

Age Forward

A Framework for an Age-Friendly County of Marin

Progress Report for 2018-2023





County of Marin Civic Center Credit: S. Robinson



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September 29, 2023

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Dear Residents of Marin County,

I am pleased to present the County of Marin's Age Forward Progress Report for 2018 through 2023 covering the five years since the County joined the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and AARP's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

Our Board approved Age Forward, a framework for an Age-Friendly County of Marin, on January 28, 2020. This Age Forward Progress Report, approved by the Board on September 19, 2023, reflects one year of assessing age-friendliness within the County, one year of developing the framework (or plan), and three years of implementation guided by that plan.

The report highlights actions County departments took to address needs identified by the Age-Forward community assessment and plan in six domains: housing, mobility, community services, disaster preparedness, social connection and our unincorporated areas. Additionally, many actions spotlighted in the report exhibit a commitment to equity, collaboration and planning to meet the needs of Marin residents of all races as they age. Since implementation began in the early stages of the Covid 19 pandemic, the report also features several actions not related to the Age Forward framework but that grew out of the County's response to the pandemic as departments worked to help and protect older adults, the group most impacted by Covid.

The Age-Friendly County of Marin initiative will continue to collaborate with key stakeholders, including the Marin County Area Agency on Aging's advisory committee (called the Marin County Commission on Aging), the Aging Action Initiative, a collaboration of local aging service providers, and Marin's age-friendly municipalities. County staff, community leaders and community partners demonstrated flexibility, commitment and a collaborative spirit in addressing the needs of our older population while being responsive to the needs of all generations of people in Marin.

Moving forward, the County of Marin remains committed to inclusive collaborative planning for all ages and abilities. We are proud to be part of the growing network of age-friendly counties in the State of California, the nation, and the world.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Moulton-Peters
President, Marin County Board of Supervisors

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Acknowledgments

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Marin County Commission on Aging

Advisory Organizations and Committees

AARP

Aging Action Initiative

Age-Friendly Marin (network of local age-friendly cities, towns and communities)

Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership

Dominican University, School of Nursing

Fire Safe Marin

Firewise Marin

Marin Center for Independent Living

Marin City Community Services District

Marin Transit

Marin Villages Public Disaster Education and Preparedness (PDEP) Committee of the

Marin Operational Area Disaster and Citizens Corps Council (DC3)

Marin Wildfire Protection Authority (MWPA)

Ready Marin

Regional County Emergency Preparedness Coordinators and Neighborhood Response

Group Coordinators, Marin Neighborhood Response Groups (NRGs)

San Geronimo Valley Community Center

Vivalon

Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)

West Marin Senior Services

Background

In 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO), recognizing that in the 21st century and for the first time in human history, there would be more older persons on the planet than younger, identified eight elements of what is needed to support an age-friendly community. Those elements include appropriate housing, transportation, social participation, civic participation, information and communication, community and health supports, outdoor spaces and buildings, and respect and social inclusion.

In 2012, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) became the United States affiliate on behalf of the WHO to support communities that wish to shape their environments in such a way to be more livable for older adults, and by extension, persons of any age or ability. Through an application process and five-year commitment, municipalities, counties and states are invited to become part of the [WHO/AARP Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities](#) (Global Network). In 2014, Sausalito became the first Marin municipality accepted into the Global Network. Currently, nine out of 11 of Marin's municipal jurisdictions are part of this network with the County of Marin's application accepted in 2018.

Upon the 2018 County's acceptance to the WHO/AARP Global Network, an advisory council of county department heads, community organizations and stakeholders provided input and feedback to the development of a county age-friendly framework. The plan was to be focused on County departments and to provide guidance to unincorporated areas, should those areas wish to form local work groups to support age-friendly improvements in their communities. That input, along with key stakeholder interviews and community listening groups, led to the [Age Forward action plan](#), which the Marin County Board of Supervisors (BOS) adopted in January 2020, with a requirement to report back to WHO/AARP at the five-year mark in September 2023. The Age Forward plan's intent is to 1) develop and embed an "age-forward" lens into daily and long-range County work to advance a more equitable community across the lifespan, and 2) develop equity opportunities across income, racial and geographical differences, including drawing from the [County's Racial Equity Plan](#) and the Health and Human Services Department's (H&HS) [Strategic Plan to Achieve Health and Wellness Equity](#).

A BOS subcommittee and the Commission on Aging oversaw the plan's three-year implementation. The implementation has 1) helped departments identify and put into practice age and disability-friendly policies and programs, 2) expanded and deepened age-friendly community collaborations and networks, and 3) demonstrated that no or low-cost actions can be taken by departments and others in supporting livable communities.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

In 2021, the total population of Marin County was estimated at 262,000, with approximately 77,000 persons 60 and older, representing nearly 30% of the population. Statewide, 20% of the population is age 60 or older.

A majority of people 60 and older in Marin are White(88%) versus statewide (63%). In Marin, Black/African Americans age 60 and older comprise 2% of the population, Asians 6%, American Indian/Alaska Natives 0.1%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander 0.1%, Other 2%, and two or more races 3%. Six percent of the older adult population identify as being Hispanic or Latino (not exclusive of these other races) compared to 22% of the California population. ¹

THIS REPORT CONTAINS:

An overview of actions taken relevant to the six domain areas chosen for Marin's Age Forward plan, including opportunities taken by departments and others as they arose.

Highlights many age-friendly programs and services that kept the older population informed, healthy, connected, and active during the coronavirus (COVID) pandemic which spanned three years of implementation.

Common findings, challenges, and barriers to implementation.

Recommendations for future governance of County age and disability-friendly policies.

The reader is invited to learn more in the following pages.

Implementation Process and Domains

Based on the initiative's 2018-2019 assessment process, four of the [WHO/AARP's eight domain areas](#) were selected for action. Those are housing, mobility options, community services and social participation (connections). The advisory council decided to add disaster preparedness and the unincorporated areas of the county as two focus areas.

The reader will learn in the following sections which actions were taken in these six areas relevant to those identified in the Age Forward plan. Additionally, many new actions related to the goals and objectives of the plan emerged from departments and organizations as implementation began. Many of those emerging actions are highlighted herein; however, in the interest of brevity, an exhaustive list is not provided in this report. Of note, the role of the assigned Age Forward staff analyst was to coordinate, connect and coalesce the many actions taken over the past three years throughout the county. The collaborative nature of the departments, other organizations and stakeholders has been much appreciated.

Information in each of the domain areas follows a template that includes:

- “We Envision,” which reflects the goals outlined in the plan.
- “We Hear,” which is what was learned in development and implementation.
- “We Act,” which is what has been done to date.

2020: A Year Like No Other

In fall 2020 at the beginning of the implementation of the Age Forward framework, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, many departments and staff were engaged in response work. To advance the framework in 2021, the Office of Aging and Adult Services evaluated existing services and programs and helped departments understand the concepts of age-friendly so they could identify and perhaps enhance or expand on their existing age-friendly activities. Departments were already focusing on educating and supporting the most vulnerable populations, including older adults, their families and caregivers, and people with disabilities. Due to the hard work and dedication of County staff, community-based organizations and community members, Marin had low death rates among older adults during the pandemic.

HOUSING

Protecting older residents from eviction while ensuring landlords are paid.

The **Marin Community Development Agency (CDA)** drafted a resolution to prevent residents and business owners from being evicted because of a sudden loss of income tied to the pandemic. With the pandemic causing negative impacts on the Marin economy and on residents, more residents were at risk for homelessness. The shortage of affordable rental housing left many lower-paid older workers at high risk for homelessness. This resolution and the extended eviction moratoriums provided a safety net for the most vulnerable older adults.

Providing emergency rental assistance

Using state funds and funds from the **Marin Community Foundation**, the **CDA** established the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. More than \$15 million in state and federal rental funds were distributed to Marin households through landlords via the Emergency Rental Assistance Program providing many older residents stability and preventing homelessness.²

Helping workers and residents get to essential services

Marin Access, which serves people age 65+ or and people with disabilities who cannot independently use regular transit, continued to provide services throughout the pandemic despite lower ridership. Drivers for **Marin Transit**, which provides transit service within Marin County, supported community programs providing older residents, their caregivers and

neighbors offering safety net services transportation to testing and vaccination sites, grocery and pharmacy delivery, and prepared meals delivery.

MOBILITY

Helping workers and residents get to essential services

Funding allowed **Marin Access**, which serves people age 65+ or and people with disabilities who cannot independently use regular transit, to continue providing services throughout the pandemic despite lower ridership. Drivers for **Marin Transit**, which provides transit service within Marin County, supported community programs providing older residents, their caregivers and neighbors offering safety net services transportation to testing and vaccination sites, grocery and pharmacy delivery, and prepared meals delivery.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Coordinating and Collaborating to Support the Health of Older Adults

In 2020, the **Marin Health and Human Services** Department partnered with **Marin Health, Kaiser Permanente- San Rafael**, and **Sutter Novato Community Hospital** to form the [Community Readiness \(CORE\) Collaborative](#), which provided mobile assessment and triage, education-based capacity building, and life care planning supports for Marin residents living in residential care facilities for the elderly (RCFEs).

In 2020, the **Marin County Public Health Division** (Public Health) partnered with the **Marin Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)** on weekly technical assistance calls with Marin community-based organizations (CBOs) serving vulnerable residents. Meetings continue and are now monthly.

In 2020, **Public Health** partnered with the **Marin Long-Term Care Ombudsman** on weekly technical assistance calls with residential care facilities for the elderly (meetings are now bi-weekly).

In 2020, Marin Health and Human Service's **Social Services Division** launched the [Great Plates Program](#) to provide access to meals for older adults sheltering in place who were ineligible for other nutrition programs. This program's dual purpose was to help older adults remain safe at home while providing business to more than 25 restaurants.

In 2021, this same division also partnered with **Vivalon** and **Marin Center for Independent Living** to create the [Marin Access Service Call-Center](#) to provide priority, assisted transportation-for older adults and persons with access and functional needs (AFN) to get to COVID-19 vaccines appointments and sites. This division also set up mobile vaccine clinics for senior housing, long-term care facilities and older adults with access and functional needs in their homes.

In early 2020, collaborating with Marin County Public Health, the **Marin Medical Reserve Corps** (MMRC) deployed a team of volunteers when the shelter-in-place began and worked countless hours in support of Marin County Public Health (MCPH) at both testing and vaccination clinics and in contact tracing and clinical guidance. In a time when staffing has been of critical importance, MMRC collaborated with MCPH by bringing experienced healthcare professionals to the field.

Public Health partnered with the **Office of Aging and Adult Services** to develop content for the **Marin Aging and Adult Information and Assistance Line** and the County website that was focused on helping individuals navigate the restrictions, recommendations, needs and questions of older adults related to the pandemic.

Providing Access to Nutrition for Good Health

Enrollment in the **Area Agency on Aging's (AAA) home-delivered meal program** jumped by more than 33% compared to pre-pandemic levels. On average, more meals were delivered per person per week, including to previously existing clients. For other older adults, who unlike many home-delivered meals clients were able to cook, the AAA funded and arranged to deliver a total of more than 2,400 bags of groceries from April to June 2020 to more than 300 people on a weekly basis. Each bag included the equivalent of 11 meals. In early 2021, the AAA launched a pilot drive-through meal program at its largest congregate meal site to safely provide nutritious lunches and socially distanced greetings to residents who might otherwise attend congregate meal service



a Home meal delivery brings smiles

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Responding to Wildfire and Public Safety Power Shutoffs during a Pandemic

The 2020 wildfire season during which the Woodward fire in Marin County and fires in neighboring Sonoma County forced evacuations and high winds threatened Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS). The **AAA** purchased and arranged to have 2,100 shelf-stable emergency meal boxes – each with the equivalent of five meals – delivered to home-delivered meal clients, other frail older adults and residents of more than 30 low-income senior housing sites.

In addition, the **Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)**, a partnership between the **AAA** and the **Marin Center for Independent Living (Marin CIL)** delivered 200 high-voltage batteries to individuals with access and functional needs who rely upon electric durable medical equipment. Having these batteries on hand provides these individuals security in knowing they will be able

to power medical equipment during planned power outages or those caused by storms or other events.

SOCIAL CONNECTION

Transitioning to Inclusive Digital Connection

The pandemic accelerated the use and evolution of videoconferencing to enable virtual meetings. To support staff and provide accessible services to residents, in 2020 the **Information Services and Technology Department** launched the IST Broadcast Team to provide broadcast support for County virtual events. A collaborative effort staffed by county staff volunteers from different departments, the team continues to provide both advisory and direct support for public or internal events offering multiple language services at no charge. By developing this new service, older residents and people with hearing and language accommodations are now able to participate in public meetings, forums, and briefings.

In non-pandemic times, the Marin County Free Library branches are filled with Marin’s older residents who come for speaker and educational programs, book searches, and connecting with friends while staying engaged and active. **Marin County Free Library** pivoted when the pandemic when branch visits ended and started to emphasize its “virtual branch.”³ Holding virtual live events and online classes from chair yoga to Mah Jong and hiking in Marin, the number of attendees ranged from five to 235 residents. The online “All Thing Apple” digital literacy program was a popular program for older residents with up to 200 people joining to learn how to use Apple products.

In 2020-2021 the Health and Human Services Department’s Behavioral Health Services Division’s BOOST program staff took advantage of support services launched at Jewish Family and Children’s Services to link clients to additional services, such as online support groups for isolated seniors and calls to isolated seniors in rural areas to provide socialization and connection to services.

EQUITY

Enhancing the County's Spanish-language communication and fostering equitable civic participation

In 2021, the population of Hispanics or Latinos aged 60 years and over was 5.7% of the County total. ⁴ In September of 2020 Latinos made up 71% of the coronavirus cases in Marin. ⁵ The County added a public information position to improve the delivery of Spanish-language materials and to serve as a liaison in the community. With Spanish being the second most spoken language in the county this new position helped support the urgent communication needs during the pandemic. The County also began to provide professional Spanish interpretation services for public comments and provide a Spanish language audio stream for all meeting content increasing outreach to older Spanish-speaking residents. In addition, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds received by the County have provided for a Latino outreach social worker for older adults who started in 2023.

Housing

We Envision:

Accessible, safe, and affordable housing options are available to all residents and suit their needs during each stage of their life.

We Hear:

Marin has one of the most expensive housing markets in the United States with many older adults and Marin's workforce struggling to pay rent and mortgage payments. Marin County struggles with having sufficient affordable housing.⁶

The combination of older housing stock, varying topographies, rural settings, and a costly housing market makes it difficult for individuals with functional limitations or limited financial resources to find suitable housing, which may include assisted living or other residential care settings.

The demographic shift in the population, where the 85+ age group is growing faster than the 60 to 84-year group, puts additional pressure on the need for appropriate housing options that can cater to the evolving physical difficulties of older adults.⁷

Rising everyday living costs pose challenges for older homeowners, particularly as they reach their 80s and beyond and may outlive their savings.

By 2040, the number of Latino/Hispanic older adults is projected to have increased by 518% from 2010 levels.⁸ The income disparity between White residents and Latino/Hispanic residents highlights the need for affordable housing solutions tailored to different income levels.

The local aging and disability services workforce, which includes caregivers and service providers, also faces difficulty in finding affordable housing.

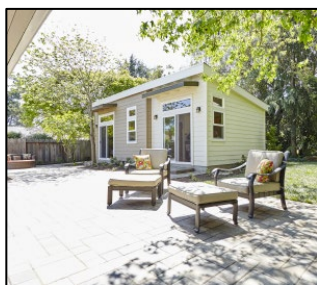
In 2022, 28% of the homeless population counted (313) were 60 years or older. Two hundred eighty individuals 50+ were unsheltered, many living in their cars. Of the total counted population, 53% had been in Marin 10 years or more.⁹

We Act:

From 2021 through 2022, Marin County underwent a planning process to meet housing needs at all income levels. Led by the County's **Community Development Agency (CDA)**, the process involved updating the Housing Element of the Countywide Plan, which is reviewed and certified by the State every eight years. The approved January [2023 Housing Element](#) plans call for at least 3,569 new units in unincorporated areas from 2023 to 2031, with specific allocations for affordable housing at different income levels.⁶ This plan aims to address the housing affordability and employment crisis faced by Marin's workforce and older adults on fixed incomes, promoting more affordable and inclusive housing options in the future.

In partnership with stakeholders, professionals and advocacy groups, several recommendations brought forward during the Age Forward implementation were added in the final housing element,¹⁰ including:

- Expansion of areas allowing for residential use in mixed-use development since mixed-use developments support social connections, easy access to amenities and a walkable setting.
- Revision of the development code to permit or conditionally permit large residential care facilities in all zones that permit residential uses, as similar uses in the same zone.
- Creation of incentives and standards in 2024 for diverse senior housing options (e.g., senior apartments, co-housing, assisted living, memory care, etc.).
- Expansion of rehabilitation assistance funding to assist lower-income households in making accessibility improvements.



Accessory dwelling unit



Make Room for Marin website



Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit

The building of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and (JADUs) is another area in which housing for older persons, persons with disabilities, caregivers and the related workforce can benefit. In 2019 the **CDA** collaborated with **AAI**, the **MCCOA**, **Age Forward** and Marin's municipalities to begin promoting these housing options that support older adults who wish to age in place. Building permit fee waivers in recent years have fostered the building of an additional 158 units of housing since 2019.¹¹

In January 2023, the County Affordable Housing fund provided a \$4 million loan to support multifamily lower-income housing in downtown Fairfax at the Sherwood Oaks Apartments. In walking distance to grocery stores, parks, and transit, this affordable housing will offer older adults, caregivers and their families the opportunity to live in what's termed a high-opportunity area. A high-opportunity area is one that provides the ability for households to build "opportunity capital" by providing economic and social mobility to renters.

Front Porch, a nonprofit specializing in senior living communities and programs, was awarded an ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) grant for its [Home Match](#) service to match older adults needing housing (such as a room) with older adult homeowners who need income. Home Match increases the County's housing stock, allows housing seekers to find shelter, and provides income or other benefits (e.g., caregiving) for older adults.

Aging and Adult Services administers the [Home Safe Program](#) established by the California Department of Social Services providing housing services and resources for Adult Protective Services-eligible clients who need to stabilize their current housing, find alternative safe housing, or get help to become housed.

Elder fraud is on the rise and Marin's older residents are subject to financial exploitation each year and suffer huge losses. The Assessor-Recorder-County Clerk's office wanted to be proactive in addressing property or deed fraud. When a fraudulent deed is recorded on a property, the owner may not know of the change of ownership. In Marin, the **Assessor-Recorder-County Clerk** and the **District Attorney** departments teamed up to launch a program in 2021 to notify former and present property owners of recent filings. If the owner is not aware of the transfer, they are asked to contact the District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud division. Receiving a notification letter of a deed transfer might prevent an older resident from losing their property, becoming homeless and being victimized. Age-Friendly Counties optimize systems and resources to improve safety and to reduce financial vulnerability. The DA's office is also an active administrator of the Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST) charged with protecting and safeguarding our seniors.

Mobility

We Envision:

Mobility needs are met by a more flexible and responsive public and private system where older residents can safely travel where they want and need to go.

We Hear:

Driving and walking are the primary modes of transit for most older adults in Marin. ¹²

There is a growing need for first mile/last mile services and more shuttles to facilitate access to essential services, shopping centers and healthcare with same-day options.

Lower-income older adults face more significant transportation challenges compared to the overall population. ¹³

Incorporated communities have better-maintained infrastructure, while unincorporated communities lack proper upkeep. ¹²

We Act:

Marin Transit is the local transit provider for rides within Marin County. Marin Transit offers older adults and people with disabilities a variety of options for getting around without driving. Marin Access riders are residents of Marin County who are age 65+ and/or persons with disabilities who cannot independently use regular Marin Transit or Golden Gate Transit bus service some or all the time.

Marin Transit and the **Commission on Aging's Housing and Transportation Committee** worked closely with the Mobility Consortium and Paratransit Council to bring the unique transit needs of unincorporated rural West Marin forward in conversation with Marin Transit management. Marin Transit responded by forming a community engagement process, an "Innovation Incubator," which resulted in the following modifications and enhancements to its planning process:



Marin Access Bus

- In 2023, rebranded its Dial-A-Ride service to “Shopper Shuttles” to better reflect how riders use the service to access groceries and other necessities and made it a Marin Access program.
- Made improvements allowing staff and reservationists more time to answer questions and provide information.
- Permitted digital and paper vouchers for use in the Catch-A-Ride service. The Catch-A-Ride program allows eligible riders to take up to 30 trips per quarter with approved taxis and rideshare services at discounted rates and extended distances. These changes will offer more residents same-day and accessible service options.



*The Marin Catch-A-Ride Program
offers passenger support*

- Designated three equity priority communities in Marin, all of which now receive high-quality, frequent fixed route services to help residents’ mobility within the county.
- Partnered with the County’s **Cultural Services Department** to provide a free transit ticket day for seniors to offer no-cost transportation the week of the annual County Fair. This allowed for isolated residents to connect with others, participate in the fair events and spend time with families.

In other actions, the **Department of Public Works (DPW)** focused on accessible sidewalks and lighting that remained a challenge to older adults. DPW has announced 59 traffic intersection upgrades across the county that will enhance public safety.

DPW has also installed accessible curb ramps and sidewalks in unincorporated Santa Venetia; created new accessible parking spots and a ramp at the Point Reyes National Seashore Visitors Center; and renovated the County's Bayside Park in San Rafael to be accessible as part of the Disability Access Program, ensuring equity and access is provided for members of the public with disabilities.



A flashing crosswalk signal in Fairfax

In addition, DPW installed rapid flashing beacons at three unsafe crosswalks increasing the beacon locations to 10 in the unincorporated areas of Marin. These beacons raise driver awareness of pedestrian activity and give older pedestrians ample time to cross the road safely.

Accessible walking is also an important aspect of promoting mobility. AARP awarded fellowships to unincorporated **Marin City** and the **City of Sausalito** for a joint America Walks Walking College. The purpose of this “college” is to conduct walk audits identifying public space opportunities and improvements for walkability, including placement of benches and community bulletin boards, enhancing pathways, sidewalks, and bikeways, and organizing walking groups between the two communities. These activities will now be incorporated into the overall Marin City and City of Sausalito improvement plans.

Community Services

We Envision:

Designing, targeting, and delivering community-based services to maximize efficacy and impact.

We Hear:

An age-friendly community has affordable, accessible community-based services that are easy for people to locate and where person-centered assistance is provided when needed.

Residents need enhanced system navigation to effectively access the information and services they need.

About 25% of Marin's Older Adults, or more than 17,000 people, are financially insecure.¹⁴

Isolated individuals struggle during major life transitions such as retirement, medical event, or the loss of a spouse.

Caregivers also face significant financial and health stress.

The decline in formal volunteering further exacerbates the situation, impacting community organizations that serve older adults.

We Act:



Digital inclusion is a priority for the County

Age-Friendly Marin, which includes the County of Marin, plans and hosts monthly online forums for residents to learn about community resources. These forums are recorded and available on YouTube.

The County's **Information Services and Technology (IST)** department launched an initiative to provide only digitally accessible content. DPW, CDA and Health and Human Services (HHS) were the first departments to partner with IST to make this a priority. This includes developing websites that are usable by everyone.

Aging and Adult Services expanded the [Information and Assistance \(I&A\)](#) service for residents to include a Vietnamese-speaking social worker. The social workers answer calls from the public regarding the full range of social services and related resources available to Marin County older adults, adults with disabilities and family caregivers. Spanish speakers are also available.

The **Marin Health Outreach and Prevention team** in Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS), worked with the Age Forward to increase awareness of older adult suicide, including using images of older adults in campaign materials.

Age Forward participated in the planning, developing community engagement and grant review process for the Behavioral Health **Help@Hand Project** (previously known as the Innovation Technology Suite) a multi-county/city Innovation Project designed to determine if, and how, technology fits within the behavioral health system of care. The project recently awarded seven digital literacy grants to community partners serving older adults.

Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) Will be expanding early intervention services for Older Adults through the Senior Peer Counseling Program in 2023 to increase the number of people served and to include different communities. Senior Peer Counseling decreases isolation and addresses issues of aging, grief, and depression.

The **Marin County Free Library** has offered free computer literacy classes via video conference with partner [Technology4Life](#), an organization that teaches adults how to understand and utilize technology to help remain independent, healthy and connected to their communities.

HHS established a Marin City services hub to bring information about social services, public health, mental health and aging and disability resources to residents. This presence in the community helps broadens access and creates an opportunity for relationship and trust building between government and community members.

In 2023 **Health and Human Services** began bringing Public Health and Social Services into the **Marin City Community** twice-a-week using its new mobile van. With a focus on making information and resources more accessible, the mobile van provides an opportunity for relationship and trust building and serves older adults close to home.



Corte Madera congregate meal

Disaster Preparedness

We Envision:

Older adults and people with disabilities are prepared and safe during natural disasters and emergencies.

We Hear:

It's important to proactively engage and educate vulnerable populations, especially older adults, people with disabilities, non-English speaking communities, and low-income and geographically isolated residents.

Many parts of the county lack disaster preparation and emergency readiness and response groups or are certified Firewise USA communities that work together to prepare their homes and properties against the threat of wildfires.

A [West Marin Fund survey](#) indicates that West Marin community-based organizations believe mitigating the negative impacts of disasters is the second most challenging or not achievable issue in the next 10 years.¹⁵

Many older residents face physical and financial barriers to performing fire mitigation tasks on their properties, which need to be addressed to enhance overall community safety.

We Act:



A Firesafe Marin social media post for pet owners

Age Forward collaborated with [Ready Marin](#), which helps individuals prepare for disasters; [Fire Safe Marin](#), which is dedicated to reducing fire hazards, promoting fire safety awareness and helping residents prepare for wildfires; and the Marin Wildfire Protection Authority (MWPA) which leads development of fire-adapted communities, to work on common priorities.

These priorities included revising educational resources, including websites and increasing the use of social media to share a unified voice and messaging to help eliminate confusion generated from previously varied guidance from Marin’s multiple emergency preparedness and response organizations.

Trainings were held in-person during the daytime to attract older adults who wished to learn the steps to prepare and respond to fire, flood and other evacuations.

The County’s Emergency Services coordinator has organized in-person Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training.

The Office of Emergency Services and HHS, along with the Red Cross, more prominently incorporated the needs of older adults and people with disabilities in the Mass Care Emergency Shelter Operations plan.

The MWPA has offered grants to low-income seniors to afford home hardening and home fire prevention measures. Age Forward, along with many other organizations and initiatives, has been active in promoting this opportunity to low-income older homeowners.

Marin Center for Independent Living developed “[Powered and Prepared](#),” a dedicated program to aid in the readiness and safety of people with disabilities of any age in the event of an emergency or disaster.



Emberstomp is an annual County emergency preparedness event

In 2022 and 2023, Firesafe Marin, the MWPA and the Fire Department hosted “[Emberstomp](#)” at the County fairgrounds to provide information for Marin residents on fire safety and disaster preparedness. The “Powered and Prepared” resources and new Ready Marin caregiver checklists were distributed.

Marin County has developed a Mass Care Feeding Plan to supplement the County’s Emergency Operations Plan and Mass Care Planning Framework that defines the roles of managing and/or supporting feeding activities during disasters

As part of Age Forward implementation, in partnership with the Marin City Community Services District (MCCSD) and others, a community safety plan was developed that included CERT volunteer training, practice drills and emergency supplies.

Social Connection

We Envision:

Older adults in Marin County have opportunities for physical, mental, affordable, and meaningful social engagement and remain connected within their communities.

We Hear:

Isolation creates poor physical and cognitive outcomes.

Before the pandemic, the Age Friendly assessment survey revealed a growing concern about the increasing risk and cases of loneliness and social isolation.¹²

Building supportive and inclusive relationships helps communities thrive and enhances overall well-being and resilience.

We Act:

The Marin City Community Services District was awarded American Recovery Plan Act funds to provide intergenerational activities, including classes, projects, monthly social events and field trips around the county to promote connections and intergenerational understanding to address social isolation of older adults and teens.



Marin City children display produce grown in the Intergenerational Garden

The Villages model is one that matches older adult members with different skill sets to help other older adults in the “village” connect and help one another. Currently running six local branches in Mill Valley, Novato, Ross Valley, San Rafael, Tiburon Peninsula and Twin Cities, [Marin Villages](#) is actively seeking to expand its membership to support more persons desire to remain in their own homes and to prevention isolation. Establishing the model in West Marin is also being explored.

Age Forward coordinated with the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) in the Public Health division to develop strategies to reduce social isolation and expand peer-based approaches to social connections. The Healthy Marin Partnership, HHS Equity and Age Forward together engaged with community partners in Marin City to assist them in understanding isolation and loneliness, to identify the community goals for their residents and to develop solutions and local partnerships for implementation.



A woman receiving a Meals-on-Wheels delivery



Admiring the Art at the Fair Gallery



The 2023 Corte Madera Town Birthday celebration for residents 90 years and older

Unincorporated Areas

We Envision:

Older adults in unincorporated areas have the services and support necessary to safely and contentedly age in place. West Marin is an incubator for age-friendly activities in unincorporated areas.

We Hear:

Limited community and health services.

Higher risk of natural disasters.

Limited pedestrian infrastructure.

Limited housing options and downsizing challenges.

Higher need for home repair and modification for older occupants.

Food insecurity in some areas, particularly West Marin.¹⁶

Need for more accessible paths and trails to better accommodate people with limited physical abilities.¹⁴

Residents are unsure how they will know about an emergency if they have poor cell signal, hearing or visual abilities.

Social and community engagement and participation are a high priority in these communities.¹⁷

Opportunity to build awareness of County resources through the unincorporated community centers, district offices, and neighborhood associations.

We Act:

Enhanced access to parks and open spaces for people with limited income. In 2023, the Marin County Parks Department offered grant opportunities that focused on key populations, including seniors who may not utilize or have access to the Parks. Organizations that serve older adults in West Marin, San Rafael, Novato and Marin City were able to apply in June of 2023.

Residents of Marin City, in partnership with Age Forward, Commissioners and the MCCSD collaborated to improve walkability and emergency preparedness, as previously mentioned in the mobility and emergency preparedness domains of this report. They continue to address the

social isolation of their older residents through other age-friendly programming including senior excursions, home visits by volunteers, meal and grocery deliveries to the homebound, community health education programs and by participating in the Marin County Community Health Worker Collaborative

HHS hired a county resource navigator to serve Bolinas and Point Reyes Station to support all residents, including older adults, in accessing basic needs such as food and public benefits. Residents now have a direct connection with this resource navigator.

The County Administrator's Office added a new Deputy County Administrator with the responsibility for building relationships throughout the County with a special focus in West Marin. This Administrator is determining the broader community needs and increasing funding to groups and organizations serving West Marin residents, including older adults.

In early 2023 the Commission on Aging member representing District 4 convened and led a group of elders in discussing needs, community assets and the vision of how they could stay in their homes and communities as they age. The group chose to follow the age-friendly process, including developing a mission and gleaning information from community members via a survey.



San Geronimo Valley Community Center

Of note, at the outset of the Age Forward implementation, several barriers were identified that would hinder progress on some of the Age Forward action items for the unincorporated areas, and specifically West Marin. These barriers included a substantial loss of volunteers due to the COVID pandemic. This affected service delivery and the ability to utilize the volunteer culture to provide home maintenance, visits, and rides.

Common Findings, Challenges and Barriers

The Age Forward implementation process began at a challenging time when staff became disaster service workers supporting the pandemic response. Many regular programs came to a halt and working together meant joining a teleconference room. These challenges led to opportunities, and over time some process themes emerged as follows:

- The process depends on relationships.
- Success in age-friendly planning is facilitated by having champions at all levels of the organization and community.
- Beginning conversations about age-friendly actions most often required some discussion on ageism and a revelation of one's personal thoughts on aging before identifying possible enhancements, policies or programming that would best support older residents.
- County staff may be working on similar programming or issues within the same community but may not be aware of the planning, progress or results of the other staff and departments.
- Community leaders are often approached by different divisions, departments and staff. Better external communication would aid these leaders in determining where to direct their input and energy and reduce the experience of giving the same information to many different projects.
- Getting direct access to the department decision makers was at times challenging due to the upward communication hierarchy.
- When Age Forward had direct access to department directors or their assistant or deputy directors, conversations were more likely to lead to action.
- Sustaining age-friendly efforts requires establishing trusting, enduring and productive partnerships, being deliberately inclusive, and leveraging partnerships for non-financial resources.

Age Forward Going Forward


A Proposal for Governance and Future Implementation of Age and Disability Friendly Initiatives

Age-friendly planning brings together government and educational leaders, community-based organizations, and residents to collaborate on what is best needed to make a community livable for all ages. It inspires change through the exchange of information and experiences. It aligns with the social determinants of health and provides a context for addressing disparities by establishing goals for more equitable outcomes. It also promotes positive perceptions of aging by enabling older adults to contribute to the community (including economically) by bringing together different generations to reduce divisions and work together for mutual benefit. Age-friendly communities not only declare that older adults and people with disabilities are valuable resources, but also celebrate aging and different abilities.

This report signifies an exciting benchmark for the County of Marin. Together and independently, departments have accomplished a great deal. Department leaders and staff have begun to weave in an age-friendly approach when creating and adapting services, programs, policies, places and spaces to be livable for all generations now and into the future.

However, there is more to do. The changing demographics of Marin's older adult portion of the population necessitate confronting prejudices about aging, recognizing the possibilities of growing older, and reflecting those understandings in the work of the County. Maintaining an equity focus in this work and in policy development will be vital to addressing the growth among the older adults who are Latino and Hispanic and/or low-income and for confronting the disparities in aging among all communities of color and the LGBTQ+ population.

Research on the parameters and dimensions of age-friendly sustainability demonstrates that cultivating champions, partnerships and cross-sector collaborations maximizes public interest and investment. Reviewing different models of age-friendly organizational design, governance, and overall impact -- including discussions with different age-friendly leaders and elected officials -- informed the following first and second-step recommendations for future County of Marin governance of aging and disability initiatives. Models and approaches reviewed included recommendations made in the [Integrated Aging Services Study](#) of January 2023 and the [Marin Civil Grand Jury report](#) of May 2023 as well as the five bold goals of the [California Master Plan for Aging](#).



The first recommendation is to reassemble an advisory council that oversees the initiatives and meets at least twice a year to review actions. Members of the council may include:

- a. Board of Supervisors Subcommittee
- b. Staff of the County Administrators Office
- c. Department Directors and Assistant Directors
- d. Community Stakeholders and Residents
- e. Commission on Aging Chair
- f. Health and Human Services Leaders
- g. County ADA coordinator
- h. Aging Action Initiative Director
- i. Marin Aging and Disability Institute CEO

The second is to charge this council with assisting in determining which areas of need and opportunity are the greatest and which would have the greatest impact across County departments and throughout Marin. For instance, could two or three priorities be selected on a two-year basis that could be implemented in most -- or all -- departments?

As the Marin County Board of Supervisors looks to have County departments continue to make improvements in better serving older adults and future generations, deep appreciation is expressed again to the Board and all other individuals and groups that have joined the effort to make the Marin community more livable for all ages. And special thanks to the County departments that have brought a “lens of aging” to better serve people across the lifespan.

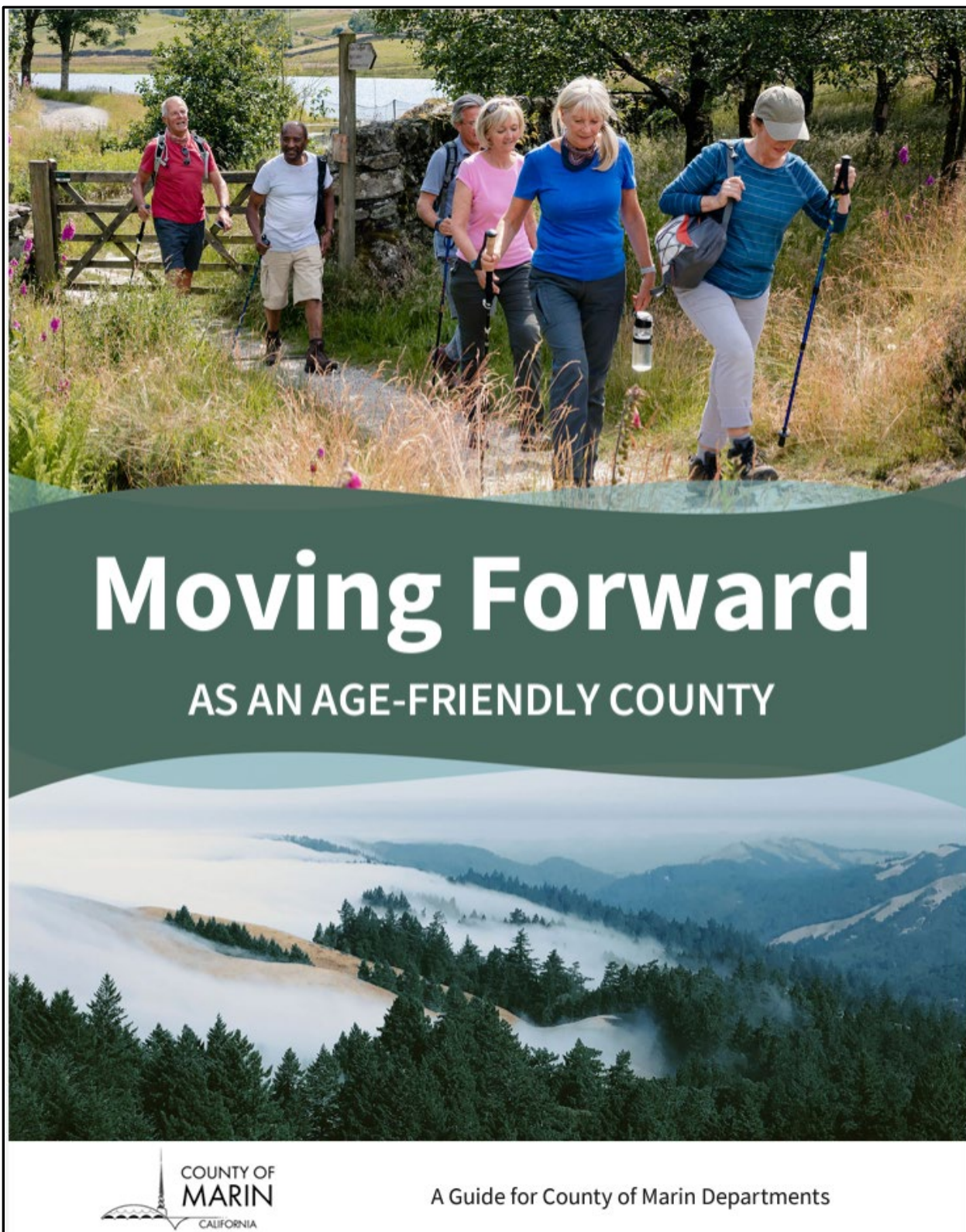
Appendices

Moving Forward Guide and Link

Status of Age-Friendly Marin- The network of local age-friendly cities, towns and communities

References





[Moving Forward Accessible Document](#)

Status of Age-Friendly Marin

(A network of local age-friendly cities, towns and communities)

As of July 2023

Town/City/County	Age Friendly Designation Year	Strategic Plan Submission/Status	Progress Report Submission
County of Marin	WHO AARP 2018	2019	September 2023
Sausalito	WHO 2014 AARP 2017	2017	
Fairfax	2017	2017	2020
Corte Madera	WHO 2015 AARP 2018	2017	5 yr update 2021
San Rafael	2017	2020	
Ross	2018	2021	2024
San Anselmo	2018	In assessment and process to become age and disability friendly	
Belvedere	2019 Will be merging with Tiburon	2021	Merge in discussion
Larkspur	2021		
Novato*		Developing new initiative	
Mill Valley	No current plans		
Tiburon	Will be merging with Belvedere		
San Geronimo Valley	Age-Friendly planning	Assessment planning	
Marin City	Age-Friendly programs	Programming and planning	

Table 1 Status of Age-Friendly Marin Network communities

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