



A Five-Year Report: 2017–2021

**Making Seattle a great place
to grow up and grow old!**

www.seattle.gov/agefriendly



Accessibility Commitment

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Executive Summary



Globally, we are aging. The United Nations declared 2021–2030 the Decade of Healthy Aging, echoing the World Health Organization’s (WHO) call to create “age-friendly” communities around the world. In the Puget Sound region, the number of older adults is projected to grow by 85% between 2020 and 2050, eventually comprising more than one-fifth of the population.

Given this, Seattle set out to make our city a great place to grow up *and* grow old. In 2016, Seattle became the 104th member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. In 2017, following a City Council proclamation, we launched Age Friendly Seattle (AFS) as a mechanism to lead this effort. After evaluating local needs and soliciting input from more than 2,000 people, we developed the AFS 2018–2021 Action Plan. It was ambitious, tackling all eight “domains of livability” as defined by the WHO. Of the 29 distinct goals we set out to accomplish, we are proud to have made progress on 27; of the 87 action items contained within those goals, we have advanced 68. Below are a few highlights, with more detail contained in full report.

COVID-19 made our work both more challenging and more important. As we wrap up our first AFS Action Plan amidst a waning pandemic, we recognize the opportunity to recover and rebuild in ways that makes us a stronger, more connected, and more inclusive community. Older adults are both contributors to and beneficiaries of this important work. Moving forward together, we will reassess need and work alongside community partners and colleagues from around the city to create a Seattle where older adults thrive.

Domain of Livability	Actions completed or advanced
Transportation	15 of 18
Housing	11 of 13
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	3 of 4
Social Participation	3 of 5
Respect and Inclusion	7 of 8
Civic Participation and Employment	8 of 10
Community and Health Services	12 of 16
Information and Communications	9 of 13

Progress in Housing, Transportation & Built Environments

As people age, most prefer to continue living at home and enjoying familiar neighborhoods, hobbies, and friends. Affordable and accessible housing is critical, as are mobility and well-designed public spaces, all of which greatly impact older adults’ ability to safely enjoy their communities. To promote access to housing, transportation options, and accessible public spaces, AFS and our partners have made progress on a range of issues.

Improved the age-friendliness of Seattle’s streets. AFS conducted several walking audits in key locations frequented by seniors. The learnings from these audits have resulted in tangible improvements, such as better wayfinding at Pike Place Market and bus stop improvements near the IDIC Filipino Senior Center. We also supported Department of Transportation colleagues in creating a “Street Design Toolkit for Age-Friendly Neighborhoods” and co-hosted a Universal Design & Pedestrian Wayfinding Forum at City Hall attended by over 200 people.

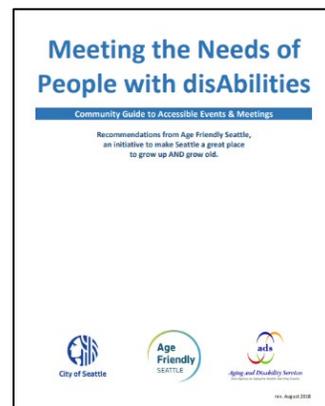
Promoted Universal Design. Partnering with the Northwest Universal Design Council, AFS supported multiple public events, industry networking opportunities, and demonstration projects aimed at educating key audiences about the importance of intentional design that allows older people to age at home and participate in public life. One highlight was the 2019 Seattle Design Festival, where AFS co-facilitated a demonstration called “Doorway to Inclusion and Independence.”

Informed housing policy recommendations. AFS played an active role in elevating the housing needs of older adults. Staff coordinated an interdepartmental project to map locations and concentration of available senior housing, suggested a “visitability” standard to promote affordability and social connectivity through housing development, and provided input on the housing recommendations put forth by the Mayor’s Council on African American Elders.

Encouraging Social Participation, Respect, Inclusion & Communication

A growing body of research points to the strong links between social connectivity and positive health outcomes. When social distancing became a strategy to slow the spread of COVID-19, many people—particularly older adults who were most at risk—suffered from the loss of human connection. AFS worked to address this, bringing people together online and emphasizing language inclusivity. Celebrating Seattle’s diverse communities and understanding that as people age, they often experience disabilities, we have encouraged multicultural understanding and prioritized accessibility for all.

Published *Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities: A Community Guide to Accessible Events and Meetings.* This guide has been widely used and presented locally at several trainings for human services providers, as well as nationally at conferences hosted by AARP, the American Society on Aging, and the Hearing Loss Association of America.



Connected and informed older adults during uncertain times. In partnership with Seattle Public Library, AFS has held monthly in-person Civic Coffee events for several years. In a rapidly changing and isolating 2020, we pivoted and expanded efforts to foster social connectivity and disseminate accurate, timely information online. We added an additional bi-monthly event called Close to Home that featured local leaders and resources throughout Seattle. In 2020–2021 alone, our 55 events were viewed over 12,192 times.

Improved inclusivity for immigrant, BIPOC, and non-English speaking older adults. We routinely provided live interpretation at in-person events and brought this feature online during the pandemic: real-time caption translation was made available in 11 languages, and we now strive to bring live interpretation to online events.

Nationally recognized as leaders. In recognition of our intentional outreach to immigrant elders, AFS received the American Society on Aging Award for Excellence in Multicultural Aging, which recognizes high-quality, innovative programs enhancing the lives of a multicultural aging population. We also received an Aging Achievement Award from USAging for our online events, which have become a model for other Age Friendly communities to adopt.

Introduction

Globally, we are aging. The United Nations has declared 2021–2030 the Decade of Healthy Aging, issuing an international call for all sectors to improve the lives of older people. This echoes the World Health Organization’s efforts to encourage “age-friendly” communities around the world, a mantle taken up by AARP here in the United States. In 2016, the City of Seattle embraced this mission and soon became the 104th member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities; on March 31, 2017, the City Council¹ formally adopted an Age Friendly Resolution. In doing so, we joined Puyallup and have since welcomed  our neighbors in Renton, Tacoma, and several towns along the Columbia River into the network of Age Friendly communities.

Every age-friendly community must evaluate local needs and develop an action plan that addresses some or all of eight Domains of Livability², as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program. More than 2,000 people participated in creating Age Friendly Seattle’s (AFS) 2018–2021 Action Plan, and their feedback led to the development of the 87 of actions outlined within. The plan was organized into eight sections, reflecting the WHO’s prescribed domains:

1. Transportation
2. Housing
3. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
4. Social Participation
5. Respect & Social Inclusion
6. Civic Participation & Employment
7. Community & Health Services
8. Communication & Information

First managed by staff wearing multiple simultaneous hats, Age Friendly Seattle now has three dedicated staff people: two outreach coordinators who work directly with community members and partners, and a program manager who provides guidance and support to the team. In addition to external facing work, these staff work cross-departmentally within the City to elevate the needs of older adults and identify areas for collaboration and improvement.

It takes a village to create an age-friendly community, and the AFS Action Plan is not the first or only effort in Seattle to offer programs and services geared toward supporting older adults. Throughout this report we highlight accomplishments from several departments that have made our city a better place to grow old. We hope this offers insight into the range of efforts undertaken as part of realizing an age-friendly Seattle and gives credit to the many public servants who work each day to improve our community.

This report provides a comprehensive five-year summary of what Age Friendly Seattle has achieved since its inception. It is organized by the eight domains of livability we set out to address. Each section

¹ Seattle City Council Resolution 31739: <https://bit.ly/2oHW47Q>

² For more information about The 8 Domains of Livability, visit the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities online at <https://bit.ly/2H8l9H4>.

contains three sub-categories that group related actions together. The COVID-19 pandemic unfolded during the third year of our plans, and like people and organizations across the world, we pivoted to de-prioritized some actions and address others with urgency. While some of our planned actions were waylaid, we did successfully conduct efforts across each domain and made progress on 68 of our 87 action items.

Progress Overview

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As we draw our 2018–2021 Action Plan to a close, reflecting on past accomplishments and efforts provides us with a solid foundation on which to build. In 2022, we are reassessing community need and soliciting input from a range of stakeholders to inform our future goals and strategies. We look forward to sharing the next iteration of Seattle’s Age Friendly Action Plan, and to continuing to make Seattle a great place to grow up and grow old.

Race and Social Justice Initiative

In 2005, the City of Seattle became the first city to undertake an effort that focused explicitly on recognizing and dismantling structure racism.³ The Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) includes a Racial Equity Toolkit that guides the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, initiatives, programs, and budget issues. Ideally used from project conception to evaluation, this tool helps staff identify and address impacts on racial equity. The Age Friendly program reviewed the City of Seattle's RSJ Equity Toolkit when writing began in earnest in early 2018. Later the same year, in team meetings, objectives were evaluated for potential impact on racial equity.

Step 1: Set outcomes. AFS is housed within Seattle's Human Services Department, which aims to improve outcomes in several areas prioritized in Seattle's RSJI. Notably, the department has focused on preparing youth for success, supporting affordability and livability, addressing homelessness, promoting public health, supporting safe communities, and promoting healthy aging.

Step 2: Engage stakeholders and analyze data. Early efforts were conducted to better understand community need. To reach diverse populations and people not already part of formal networks, AARP Livable Communities conducted a phone survey of 506 residents aged 45 and older. The Seattle report, annotation, methodology, and infographic are available online⁴; while our sample was reflective of the percentage of older Black adults in Seattle, it slightly overrepresented white people and underrepresented API people. A Task Force (subsequently called the Advocacy Coalition) was convened in 2016 to help identify priorities and advance mutual goals; these advocates were representative of our key constituent population of older adults and met regularly for two years. Data gathered underscored that racial inequities can compound over a lifetime, and racial disparities exist interconnectedly across nearly all domains that Age Friendly Seattle aims to address. For example, the racialized wealth gap makes it harder to access housing, transportation, and health services; this can contribute to the poorer health outcomes many older adults of color experience, and poor health can create barriers to social and civic participation. In addition to leading with race, AFS has acknowledged and aimed to support other vulnerable older populations, including LGBTQ+ and immigrant and refugee communities.

Step 3: Determine benefit and/or burden. By aiming to make our city more livable for all older adults, AFS actions benefit diverse communities. We focused on meeting the needs of low-income older adults, who are disproportionately BIPOC.

Step 4: Advance Opportunity or Minimize Harm. The AFS Action Plan set out to address a broad range of issues over eight different domains of livability. By reaching wide, we hoped to have broad impact across our communities, with the understanding that many older adults of color face inequities in several domains.

Step 5: Evaluate, raise racial awareness, and be accountable. During five years of work, AFS became increasingly intentional about engaging communities of color in our outreach work, particularly our events. We improved language access with live translation and interpretation in more languages, often partnering with our colleagues in the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs for assistance. Most of our

³ www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/RSJI/RSJI-Our-Approach.docx

⁴ www.aarp.org/research/topics/community/info-2017/aarp-2017-age-friendly-community-surveys.html

events have featured leaders of color, often representing organizations serving BIPOC and immigrant and refugee communities and educating audiences on a range of racial and social justice issues and resources. While we are proud of these efforts, accountability requires recognizing our shortcomings. AFS did not implement evaluation metrics specific to racial equity, limiting our insight into how we have—or have not—impacted BIPOC communities. Furthermore, our community stakeholder participation waned over time. While this was in part due to changes brought by COVID-19, we acknowledge and appreciate that more input, from more diverse audiences, will be beneficial to our program and enable us to serve Seattle’s residents more equitably.

Step 6: Report back. As part of our commitment to holding ourselves accountable for advancing racial equity and social justice, AFS is making our progress in this space publicly visible via this report. We welcome community feedback on our past efforts, as well as input on how we can better serve Seattle’s diverse communities moving forward. AFS staff have demonstrated professional and personal engagement in this space, holding leadership positions on the Human Services Department’s Change Team and Racial Affinity Caucuses and serving as our department’s language access liaison. We commit to keeping racial justice at the fore while creating our next action plan.



1: Transportation

Mobility is essential for healthy aging. Safe, reliable, and easy-to-use transportation options—including accessible and affordable public transit, rideshare, ride-hailing, walking, and biking— get people to shopping locations, museums and events, visits with friends, and health care appointments. Since 2017, Age Friendly Seattle and our partners around the city have employed a range of strategies to improve the mobility of older adults, focusing on the quality of our streets, effective wayfinding, and transportation access needs.

A. Improving the age-friendliness of Seattle’s streets

- In 2017, AFS staff met with Market to MOHAI, one of several pedestrian corridor projects planned for downtown Seattle, to suggest age- and disability-friendly enhancements.
- AFS has conducted and participated in several walking audits, including the Find It, Fix It community walk on First Hill, accompanying Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) and residents of Elizabeth James House on a walk in 2017, and partnering with AARP in 2018 and 2019 to conduct two Pike Place Market audits using Stanford software. The findings of this discovery work were subsequently presented to stakeholders and led to tangible improvements.
- The SDOT “Street Design Toolkit for Age-Friendly Neighborhoods” is a valuable resource that serves as a guide for designing streets and neighborhoods to support people of all ages. First drafted in 2017, AFS staff have reviewed and provided input at several points over the years. In 2019, age-friendly design criteria were added to the guide’s Complete Streets Checklist for projects over \$500,000.

B. Promoting effective wayfinding

- As a result of the Pike Place Market walking audits conducted by AFS and AARP, an AARP Community Challenge Grant was secured and used to improve wayfinding to the market’s food pantry and garden operated by seniors who are residents at the market.⁵

⁵ www.king5.com/article/entertainment/television/programs/new-day-northwest/aarp-community-challenge-grant-winners-washington-state-pike-place-market-foundation/281-0604bbad-631b-4187-8d39-2348843ef104

- In February 2020, AFS supported the Northwest Universal Design Council⁶ in presenting “Universal Design & Pedestrian Wayfinding Forum.” Over 200 people attended this event at City Hall, engaging with an expert panel about wayfinding design and local government efforts to address the needs of all.⁷ The forum was recorded and broadcast by The Seattle Channel.⁸

C. Working with partners to Improve mobility/transportation access

- AFS participated with several other Seattle City Departments and community organizations to hold Pedestrian Potlucks in 2017 (Jefferson Park) and 2018 (Alki Beach).
- In 2018 and 2019, the AFS workgroup on Transportation and Public Spaces reviewed countywide health, demographic, and planning data. Based on this, they selected Beacon Hill as a focus area. After meeting with stakeholders and conducting walking tours to observe transportation infrastructure in Beacon Hill, they began working with the IDIC Filipino Senior Center on potential pedestrian and bus improvements around this building. Many of the capital improvements identified and proposed have now been implemented by SDOT.
- AFS has participated in the development of King County Mobility Coalition’s One-Call/One-Click project, begun in 2018. Intended to make specialized transportation more user friendly, this program is on track to launch publicly in 2022.
- In 2019, AFS distributed information about opportunities to serve on the SDOT Transit Advisory Board and to advance Seattle’s Transportation Equity Program. We also promoted the Regional Reduced Fare Permit available to older adults.
- Several AFS Civic Coffee events have focused on transportation issues. In 2020 and 2021, we hosted the Director of Seattle’s Department of Transportation to share COVID-19 response and recovery information.



CITY SPOTLIGHT: Seattle Department of Transportation responds to COVID-19.

When the pandemic changed life for all of us in Seattle, SDOT responded by creating more spaces for people to be outside safely. This involved the establishment of more than 25 miles of Neighborhood Greenways to Stay Healthy Streets¹ and the creation of Stay Healthy Blocks.¹ This reduced traffic and encouraged walking, rolling, and biking. SDOT also issued more than 500 temporary street use permits to restaurants, food trucks, retail vendors, and others to establish outdoor cafes, merchandise displays, and pickup zones.¹ Changes in parking zones and enforcement practices, including temporary parking zones for retail pickup and parking sites for healthcare providers,¹ allowed people to access necessary services more easily. Older adults are especially vulnerable to the health risks and social isolation caused by the pandemic; creating safe spaces outside and enabling outdoor dining and shopping helps keep older adults connected to people and to services.

⁶ Northwest Universal Design Council (www.environmentsforall.org)

⁷ For more information, read “Universal Design & Pedestrian Wayfinding Forum” at <https://bit.ly/3oh8sdj> (AgeWise King County, February 2020)

⁸ View “Universal Design & Pedestrian Wayfinding” on the Seattle Channel’s YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/JtEKC2QieY>.



As people age, most prefer to continue living at home and enjoying familiar communities. AFS supports efforts to ensure older adults have safe, affordable housing options that meet their access needs. Over the past five years, we have grown the collective knowledge of Seattle’s housing landscape, supported measures that increase the economic stability of older adults, and worked to understand and address community-specific needs.

A. Assessing housing needs and strategies

- Early on, AFS supported the creation of a Housing Workgroup consisting of community members who serve on the Age Friendly Coalition.
- In 2018, AFS staff conducted a literature and policy review on behalf of the Mayor’s Council on African American Elders (MCAAE). This included an overview of new affordable and age-restricted housing, a survey of other City preference policies, and a discussion with a Housing Levy Oversight Board member. This led to the MCAAE’s recommendation, included in their [2018 Advocating for Change Report](#), for a local preference policy for Seattle neighborhoods impacted by gentrification modeled on Portland’s policy. It also recommended affordable housing for extremely low-income older people and raising the property tax exemption ceilings so more older adults can qualify.
- In 2019 and 2020, AFS coordinated an interdepartmental project with Seattle’s Office of Housing, Department of Transportation, and IT Department to implement recommendations from the 2018 “Moving Toward Age Friendly Housing in King County” report. An online inventory of housing assets was initiated, including age-restricted housing, using Geographical Information System software. This was used to increase awareness of older adult housing clusters and to guide decision-making around co-location of services. Efforts were made to identify affordable and accessible housing within .25 miles of essential services.
- AFS participated in the Housing Options Interdepartmental Team focused on the creation of more “missing middle housing” options. AFS suggested specific recommendations, including the need to implement a *visitability* standard to promote social connectivity, and instructional manuals and brochures for single family homeowners to adaptively redesign housing.

B. Supporting economic stability for older adults

- In 2018 and 2019, AFS supported the King County Repair Assistance program, which aims to reduce barriers by expanding the number of contractors providing estimates and doing repairs and thereby reducing delays in service. Together with the Seattle Office of Housing and the King County Repair Network, we distributed information about home repair and weatherization programs.
- Through a partnership with the AARP Foundation, AFS investigated the efficacy of a web-based financial literacy program to assist households that receive rental assistance with one-on-one financial coaching.
- AFS collaborated with the King County Assessor's Office to maximize outreach to older people about eligibility for property tax exemptions. Information was disseminated online as well as at public libraries and senior activity centers.



**CITY SPOTLIGHT:
Seattle Public Utilities
gives seniors a break.**

Many families face severe rent and mortgage burdens, and even a small discount on utilities can be a big relief. In 2017, the Utility Discount Program eligibility rules were changed to allow Social Security recipients to deduct Medicare Part B premium payments from their gross income calculation. This allowed several thousand households that were previously ineligible to enroll in the savings program. Staff from Seattle's Human Services Department Utility Discount Program, Seattle City Light, and Seattle Public Utilities have worked together to cross-promote utility savings as well as property tax savings.

C. Addressing a range of community-specific housing needs

- In 2018, leaders from the Northwest Universal Design Council (which AFS staff supports) were successful in getting the Northwest Multiple Listing Service to add an accessibility worksheet as an optional sales feature. This supports people with disabilities in the home-buying process, and educational training programs and open houses were subsequently offered to support Realtors in using this new system and understanding visibility priorities.
- AFS staff sat on the Washington State LGBTQ Equity and Diversity Project Advisory Committee and participated in University of Washington research on what age-friendly housing means for diverse populations, including LGBTQ+ seniors.
- AFS staff reached Black communities with information about housing affordability programs by presenting to Seattle Human Services' African Descent Caucus, the Mayor's Council on African American Elders, and on Rainier Avenue Radio.



3: Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

The design of a public space can greatly impact older adults' ability to enjoy them. Gathering places are important, and AFS has regularly supported efforts to make parks, streets, sidewalks, and buildings accessible and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities. We have done so by advocating for the adoption of Universal Design principles in land use and housing policies so that spaces are designed to be as accessible to as many people as possible, and by defining and promoting event accessibility and encouraging age-friendly components in City of Seattle plans.

A. Promoting Universal Design

- Early in AFS history, we began working with the community advocate-driven Northwest Universal Design Council (NWUDC). Supported by AFS staff, this group is comprised of a wide range of industry experts and engages in a range of efforts to promote Universal Design principles. This group held regular steering committee meetings, quarterly public meetings and events, and several happy hours for networking, brainstorming, and small demonstrations.
- In 2018, AFS staff supported three NWUDC events—a Washington Assisted Technology Act Program (WATAP) training on assistive technology tools, another event focused on special populations housing, and a third on remodeling for aging in place.
- The Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS) added an accessibility worksheet as an optional sales feature in 2018, and the following year UD advocates offered educational training programs to familiarize members with the new system and coordinated open houses showcasing visibility.
- AFS facilitated a joint venture between NWUDC and WATAP to install a demonstration called “Doorway to Inclusion and Independence: How universal design creates balanced access for all” at the 2019 Seattle Design Festival Block Party. More than 1,000 volunteers interacted with this over the course of one weekend.
- NWUDC supported Pathway Design and Construction by co-hosting a booth at the 2020 Home Show, where UD components in their work were featured
- AFS has twice reviewed the “Practical Guide to Universal Home Design,” a popular booklet produced in Minnesota, with the intention of providing guidance to Seattle’s design community and single-family homeowners in alignment with local building codes.
- In addition to the well-attended 2020 Wayfinding forum mentioned above, AFS featured NWUDC leaders on a 2020 online event, "Innovations in Dementia Support & Universal Design."

B. Making Events More Accessible

- AFS created *Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities: A Community Guide to Accessible Events and Meetings* and has disseminated this with colleagues within the City and external partners. This has included presentations at an Innovation Showcase during the 2018 AARP Livable Communities National Conference and the Hearing Loss Association of America conference. Since then, AFS has continued to update the booklet with relevant information.
- In 2019, AFS teamed up with the City of Seattle’s ADA Title II Compliance Program and the Northwest Universal Design Council to coordinate a forum at Seattle City Hall called “How to Plan an Accessible Event” that drew more than 100 people and featured panelists with a range of physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities. The event served as a model itself, featuring a range of accessibility tools, and engaged multiple Seattle City Departments. It has since become an available resource on the Seattle Channel.
- In 2019, Seattle Human Services Department’s Aging and Disability Services division (King County’s Area Agency on Aging) received an Aging Achievement Award from National Association of Area Agencies (now USAging) for Age Friendly Seattle’s work on accessibility.
- When traditional in-person gathering spaces were restricted during the pandemic, we pivoted to virtual spaces. Maintaining our commitment to accessible events even online, we conducted a thoughtful search for the best digital platforms and have incorporated translation and interpretation in several languages at virtual events throughout 2020 and 2021.



**CITY SPOTLIGHT:
Removing barriers to
Accessory Dwelling
Units in Seattle.**

With space and housing at a premium in our city, the Seattle City Council passed a 2019 bill that removed several regulatory barriers to building accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Many older adults are on fixed incomes, and these smaller dwellings can offer lower-cost housing options, opportunity to live near caregivers, or much-needed rental income that allows people to age in place and enjoy their familiar neighborhoods. In the first report issued by the Seattle Office of Planning and Development and the Department of Construction and Inspection, the number of permits issued for ADUs more than doubled within just two years of the regulatory changes. On its ADUniverse website, the City provides tools and information-- and even pre-approved building designs – to help reduce barriers and demystify the build process.

C. Encouraging age-friendly components in neighborhood and area plans

- In addition to the Interdepartmental Team projects mentioned above, AFS provided comments on the planned update of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan to the Office of Planning and Community Development and recommended forecasting shifts in the older adult population to improve person-centered services. Because this was based on similar work developed by Age Friendly NYC, AFS staff facilitated a meeting of Seattle and New York City demographers to discuss their forecasting approach.

- AFS staff also worked with Age Friendly New York City to understand and potentially replicate NYC's bench mapping project.
- For several years, Age Friendly staff have served on the Puget Sound Regional Council's Transportation Policy Board, reviewing regional plans, and bringing to the fore issues impacting older adults.



4: Social Participation

A growing body of research points to the strong links between social connectivity and health outcomes. When social distancing became a strategy for slowing the spread of COVID-19, many people—particularly older people who were most at risk—suffered from the loss of human connection. AFS worked to address this challenge, emphasizing language inclusivity.

A. Responding to the pandemic

- Even before the pandemic, AFS had begun plans to video-record and livestream events to senior centers and community centers, including organizations serving immigrants and refugees that could interpret the events for non-English speaking elders. This became increasingly urgent when stay-at-home measures further limited access to social activities and information sharing, and we were primed for the shift to virtual environments.
- As the pandemic unfolded in spring of 2020, AFS launched a bi-weekly online series called “Close to Home: Stories of Health, Tech & Resilience.” This offered a regular touchpoint for older adults to connect with their community and receive valuable information from leaders serving Seattle’s diverse communities. The 34 events hosted in 2020 and 2021 have been watched more 7,664 times.
- We also pivoted our monthly Civic Coffee events to offer them online. These events have traditionally featured City leaders, and this format became even more relevant during a pandemic when local governments had critical and timely information to disseminate. Rebranded by AFS in 2018, Civic Coffees have steadily grown in popularity. In 2019, AFS held 12 events and increased total participation by 67% over the previous year, in 2020 we hosted 10 events and doubled attendance, and in 2021 we held 11 events that received over 2,760 views total.
- In total, the 55 online events we hosted during the pandemic years of 2020–2021 were viewed more than 12,192 times.
- AARP highlighted AFS in their widely disseminated publication, “Age-Friendly Seattle and King County, Washington, Respond to COVID-19: A look at how the city of Seattle and its surrounding county are serving and protecting older adults.”⁹
- Having honed our online event production skills, AFS staff also provided technical assistance for several other events reaching older audiences in 2020 and 2021. This includes support of Seattle Parks and Recreation’s Lifelong Recreation Program, two Legacy of Love African American Caregivers Forums, and many more. AFS staff joined the Digital Workplace Champions initiative led by the City

⁹ Age-Friendly Seattle and King County, Washington, Respond to COVID-19: A look at how the city of Seattle and its surrounding county are serving and protecting older adults (www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2020/seattle-king-county-washington-COVID-19-response.html)

of Seattle Information Technology Department and presented to colleagues on several topics related to remote work during the pandemic.

B. Improving inclusivity for non-English speakers

- AFS has a strong history of considering the needs of non-English speakers. In 2017, we collaborated with Seattle’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, Department of Neighborhoods, and Seattle Housing Authority to host a luncheon and listening session with immigrant and refugee elders at New Holly. Eight languages were represented.
- AFS has since made language inclusivity a priority at events. We routinely provided live interpretation during in-person events and have endeavored to bring this feature to our online events, too. We worked with a University of Washington Information School capstone project team to select the right digital platform for online events given our translation goals, and we have continued to experiment with products that support non-English speakers.
- During the pandemic, AFS made real-time caption translation available at online events in 11 languages—Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, English, Filipino, French, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese. In early 2022, we held our first online event featuring live interpretation in three languages: Amharic, Tigrinya, and Somali.
- In addition to providing in-language access, our event programming includes content and information specific to immigrants and refugees in Seattle. In 2020, this included topics like the U.S. Census, speakers from organizations that advocate for refugee and immigrant assistance, and featured resources for immigrant and refugee elders. In 2021, we celebrated Hispanic Heritage month, Black History month, and featured the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs and the Immigrant Women’s Community Center at our events.
- Since 2020, AFS staff have served on the Washington State Refugee Advisory Council, contributing perspectives on older refugees. This connection has helped AFS better understand and serve all residents in our community.



CITY SPOTLIGHT: **Seattle’s Aging and Disability Services division uses technology to keep social isolation at bay.**

When stay-at-home restrictions were put in place during the pandemic, many older adults were cut off from contact with family, friends, health care providers, and other networks. While many people quickly pivoted to find connection in the digital space, some older people lacked the technological skills and devices needed. Seattle Human Services Department Aging and Disability Services staff quickly stood up an “Intergenerational Tech Support” pilot project that connected high school students with older adults to provide digital coaching (a project now being expanded by Washington State University). Staff also facilitated the purchase and distribution of nearly 120 tablets and over 130 Wi-Fi hotspots so that low-income adults had Internet-connected devices, and could access telehealth services and online recreation, and stay connected to family and friends. Additionally, the ADS team supported the launch of a robotic pet program built off research indicating that even robotic companions can reduce social isolation and loneliness in older people.

C. Encouraging participation in community activities

- From our inception, AFS has worked closely with several City of Seattle departments to cross-promote programs, events, and activities that engage older adults and help them thrive. Notably, this has included close partnership with the Seattle Public Library and the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department, both of which offer a range of continuing education, fitness, and training programs for elders.
- Since 2018, AFS has coordinated a discount program for people 65+ in Seattle. Our growing list of participating organizations includes both businesses and entertainment options, with the Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle Animal Shelter pet adoption, and Seattle Aquarium among the most frequently used discounts. In 2019, AFS brought this discount directory online, making it easier for residents to search for discounts and for businesses to register them. Although we paused the solicitation of new business discounts in 2020 due to COVID-19, there were 73 discounts listed at the end of 2021, and outreach has once again begun.
- In 2019, AFS and AARP coordinated an Age Friendly discount at a Seattle Sounders soccer game, receiving positive feedback from the community. Plans for a second event in 2020 were curtailed due to COVID-19 but we are eager to pursue similar events when safe to do so.



5: Respect & Social Inclusion

All people deserve to live in a city where they feel respected and included. AFS celebrates Seattle’s diverse communities and encourages multicultural understanding. We have a long-standing commitment to equity, including racial and gender justice, support for LGBTQ+ communities, and inclusion of people with disabilities and memory loss.

A. Supporting aging within the LGBTQ community

- Since our beginnings, AFS has had a strong commitment to supporting LGBTQ+ elders. In 2017, we teamed up with a community-based planning team to present an all-day “Aging the LGBTQ Way: A Forum on Equity, Respect & Inclusion” at Seattle City Hall. This all-day forum was supported by the Mayor and City Council and attended by 130 participants.
- Our commitment to LGBTQ-friendly housing is documented in the Seattle Rainbow Housing report, “Aging in Community: Addressing LGBTQ Inequities in Housing and Senior Services,” which references the AFS Action Plan¹⁰
- In 2018 and 2019, AFS collaborated with Generations Aging with Pride and University of Washington to expand Seattle HSD Aging and Disability Services case managers’ knowledge about LGBTQ+ needs and increase cultural competency. Trainings were held in Seattle and Renton. We also explored ways to amend existing LGBTQ+ trainings to provide continuing education credits for caregivers and Certified Nurses Assistants.
- Staff at AFS have regularly taken state and national leadership roles in this space, serving on the Washington State LGBTQ Community Advisory Committee, presenting at the 2019 National LGBTQ Health and Longevity Conference, and contributing to the 2020 Washington State LGBTQ+ Equity and Health Report.
- In 2019, AFS initiated discussions on the intersectionality between HSD’s African Descent Caucus and LGBTQ Affinity Group. Members of both groups and health care professionals from University of Washington and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center met monthly to explore program design and policies affecting care and support for LGBTQ elders, their caregivers, and families who identify as people of color.
- In 2020 and 2021, six online events were geared toward the LGBTQ community, including three in collaboration with Saying It Out Loud Conference organizers and other community partners. Several

¹⁰ Aging in Community: Addressing LGBTQ Inequities in Housing and Senior Services, by Karen Fredriksen Goldsen, PhD

(www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Housing/Footer%20Pages/Data%20and%20Reports/Seattle%20Rainbow%20Housing%20Report.pdf)

events focused on COVID-19 and LGBTQ+ communities, including “What have we learned from the HIV/AIDS pandemic with COVID-19;” “LGBTQ+2S Resilience: Thriving or just surviving during the COVID-19 pandemic;” and “LGBTQ+2S & BIPOC: Vaccines, Vaccination Trials and YOU.” Events in 2021 focused on City of Seattle programs that support LGBTQ+ elders and featured leaders from LGBTQ community organizations.

B. Encouraging dementia-friendly environments

- AFS staff were appointed to the University of Washington Medicine Memory and Brain Wellness Center’s Community Education Advisory Group, which focused on creating a “hub” for dementia friendly communities. This was envisioned as a center for collaboration and programming for people with dementia and their families, located at the Frye Art Museum with construction slated for 2020. AFS staff joined the museum’s Creative Aging Advisory Committee, which has a mission to improve the lives of people living with dementia and supporting their caregivers and families.
- In 2018, Councilmember Sally Bagshaw hosted a lunch-and-learn panel at Seattle City Hall coordinated by AFS for National Family Caregiver Support Month
- In 2019, AFS partnered with Aging and Disability Services’ Elder Abuse Prevention Program to compile aging, disability, and memory loss trainings used by Seattle Police Department, Seattle Fire Department, and King County Emergency Medical Services. This process helped determine what additional training resources should be added to best support Seattle’s communities. The partnership with Seattle Fire has now grown into the Mobile Integrated Health Program.
- In 2019, AFS teamed up with Human Resources and other partners to identify City of Seattle job classifications that would benefit from aging, disability, and memory loss trainings. AFS has taken the next step of designing curriculum for a video training that will be available in 2022/23.
- For several years, AFS has promoted Memory Sunday, an annual event recognized by several Black faith-based communities and aimed at providing education and resources on dementia prevention, treatment, and caregiver support¹¹. Participation has steadily grown, rising by 85% between 2018 and 2020 and engaging approximately 1,000 people through 20 faith communities in 2021.
- AFS’s Close to Home online event series hosted an event featuring information about dementia support for LGBTQ elders.

C. Advancing gender and racial equity for older adults

- In 2017, AFS and a community-based planning team presented “Engaging Aging,” a forum focused on women and optimal aging in Seattle, attended by 200 people.
- In 2018, AFS worked with Seattle University students to explore opportunities to showcase the wisdom and knowledge of older adults, especially older adults of color.

¹¹ For more information about Memory Sunday, read “Memory Sunday Focuses on African-American Dementia Caregivers” at <https://bit.ly/36xXgn1> (AgeWise King County, June 2020)

- In 2020, AFS convened meetings to discuss strategies to promote older adults' health and wellness with faculty and subject matter experts from the University of Washington, Fred Hutchinson, Seattle Indian Health Board, Harborview, and state agencies, including the HealthCare Authority and AL TSA
- AFS staff participated in research conducted by the University of Washington about what age-friendly housing means for diverse populations.
- AFS staff moderated the Washington Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance's 2020 virtual conference, a one-day symposium on the intersections of racial justice, immigrant and refugee communities, and the Black Lives Matter movement
- We regularly support events geared toward Seattle's Black communities. This includes co-hosting the annual Legacy of Love African American Caregivers event in 2020 and 2021, reaching more than 300 viewers, and promoting Grandparents Day at the Northwest African American Museum in 2019, 2020, and 2021.
- AFS staff have continued to engage fully in the City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative. Staff have co-chaired an internal African Descent Caucus and White Caucus, exercising leadership amongst colleagues and keeping racial justice central to all AFS work.



CITY SPOTLIGHT:
Seattle Parks and Recreation engages all people in lifelong recreation.

For decades, Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation has been improving the wellbeing and social connectedness of older adults through fitness, recreation, and education.¹ Pre-pandemic, the Lifelong Recreation Program offered programs at Seattle's 26 neighborhood community centers and other locations. When COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, they quickly brought programming online,¹ conducting a survey and incorporating 1,000 responses to inform their virtual efforts. This included production of 21 free exercise videos, training for older adults to comfortably use WebEx, dissemination of information about walking, cooking, art, gardening, and music, and collaboration on an art cars parade that took place at 40 senior living sites serving low-income adults.¹ ¹ Dementia Friendly Recreation offered monthly virtual Garden Discovery walks to bring nature to the dementia-friendly community, and the 7th Annual Momentia Talent Share celebrated and showcased a range of community talent including watercolor painting, mixed media and photography, poetry, songs on ukulele, mandolin, accordion, and acapella, and a dance break with Silver Kite.



6: Civic Participation & Employment

Older adults make significant contributions to our communities. They are some of the most valuable employees, volunteer at high rates, serve as civic leaders on boards and commissions, and donate resources generously. AFS encourages older adults to share their skills as knowledgeable advocates, seasoned employees, and passionate leaders in our city.

A. Embracing community advocacy

- Seattle became an “Age Friendly” community thanks in large part to the members on a Task Force who came together to build public and political support for this initiative. This group, comprised of older adults as well as service providers, was instrumental in helping our city receive its Age Friendly distinction. The Task Force evolved into a Coalition, meeting regularly with AFS staff and other stakeholders for several years.
- The Mayor’s Council on African American Elders (MCAAE) provides important insight into the needs of older Black adults in Seattle. Over the past five years, AFS has frequently collaborated with the MCAAE on a range of items, including co-hosting events and supporting proposals for housing recommendations.
- AFS has regularly met and engaged with the Seattle-King County Advisory Council on Aging & Disability Services, which advises the Area Agency on Aging. We continue to work in tandem with this group on issues impacting Seattle communities.
- In 2019, AFS joined forces with Age Friendly Pittsburgh to present a symposium called "Going Age-Friendly: Creative Community Engagement Techniques" at the American Society on Aging's annual conference.
- During our first five years, we consistently supported efforts of the community-led Northwest Universal Design Council.

B. Encouraging age-friendly employment and recreation

- In 2018, AFS worked with Bellwether Housing, Seattle’s largest low-income housing provider, to explore the feasibility of training resident service managers to use computer skills training curriculum developed by long-time Seniors Training Seniors volunteers at the former Mayor’s Office of Senior Citizens. This was intended to support digital communication as well as workplace job skills.

- In 2020, AFS created a guide to encourage businesses to become more age-friendly for both their customers and their employees. We launched a related business-centric website at GoAgeFriendly.org where employers and business owners can self-evaluate their “age-friendliness” and get tips on how to improve. This work was inspired by a 2019 University of Washington Information School undergraduate capstone project designed to help businesses and other organizations become more age-friendly and dispel ageism.
- In January 2020, Age Friendly Seattle and The Seattle Public Library signed a Memorandum of Agreement outlining our shared goal of bringing Age Friendly Seattle Civic Coffee events to Central Library in downtown Seattle and allowing for greater participation. During the pandemic, a new Memorandum of Agreement expanded this partnership to include co-sponsorship of the Close to Home: Stories of Health, Tech & Resilience event series.



CITY SPOTLIGHT: The Seattle Public Library launches programming specifically for older adults.

Seattle’s libraries have long supported neighborhoods through events and programs geared specifically toward older adults. Now, SPL hosts a new website section for people aged 50 and older. This “Next Chapter” section aims to connect Seattle residents with information about common themes like aging in place, creative aging, dementia-friendly libraries, employment, entrepreneurship, healthy aging, retirement planning.¹

C. Supporting life-long learning and civic engagement

- In both 2017 and 2021, AFS co-sponsored a nonpartisan Seattle Mayoral Candidates Forum so that older adults could tune in and educate themselves before voting.
- In 2018, AFS presented "Librarians and Age-Friendly Communities" at an annual meeting of the Outreach Workers of Washington Libraries. This was part of our efforts to uplift the potential of libraries as a great resource for older adult education and engagement.
- In July 2019, after several years of advocacy, Seattle Public Library (SPL) hired its first older adults program manager. This was a specific objective in the original AFS Action Plan and has led to strengthened programming for older adults through SPL and a strong partnership with AFS that supports events and cross-promotion of resources.
- Planning for a Lifelong Learning Summit began in 2019 and continued in early 2020 in collaboration with Seattle Public Library and other partners, but the event was postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19.
- Nearly every month for the past five years, Civic Coffee Hours have put older adults in touch with decision-makers ranging from transportation planners to immigration outreach specialists to the mayor. During 2020 and 2021 alone, these events reached more than 4,528 viewers.



7: Community & Health Services

Access to affordable health care and community services is important for everyone, especially as people age. AFS supports research that can benefit people long-term, as well as outreach and promotional efforts that help people get connected immediately with the care and information they need to live healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives.

A. Supporting health-related learning and research

- AFS staff reviewed public health data showing that foreign-born Black people have become an increasingly larger part of Washington’s HIV epidemic. Outreach to experts at the University of Washington resulted in an invitation to participate in a Stigma Working Group.
- AFS and Age Friendly Puyallup co-presented an overview of age-friendly communities at the 2018 annual meeting of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Washington Chapter.
- AFS co-sponsored and promoted a presentation on “The Affordability of Long-Term Care” at a meeting of the Seattle City Council’s Finance & Neighborhoods Committee, chaired by Councilmember Sally Bagshaw.
- In 2020, AFS convened meetings to discuss strategies to promote health and wellness with faculty and subject matter experts from the University of Washington, Fred Hutchinson, Seattle Indian Health Board, Harborview, and state agencies, including the HealthCare Authority and the DSHS Aging and Long-term Care Support Administration.

B. Disseminating information and supporting health and safety related events

- AFS teamed up with Pike Market Senior Center to promote AgeWise TV, a series of programs designed for older people that were broadcast on the Seattle Channel (Channel 21 on Comcast). First aired in 2020, each 60-minute AgeWise TV episode was curated by aging experts and professional videographers to include worthwhile lifelong learning and physical activities that could help older viewers stay connected and stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In addition to co-hosting events aimed at promoting healthy aging in Black communities, AFS collaborated with City colleagues to share information relevant to older adults. This included working with Seattle Police Department to promote Night Out and supporting the Department of Neighborhood’s dissemination of their Community Resource Hub.

- Several AFS events featured health topics, including the Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS) for veterans, veteran spouses, and spouse survivors, and discussions with experts at Public Health-Seattle & King County about the area's COVID-19 response, as well as an event focused on hearing loss and local resources.

C. Addressing fraud and abuse

- In 2017, AFS presented to the King County Elder Abuse Council and sought their input on the draft AFS Action Plan's goals that address reducing elder abuse.
- AFS coordinated a lunch-and-learn panel at Seattle City Hall hosted by Councilmember Sally Bagshaw called "Coordinated Response to Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation."
- A 2019 AFS Civic Coffee event focused on elder abuse, featuring HSD Aging and Disability Services' elder abuse prevention case manager and a representative from the AARP Fraud Watch Network



CITY SPOTLIGHT:
**Seattle Fire, Police, and
 Human Services
 Departments team up
 to reduce non-emergent
 911 calls.**

In 2019, the City of Seattle launched Health One, a new mobile integrated response unit staffed by Seattle Fire Department medics and Human Services Department case managers. This program is designed to address low-acuity calls, which are non-emergency and often related to chronic issues such as addiction, behavioral health, homelessness, social needs, and lack of primary care. By teaming up first responders with case managers, older adults and others receive better referrals to appropriate resources, emergency-room usage is decreased, and future non-emergent 911 calls are averted.¹



8: Communication & Information

Reaching people with the information they need requires external outreach efforts, and it also requires strong internal practices to ensure City employees understand and can meet the needs of older adults. Over the past five years, AFS has worked to educate and support our colleagues in efforts to be as inclusive as possible and communicate effectively with older people. As people age, they may be particularly vulnerable in emergency situations like severe weather, and we support resilience promotion. Our efforts to communicate effectively with the diverse communities in Seattle have earned us national recognition, and we are proud to be looked to as leaders in this space.

A. Encouraging City of Seattle employees to meet the needs of older adults

- As referenced in the above section on accessibility in built environments, AFS published *Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities: A Community Guide to Accessible Events and Meetings* in 2018. This was presented locally at several trainings for human services providers, including the Community Living Connections network of providers and Healthy Aging Partnership participants. It was also presented nationally at the 2019 Hearing Loss Association of America convention in New York and a 2021 AARP Livable Communities Conference, and a proposal was accepted for the American Society on Aging's 2020 Aging in America conference. We have periodically updated the guide as needed, and this document continues to raise awareness of the broad range of accessibility issues and strategies for addressing them.¹²
- Also in 2018, AFS began the process of compiling aging, disability, and memory loss trainings across the City's various departments with an eye toward creating a comprehensive training for frontline staff. Since then, AFS staff have collected training materials and interviewed key staff members with the goal of creating three training modules to be released in 2022/23.
- Training credit was given to each City departmental American Disabilities Act coordinator who attended the Northwest Universal Design Council's wayfinding event at City Hall in early 2020.

B. Building resilience and meeting people where they are

- Regular events—made increasingly accessible in a range of languages—are part of building community resilience. They serve as a conduit of information (especially important in rapidly evolving situations) as well as a community meeting space where folks can connect with people and resources. Even during the pandemic, AFS continued to hold regular events on salient topics, including pandemic-related information.

¹² Available as a free download on www.seattle.gov/agefriendly

- In 2019, AFS delivered a presentation at a Jewish Family Service Endless Opportunities program for adults over 60 at Temple De Hirsh Sinai with a special emphasis on emergency alert enrollment and emergency preparedness.
- AFS's Close to Home online event series has featured speakers from City Office of Emergency Management, other emergency preparedness educators, and the Chair of North Seattle Emergency Hub.
- AFS partnered with AARP to host a civic technology hackathon called "A City for All," a three-day event at Seattle City Hall where more than 100 people came together to create tools that could help Seattle become more age-friendly. Nine project teams presented projects to a panel of judges from the City of Seattle, AARP, Impact Hub Seattle, Microsoft, Socrata, and Tableau.
- We have steadily grown our listserv, meaning we can reach more people with helpful information and engagement opportunities.

C. Demonstrating leadership in communications

- AFS received the American Society on Aging Award for Excellence in Multicultural Aging, which recognizes high-quality, innovative programs enhancing the lives of a multicultural aging population. This honor was in recognition of our demonstrated success in intentional outreach to immigrant elders and innovation in meeting their language needs at live in-person and online events
- In 2021, USAging recognized "Age Friendly Live"—our live and online events—with an Aging Achievement Award. These events have become a model for other Age Friendly communities to adopt.
- AFS staff presented "Lights, Camera, Interaction! How to Engage Diverse Audiences with Video on Social Media" at the American Society on Aging's *On Aging 2021* conference and presented "Social Media Advocacy for Older Adults" to the Washington State Council on Aging.



CITY SPOTLIGHT: **Citywide employee training helps us better serve people with disabilities.**

People may experience disabilities at any stage of life, but there is a strong correlation between age and disability. Many people face visual, auditory, and mobility challenges in their later years. In late 2020, the City of Seattle's American Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II compliance team created a training program for City employees to increase our knowledge and improve our customer service for community members with disabilities. These 10 interactive training modules have been rolled out through Seattle's internal training platform and are available to all employees. They provide an overview of the history and purpose of the ADA, tips for communicating effectively with people who have disabilities, and reminders about how to create inclusive and accessible programs and policies.

Tell us your thoughts

This work touches many people, from many different communities. We are grateful to those who have shared their knowledge, experiences, and opinions to help inform our efforts. As we look ahead to the next chapter in Age Friendly Seattle, we welcome thoughts and feedback on how best to prioritize and address the needs of older adults in our city. Please visit www.seattle.gov/agefriendly for additional information, and feel free to email us directly at agefriendly@seattle.gov.