate a patchwork of programs and operators to find an option that meets their needs, which can be a barrier to getting to and from places as needed on a timely basis.</p>	<p>Support launch of online app for riders to book special needs transportation.</p>

GOAL 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 and doubled in the two years following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic; nearly 1 in 9 older adults report having sent payment to a COVID-related scam.⁶⁴ WA State's Adult Protective Services has seen steep increases in the number of elder financial exploitation reports filed and in 2021, 66,676 cases of suspected abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, and self-neglect of vulnerable adults were reported to the WA Department of Social and Health Services.⁶⁵

Several factors put older adults at increased risk, including “stringed relationships” and dependencies, social isolation, cognitive decline, and lack of digital literacy skills, all of which were exacerbated by the pandemic⁶⁶ and an increasingly digital world.

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 16: 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.
- **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.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

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 LGBTQAI+ 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.⁶⁷ Efforts to support financial planning should be sensitive to these different economic realities.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>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. Education and support can help people address financial fears, set and reach realistic goals, and prevent being victimized by scams and abuse.</p>	<p>Hold Civic Coffee events focused on this topic.</p>
<p>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,⁶⁸ family members and caregivers can also play an important role in identifying and reporting abuse. Financial professionals often have visibility into irregular spending or withdrawal patterns and can also help alert people to potential abuse.⁶⁹</p>	<p>Distribute tips sheet to middle-aged people via PTA groups.</p>

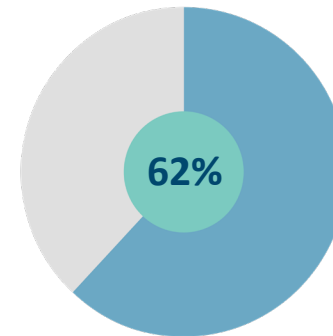
GOAL 5: Businesses and workplaces are more age-friendly.

People are working longer, and the workforce participation rate of people age 75+ is expected to double between 2022 and 2032.⁷⁰

Yet, many people 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 Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 6: Ageism and stigma against older adults and aging is reduced.**
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.⁷¹



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.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

Women and people of color are more likely to take on family caregiving responsibilities,⁷² and therefore may benefit more from flexible and part-time paid work schedules. Ageism may compound with racism, sexism, ableism, and other 'isms'; efforts to address ageism in businesses and workplaces must be sensitive to the many forms of discrimination people of diverse backgrounds may face simultaneously.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>5a. Grow business participation and consumer utilization of Gold/FLASH card discount program. Offering discounts to older adults can help conserve economic resources. Engaging a robust network of diverse businesses can help ensure older adults in all parts of Seattle can benefit, whether shopping for necessities or exploring entertainment. AFS continues to manage and grow a discount directory for older adults and people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Streamline online enrollment processes for new businesses joining the directory.</p>
<p>5b. 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.⁷³ We have already created some tools to support businesses.</p>	<p>Update and distribute the Age Friendly Business Guide.</p>
<p>5c. 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.</p>	<p>Encourage creation and advertising of more part-time job opportunities within the City of Seattle.</p>

In addition, several goals listed elsewhere in this framework also contribute to **ECONOMIC SECURITY** in some way:

- **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. Therefore, efforts to improve health will also support stronger economic security for older adults and their families.



SECTION II:
HEALTH & WELLBEING



Helping older adults retain **PHYSICAL** resources

Aging and illness do not automatically 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 engaging in hobbies, enjoying social activities, participating in the workforce, and living at home. Preventative measures, environmental factors, access to health care services, and social connectivity all play a role in enabling people to thrive physically and mentally in later years—and indeed, many people age 60+ in Seattle rate themselves as in good or excellent health. However, many people do experience a range of age-related health challenges and medical expenses can be a serious burden on older adults, particularly those living on fixed incomes. Stark disparities exist, and people of color are also more likely to live with a chronic illness and report poorer health in general than white people.⁷⁴

Age Friendly Seattle can help create accessible environments, encourage programs that support the health of older adults, and connect people to available resources. By doing so, 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:

6. Ageism and stigma against older adults and aging is reduced.
7. Physical activity and exercise is increased among older adults.
8. Caregivers are supported.
9. Brain health is improved and people experiencing memory loss are supported.
10. Falls are reduced.
11. Safety is improved for older adults.



GOAL 6: Ageism and stigma against older adults and aging is reduced.

The WHO calls ageism a global challenge⁷⁵ and the American Psychological Association has issued public proclamations urging the rejection of ageism⁷⁶ recognizing that it contributes to poor physical and mental, health, social isolation, economic insecurity, lower quality of life, and even pre-mature death. It impacts the workplace (especially tech, which is a major industry in Seattle), social settings, and health care environments.

Internalized ageism is responsible for poorer health outcomes and higher costs to the healthcare system,⁷⁷ as people who have negative views on aging are less likely to engage in healthy behaviors like medication adherence, exercise, and good nutrition.

In the workplace, ageism can impact people during hiring, evaluation, and termination practices, access to training and promotions, and lead to early retirement. More than 1 out of every 10 older adults say they have been passed over for a promotion because of their age.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Strategy 12a: Increase accessibility of event venues and programming, including arts, entertainment, educational, and cultural events.** Designing events and programming to 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.
- **Strategy 12e: Encourage buildings and structures (ex: bus stops, hotels, restrooms, parking lots, theaters) to use Universal Design standards.** Designing physical spaces for inclusivity makes it easier for everyone—including older adults—to engage in all facets of life, including social events, exercise, and health services. Universal Design can help reduce fall risks and send the message that all ages are welcome and valued.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

Ageism can compound with other “isms,” including racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism.⁸⁰ 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 experienced, and may still be facing. People of different races, ethnicities, genders, abilities, and incomes may experience ageism differently, and in addition to other forms of discrimination. 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. It will be important to consider these varied experiences and cultural perspectives when tackling ageism.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>6a. Improve City of Seattle employees’ understanding of agism and how we can best serve older adults. City employees interact directly with hundreds of older adults daily, helping them navigate utility bills, visit our libraries, cross streets safely, and more. We have an opportunity to add an aging lens on our many policies and regulations (a key ageism prevention strategy, according to the WHO)⁸¹ and to set the tone for treating older adults with dignity and encourage civic engagement at all ages.</p>	<p>Create and disseminate an anti-ageism training available to City of Seattle staff.</p>
<p>6b. Reach mid-life and younger people with information about aging readiness. Being anxious about aging and death is a key risk factor for perpetrating ageism. Decreasing this anxiety and educating people at all ages⁸² in both formal and informal settings is an important ageism reduction strategy.</p>	<p>Host a forum on aging readiness aimed at mid-life adults.</p>
<p>6c. Promote intergenerational activities. Increased intergenerational contact reduces the likelihood of someone perpetrating ageism. According to the WHO,⁸³ this is one of the most effective ways to reduce ageism against older adults, and possibly against young people, too.</p>	<p>Help market jobs to older adults so that workplace teams are more intergenerational.</p>
<p>6d. Expand the Age Friendly Seattle discount directory and increase consumer utilization. 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.</p>	<p>Solicit to businesses to offer discounts to the services older adults report most interest in (ex: arts, culture, and entertainment).</p>
<p>6e. Reframe messaging and narratives about aging and older adults. Messaging is a powerful tool and can either create or reduce stigma. There are many internal and external opportunities to influence and adjust public messages.</p>	<p>Conduct a photo shoot capturing non-stigmatizing images of older adults; encourage use of these citywide.</p>

GOAL 7: Physical activity and exercise is increased among older adults.

The CDC recommends physical exercise as one of the most important things older adults can do for their health, as it can prevent and delay many negative health outcomes that are common in older age. It can improve balance and reduce falls, reduce depression in people experiencing dementia, and slow the symptoms of Parkinson's Disease and other chronic diseases. The majority of people age 60+ in King County report living with a chronic condition, which are among the leading causes of death, disability, and hospitalization in King County.⁸⁴

Only one in four people ages 65-74 in King County engage in activities that meet aerobic and strengthening guidelines, as do only 20% of people age 75+.⁸⁵

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Strategy 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.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

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.⁸⁶ Racial bias in the healthcare system can result in lower quality of care for people of color and serves as a barrier to accessing care throughout life. Exercise is one tool for staying healthy and deterring the need for chronic disease management, yet the ability to exercise may depend on access to safe streets, local parks, and free time: the percentage of adults getting the recommended levels of exercise varies widely across Seattle's neighborhoods, from 17% in Delridge to over 40% in Montlake, Madison Park, and Madrona.⁸⁷

It will be important to consider how access to exercise may vary across communities. Because 19% of Seattle residents are immigrants, and the public school district reports over 150 languages spoken⁸⁸, cultural relevance and language access should be factored into programming. The needs of older adults with disabilities such as mobility or memory loss should also be considered.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>7a. Support and encourage use of parks and other outdoor spaces. Older adults in Seattle rank the park system as one of the best features of our city, according to the 2017 Age Friendly Seattle survey. Evidence suggests that spending time outdoors can boost mood and encourage healthy behaviors.⁸⁹</p>	<p>Create and distribute a calendar featuring Seattle parks and special features to visit each month.</p>
<p>7b. 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.</p>	<p>Support relaunch of Seattle’s Sound Steps walking program.</p>
<p>7c. Help instill healthy habits in younger people. Being healthy and staying healthy early in life increases the likelihood of good health in later years.</p>	<p>Support health programming for youth and families and seek opportunities for intergenerational elements.</p>



GOAL 8: 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.⁹⁰ In WA alone, Alzheimer's caregivers contribute about 434 million hours of unpaid care annually.⁹¹ 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 provide daily support with dressing, eating, and other functions. Many caregivers report stepping back from work in order to provide eldercare. Caregivers are often older adults themselves, caring for an aging partner. Others may 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 increase if current healthcare workforce trends continue.

By 2030, nearly 77,000 home care aides will be needed to serve Medicaid clients, and data trends show that shortages will worsen over the next 20 years.⁹² Although home health and personal care aides are projected to be one of the fastest growing professions in the U.S. between 2021-2031,⁹³ the people who do this critical and often difficult work are paid low wages and this can hinder recruitment, in turn increasing wait times for clients to receive support.

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 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, accessibly-designed spaces can make caregiving easier.
- **Goal 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 and family leave policies can be helpful and allow for fluctuating responsibilities.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

People of color are more likely to be family caregivers and are also more likely to maintain fulltime employment while caregiving.⁹⁴ Most family caregivers are women, and female caregivers tend to do more work than male caregivers. Many LGBTQAI+ people face unique caregiving and support needs⁹⁵ 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 people who share a culture, language, and belief system.

The paid caregiver workforce is also largely comprised of women (9 in 10) and people of color (nearly two thirds). 30% of home health aides are aged 55 or older.⁹⁶ Home care aids—who are disproportionately women of color-- often perform important duties for low wages: the national average annual income for a paid home health aide is just \$29,430.⁹⁷ Supporting the paid caregiver workforce is one tool for advancing equity more broadly.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>8a. Expand access to training and support programs. Although family 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.</p>	<p>Vet new training programs and support their availability to Seattle residents.</p>
<p>8b. Support the expansion and adoption of Assistive Technologies. Many Assistive Technologies (AT) 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.</p>	<p>Feature Assistive Technologies at community events where people can learn more about their uses.</p>
<p>8c. 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 personal responsibilities. WA State has some existing infrastructure to support caregivers: family members can become the Individual Provider and be paid for caregiving, and the Medicaid Alternative Care and Tailored Supports for Older Adults programs exist to offer some free services to unpaid caregivers.</p>	<p>Invite health and wellness businesses to enroll in the MAC/TSOA program, increasing the range of services available family caregivers.</p>
<p>8d. Support future healthcare workforce development. A growing aging population is now coupled with a healthcare workforce shortage, putting pressure on family caregivers and straining resources. Additional workers will be needed to provide care and avoid burn-out of both paid and unpaid caregivers.</p>	<p>Support bringing a more efficient model of homecare delivery to Seattle that improves wage stability as well as clients' access to care.</p>

GOAL 9: 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. As our population ages, this will likely accelerate—between just 2020-2025, the prevalence of Alzheimer's in WA is expected to increase more than 16%, from 120,000 to 140,000 people. Alzheimer's is the 3rd leading age-adjusted disease in our state⁹⁸ and an estimated 300,000 family caregivers are supporting their loved ones living with dementia. 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.

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Section III: Social Connectivity.** Social isolation is a risk factor for memory loss. In addition to staying connected generally, engaging in participatory art can have a positive effect on older adults' cognitive function and memory.
- **Strategy 4b: Help educate families, caregivers, banks, and other institutions to spot red flags for financial abuse.** People experiencing memory loss are especially vulnerable to financial fraud and abuse, and increasing awareness amongst their support network may help reduce risk.
- **Goal 8: Caregivers are supported.** Supported caregivers are better able to care for their loved ones and avoid burn-out.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

Nationally, Black older adults are more than twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's as white older adults,⁹⁹ and more than 1 in 5 Black Americans over age 70 is living with the disease. People of Hispanic decent also have nationally higher rates of Alzheimer's than white people.¹⁰⁰

LGBTQAI+ older adults may be more vulnerable to the impacts of Alzheimer's disease¹⁰¹ because they face disproportionate social isolation and stigmatization, which can make it difficult to access support and exacerbate cognitive decline. It will be important to consider the inequities that exist within our community when prioritizing efforts to support brain health.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>9a. 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.</p>	<p>Explore the potential for Seattle to become an official “dementia-friendly” city.</p>
<p>9b. 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 sessions, and more. There is opportunity to share learnings and best-practices amongst organizations engaged in this work.</p>	<p>Support a pilot program that connects intergenerational participants to listen to music together.</p>



GOAL 10: 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%.¹⁰² Seattle's average fall rate between 2017-2021 was 184 per 100,000 people, and King County's fall-related deaths during the same period were higher than 11 per 100,000.¹⁰³ 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 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.¹⁰⁴

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 7: 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.
- **Goal 2: More housing stock meets accessibility needs.** Home or environmental hazards are a factor in 50%-70% of all falls.¹⁰⁵ Home environments can also delay people's discharge from health care settings. Safer home environments can reduce falls, promote recovery, and prevent re-injury.
- **Strategy 11b: Support emergency preparedness.** Slippery surfaces caused by snow and ice create risk and excessive heat or cold can lead to dehydration and disorientation, increasing the likelihood of a fall. Preparing older adults and environments for inclement weather can help reduce falls.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

Some fall risk factors, like diabetes and cognitive impairment, are more common in older adults of color than in older white adults, and disparities in fall hospitalizations exist; for example, between 2017-2021, twice as many Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island older adults were hospitalized in King County compared with white older adults.¹⁰⁶ 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)¹⁰⁷ and so may be less able to make home modifications necessary to reduce fall hazards. The CDC recommends focusing on reaching diverse older adults with information and programs aimed at fall prevention.

STRATEGY

10a. 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.

EXAMPLE ACTION

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



GOAL 11: Improved safety for older adults.

Older adults have expressed growing 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 Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 6: 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 increases vulnerability to scams and prevents people from receiving support if victimized.
- **Strategy 3c: Improve ridership experience on public transportation.** Safety concerns are cited as a reason some older adults avoid public transit.
- **Strategy 2c: Support home weatherization efforts.** Properly weatherized homes can help prevent adverse effects of extreme heat and cold.
- **Goal 12: Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.** Digital literacy can reduce the risk of being victimized by online scams.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

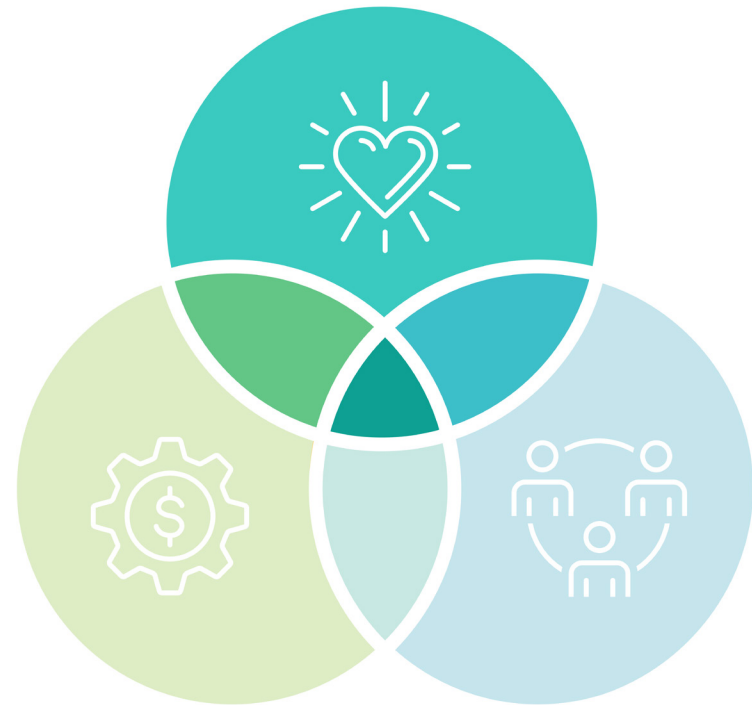
"Safety" is a broad umbrella and encompasses physical safety as well as emotional safety. Older adults of color experience the compound effects of racism and ageism, and may face unique safety concerns; for example, aggression toward people of Asian descent increased during the pandemic and elevated safety risks for certain older adults. Some LGBTQAI+ older 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.¹⁰⁸ In Seattle, people of color are also less likely to own homes and therefore do not have as much control over weatherization and modifications. LGBTQAI+ people, people with disabilities, and people with language access needs may face unique barriers when trying to access shelters or heating/warming sites. A multitude of considerations are needed when addressing the safety of older adults.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>11a. Understand and communicate safety risks to older adults. Understanding and being prepared appropriately for risk can mitigate harm and reduce fear, Fear can be paralyzing, and cause people to avoid leaving their homes and withdraw from social connections, which in turn increases vulnerability to crime and scams.</p>	<p>Hold Civic Coffee events that focus on personal safety, including available resources such as community escorts.</p>
<p>11b. 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 most adversely affected during extreme weather emergencies, including cold and heat; 90% of those who died during Vancouver’s 2021 heat wave were aged 60 and older.¹⁰⁹ Equipping older adults and providers to be ready for emergencies can help reduce risk, including during times when normal operations like transit and delivery systems may be disrupted.</p>	<p>Coordinate with King County and other partners to align on information gaps and messaging in case of emergencies.</p>

In addition, several goals listed elsewhere in this framework also contribute to **HEALTH & WELLBEING** in some way:

- **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. Specifically, this section addresses hearing loss as well as digital equity, which is becoming increasingly important with the advent of virtual health and Assistive Technologies.
- **Goals 1&2: Older adults have increased access to housing affordability and options and more housing stock meets accessibility needs.** 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.
- **Goal 3: Transportation options meet the needs of older adults.** 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.



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,¹¹⁰ including immigrant and LGBTQAI+ 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 outcomes¹¹¹ including memory loss and dementia. By helping older adults retain and even increase their social resources, we expect to also have a positive health impact.

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:

- 12. Access to arts and entertainment is increased.
- 13. The impacts of hearing loss are mitigated.
- 14. Older adults are engaged in volunteer and civic opportunities.
- 15. Programming aimed at reducing social isolation is successful.
- 16. Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.



GOAL 12: Access to arts and entertainment is increased.

There is a growing body of evidence pointing to the positive impacts of arts and entertainment for older adults.¹¹² Participatory art can have powerful physical and mental health benefits¹¹³ 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. Seattle offers a wealth of cultural, artistic, sports, and other entertainment opportunities and it is important for these to be accessible to all ages.

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 13: The impacts of hearing loss are mitigated.** Ensuring people can hear at events, classes, and other arts and entertainment settings enables participation.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

Seattle has a diverse older adult population, and art mediums may have different cultural relevancies. Art also provides opportunities to recognize and celebrate the diverse communities living here and increase our shared understanding of cultures and histories. Geographic distribution, affordability, cultural relevancy, and language-access are some of the key considerations to ensuring all older adults can reap the benefits of arts and entertainment.



STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>12a. 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 people to forego 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.</p>	<p>Hold a forum for entertainment and hospitality professionals on best practices in sound and lighting design.</p>
<p>12b. 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.</p>	<p>Conduct targeted business outreach to entertainment vendors.</p>
<p>12c. 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,¹¹⁴ including less doctor's visits and medications, reduction in falls, better morale and less depression, and improved cognitive function and memory.</p>	<p>Promote art classes to new audiences of older adults.</p>
<p>12d. Encourage buildings and structures (ex: bus stops, hotels, restrooms, parking lots, theaters) to use Universal Design standards. Universal Design (UD) principles are intended to make spaces as 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,¹¹⁵ and we can support these community-led efforts.</p>	<p>Provide staff support to the Northwest Universal Design Council.</p>

GOAL 13: 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,¹¹⁶ 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.¹¹⁷

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 16: Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.** Many Assistive Technologies can help someone mitigate hearing loss, from listening devices to closed captioning. These often require internet connectivity and basic digital skills to operate.



Race and Social Justice Considerations

Hearing loss is more prevalent in white people than in Black people (nearly twice as high).¹¹⁸ While the reason for this remains unclear, research underscores the importance of not ignoring the needs of people of color in hearing loss prevention strategies. It will be important to consider the location and audiences of outreach efforts, as well as the racial composition of typical audiences at venues where hearing loops and other accessibility features are encouraged.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>13a. 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.¹¹⁹ Continual education is needed to help consumers take advantage of resources available.</p>	<p>Bring demonstration devices to outreach events and encourage people to engage and learn.</p>
<p>13b. 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.</p>	<p>Ask venue spaces to adopt hearing loops and noise-cancelling technologies.</p>

GOAL 14: 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 outcomes. These can be opportunities to meet new people, deepen friendships, and discover new and fulfilling hobbies.¹²⁰ Additionally, older adults' participation in decision-making spaces and community leadership roles helps ensure the needs of aging people are represented in policies and priorities.

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 3: Transportation options meet the needs of older adults.** Many civic and volunteer opportunities require travel, and access to reliable transportation is critical.
- **Goal 6: Ageism and stigma against older adults and aging is reduced.** Ageism can prevent opportunities being available or marketed to older adults, and can make a person feel unwelcome to participate in activities.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

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 ages 65-74 and 15% of people 75+ have limited English proficiency in King County).¹²¹ Older adults of color are more likely to be family caregivers and provide kinship care than older white adults, and therefore may have 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. It will be important to consider people's diverse needs and experiences when promoting volunteer and civic engagement opportunities.



STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>14a. 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. Older adults bring unique and important perspectives, and Boards and Commissions are often looking for new members to contribute.</p>	<p>Establish regular feature in monthly e-blasts highlighting local volunteer opportunities.</p>
<p>14b. Create opportunities for older adults to connect with elected leaders. Engaging older adults in the civic process helps elected leaders understand and address aging-related needs</p>	<p>Hold townhalls with elected representatives focused on aging issues.</p>



GOAL 15: 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 though a range of strategies is likely required to meet the needs of unique communities,¹²² and pursuing diverse approaches thoughtfully can likely help older adults stay socially connected as well as grow the collective understanding of successful measures.

Additional Framework Elements Supporting This:

- **Goal 16: Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.** Many interventions involve some digital component, whether that's virtual chats or tracking progress. Increasing older adult's access to and comfort with technology will allow more people to participate in the full range of opportunities.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

Older adults who have immigrated to Seattle may be especially isolated due to language barriers, cultural differences, and limited family and friend networks. Consider unique approaches that connect with these audiences. Caregiving responsibilities can also lead to social isolation, and older adults of color are more likely to be caregivers than white people.¹²³ Older adults of color are also more likely to experience poor health as well as economic insecurity, both of which can limit participation in certain activities, and people with disabilities may need accommodation to fully participate. Programming should consider accessibility from multiple perspectives, including language inclusivity, location spaces, affordability, and the time and resource constraints caregivers face.



STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>15a. Disseminate information about current available programming to older adults. Several community-based organizations around Seattle offer various programs, and we can help ensure people know how to access them.</p>	<p>Add a well-organized section on our website listing resources.</p>
<p>15b. Research and share ideas for effective programming and available funding sources. Academic research has accelerated in recent years, and much data exists that could help inform program design. Organizations running programs might benefit from understanding what has been impactful for various audiences. Many levels of government, including federal, are increasingly interested in supporting efforts to promote social connectivity, and community-based organizations could benefit from understanding available resources.</p>	<p>Convene a network of people working and researching this topic to share learnings, ideas and opportunities.</p>

GOAL 16: Digital equity and comfort with technology is increased among older adults.

Assistive Technologies can help people improve their hearing and mobility, two factors influencing social connection. Day-to-day activities now rely on 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 skills and technical support, greater internet connectivity, and access to devices and applications.

Race and Social Justice Considerations

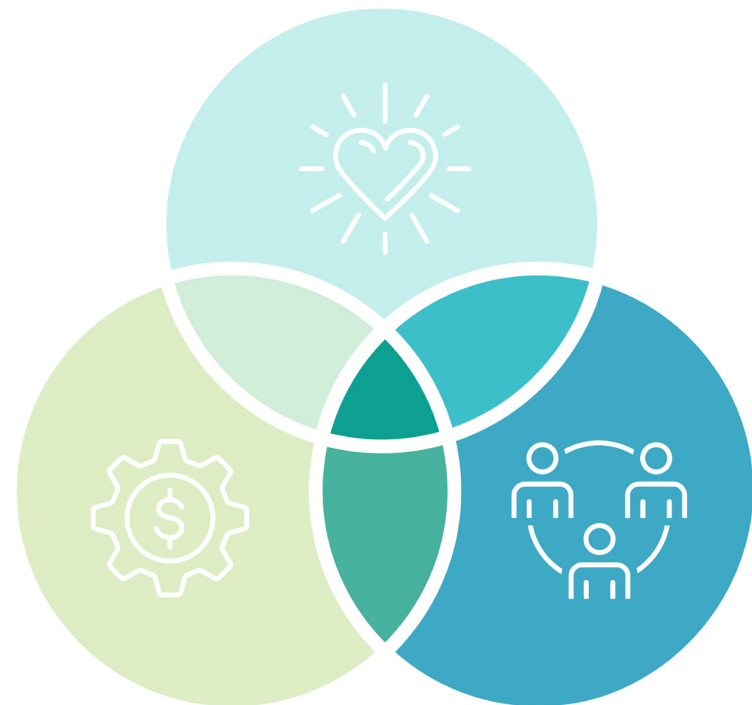
Most people in Seattle report having access to broadband internet, but there are still some areas that lack this connectivity. Older Seattleites speak many different languages, with approximately 13% of people ages 65-74 and 15% of people 75+ having limited English proficiency.¹²⁴ BIPOC people in Seattle are more likely to be low-income than white people,¹²⁵ and this may affect access to devices and internet. 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, and affordability must be prioritized to ensure equitable digital connection.



STRATEGY	EXAMPLE ACTION
<p>16a. Support efforts to expand broadband access. Without broadband access, older adults cannot benefit from virtual opportunities or many of the Assistive Technologies available. While over 90% of people age 60+ in Seattle have access to internet at home, many older adults cite cost as a reason they don't use the internet (15% of those age 60-69, 22% of those 70-79, and 20% of those 80+).¹²⁶</p>	<p>Alert age-friendly discount applicants about vouchers and other discounts for broadband access.</p>
<p>16b. Support education and skills training. Lack of skills and comfort may prevent people from using these devices: on a scale of 0-120, people age 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 people age 80+ share that they don't know how to use the internet).¹²⁷ Adoption of Assistive Technology often requires ongoing training and support.</p>	<p>Connect older adults with local community organizations serving as digital navigators.</p>
<p>16c. Support distribution of devices (ex: hotspots, webcams, digital assistants, etc.) 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+),¹²⁸ 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.</p>	<p>Work with housing authority staff to identify people who could benefit from these devices.</p>

In addition, several goals listed elsewhere in this framework also contribute to **SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY** in some way:

- **Goals 1 & 2: Older adults have increased access to housing options and affordability and more housing stock meets accessibility needs.** 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.
- **Goal 3: Transportation options meet the needs of older adults.** Maintaining social ties and participating in social, entertainment, educational, and civic events often requires travel. Modes like walking, biking, and rolling can be social activities enjoyed with friends and neighbors.
- **Goal 5: Businesses and workplaces are more age-friendly.** 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.
- **Goal 9: Brain health is improved and people experiencing memory loss are supported.** 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 and their caregivers, many of whom are older spouses.
- **Goal 10: Reduction in falls.** 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.



None of this work happens without partnership, 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.

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