

San Benito County Master Plan for Aging

Local Playbook 2024-2025



Pinnacles National Park in Paicines, San Benito County, California



Community Foundation

— FOR SAN BENITO COUNTY —

Prepared by the Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties
and the Community Foundation for San Benito County.

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Aging is a journey we all share, and in San Benito County, we believe in walking that path together. While our community faces many challenges, our strength lies in the collaboration, compassion, and commitment of individuals and organizations working to support older adults every step of the way. The Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the following organizations for their valuable contributions to the development of the San Benito County Master Plan for Aging Local Playbook:

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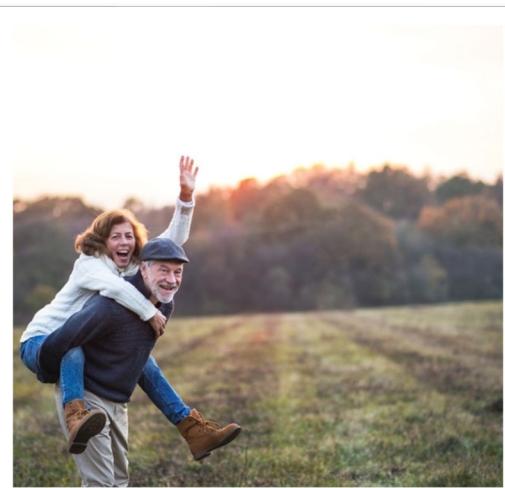
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INTRODUCTION TO CALIFORNIA'S MASTER PLAN FOR AGING

California's Master Plan for Aging (MPA) affirms the priority of the health and well-being of older Californians and people with disabilities. It is a "blueprint" for state government, local government, the private sector, and philanthropy to prepare the state for the coming demographic changes and continue California's leadership in aging, disability, and equity.

Thirty-five days before the 2018 California gubernatorial election, both candidates publicly committed to addressing the looming senior care crisis and creating a California master plan for aging. One in five older adults live in poverty and the state expects to see an increase of four million more seniors needing healthcare and support services by 2028.

The public infrastructure cannot address these needs without significant public policy changes. Having bipartisan support on developing a master plan for aging from both California gubernatorial candidates was unprecedented. We now had the commitment of the future governor to implement long-term solutions for aging with independence.



Governor Newsom made good on his promise after being elected, releasing an [Executive Order](#) that called for the establishment of a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) to help develop components of the Master Plan and advise the California Health and Human Services (CHHS) Agency and the Cabinet-level Workgroup on Aging in the development of the Master Plan.

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) was comprised of 35 diverse stakeholders with extensive expertise and experience whose input informed the work of the California Health and Human Services

Agency (CHHS) and a new, Cabinet-Level Workgroup on Aging. From September 2019 to September 2020, the SAC met nine times to develop a set of formal recommendations to the Administration. Diversity and the inclusion of people living with disabilities was embedded throughout the plan and remains a major theme. The SAC shared its final recommendations to the Administration on October 15, 2020.

One of the key goals of the SAC was that the MPA not become another report to be completed and then filed away to gather dust and be forgotten. Building on that goal, the SAC called on local communities to engage in their own plans and actions to implement the broad Five Bold Goals that the SAC developed. This approach embraced the reality that local communities vary tremendously in available resources, community needs, engaged partners and political will.

By creating these "Local Playbooks", the MPA embraced the diversity of California's regional differences. Rather than turning those differences into the barriers created by a one-size-fits-all approach, the Local Playbook turned regional diversity into a strength. Additionally, the local approach increased the chances of success and continued effort, as each local plan creates its own momentum to build upon and support the statewide effort.

The Master Plan for Aging outlines five bold goals and twenty-three strategies to build a California for All Ages by 2030. It is a blueprint for aging across the lifespan. The Master Plan for Aging calls on all California communities to build a California for All Ages & Abilities: for older Californians currently living through the many different stages of the second half of life; for younger generations who can expect to live longer lives than their elders; for communities of all ages – family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and caregivers – surrounding older adults and people with disabilities. The Master Plan for Aging calls on Californians to create communities where people of all ages and abilities are engaged, valued, and afforded equitable opportunities to thrive as we age, how and where we choose.



Aligning with this vision, San Benito County leaders, residents, community service providers, caregivers, advocates, and local workgroup participants have created a Local Playbook to reflect our community's strengths, priorities, and strategies to support healthy aging for all.

This document highlights our commitment to equity, inclusion, independence, and quality of life for older adults and people with disabilities—now and into the future. The San Benito County MPA Local Playbook is both a reflection of community collaboration and a roadmap for moving forward. It outlines actionable strategies under five key goals:

1. Housing for All Ages and Stages
2. Health Reimagined
3. Inclusion & Equity
4. Caregiving That Works
5. Affording Aging

THE AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties is a community-based non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization providing services in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, and Santa Clara Counties. It is the mission of the Seniors Council to enable older persons to function with independence and dignity in their homes and in the community to their fullest capacity.

The Seniors Council operates several programs to help further these goals, including the state-designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties. The AAA helps coordinate and offer services that support older adults to make independent living a viable option. AAAs also advocate for a continuum of long-term services and supports to meet the community living needs of older adults and individuals living with disability. AAAs also develop Area Plans for the delivery of Older Americans Act services within specified Planning & Service Areas (PSAs).

The Seniors Council also conducts public hearings, workshops, and forums to explore issues of interest to seniors. As the AAA, we work alongside other non-profit agencies, local elected officials, volunteers, and community leaders to identify areas of need and create solutions to address those needs. The Seniors Council receives federal, state, and local funds for senior services; distributes those funds to direct service providers; oversees those programs' operations, and operates a variety of direct services to older adults.

The Leadership Role of the AAA Longstanding Collaboration

In San Benito County, there has always been a high level of coordination between the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), the County Health & Human Services Agency, and local programs. The San Benito County Aging and Long-Term Care Commission, which is a monthly convening of representatives from the AAA, the County Health & Human Services Agency, and local service providers, provides regular and on-going opportunities to discuss local aging services challenges, to coordinate community outreach and educational activities, and help one another better understand the programs and services each provides. San Benito County Health & Human Services Agency staff also actively supported and participated in the successful San Benito County MPA Solutions Summit and continue to engage in local MPA workgroups. Additionally, the AAA Advisory Council provides further opportunities for collaboration and coordination of local services, and this body includes two members of the Boards of Supervisors from both Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties.

Local System Development Challenges

Some of the local systems development challenges to be addressed in San Benito County include:

- Rebuilding needs around the ranks of volunteers supporting key programs such as Project SCOUT low-income tax preparation services for older adults; the Health Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (HICAP) for Medicare and MediCal enrollment and dispute resolution assistance for older adults and individuals living with disability; and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program advocating on behalf of older adults in institutional settings to protect their rights. Volunteers were lost all around the state and the world as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and San Benito County was no exception.
- Leadership changes within the local AAA service provider network which have resulted in the loss, in some cases, of decades of experience, historical knowledge, and relationships.
- Increasing AAA staff has faced challenges due to increased programmatic, fiscal, and monitoring requirements from local, State, and Federal funders.
- The introduction of California Senate Bill 1249 (SB1249) has created uncertainty about the Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties' future as the designated AAA for the two county PSA, and also caused uncertainty within the local aging services network. SB 1249 also raises concern regarding the potential impacts of state control over local funding and restructuring the State's Intrastate Funding Formula

Successes

Some of the local strengths and successes enjoyed in San Benito County include:

- Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties' provider network, staff, Board of Directors, and Advisory Council members continue to maintain an active Advocacy Committee and actively engage in advocacy efforts.
- A State of California-designated Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) in San Benito County, which continues to solidify and expand its reach, and which continues to deliver core Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) information, referral, assistance, and person-centered options counseling. Our ADRC is a partnership between the Area Agency on Aging and the Central Coast Center for Independent Living (CCCIL).
- Direct service support successes, including the Connections, Health, Aging and Technology (CHAT) Project and Digital Connections Project iPad distribution efforts; State-funded Falls Prevention Program in-home assessment and falls safety services and supports; and more recently, an Older Californian Act Modernization allocation to develop essential volunteer services for older adults in the community.
- Engaged local AAA staff, leaders, residents, community service providers, caregivers, advocates, and local workgroup participants continue their on-going and active local participation in the development of a Master Plan for Aging Local Playbook. To this end,

the AAA successfully convened a "Solutions Summit" in San Benito County, in partnership with the Community Foundation for San Benito County, to gather community input for the development local objectives, strategies, and supporting activities for better and more successful aging.

- Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties continues to convene monthly meetings of the Aging and Disability Provider Network, resulting in a high level of coordination and collaboration with both AAA and non-AAA funded partners.

DEMOGRAPHICS

San Benito County At A Glance

San Benito County is located in the San Juan Valley and contains a total population of 68,175 (2023 estimate) across 1,390 square miles. San Benito County is home to fertile valleys and rolling hills, which support diverse and innovative agriculture, the County's primary economic driver. San Benito County historical and outdoor recreational attractions, like Pinnacles National Park, Mission San Juan Bautista, Casa de Fruta, and a host of world-class wineries also support local tourism and give the County its unique character. The City of Hollister contains almost two-thirds of the County's population. San Benito County is experiencing a period of rapid population growth due to its proximity to the Bay Area, and the availability of still relatively affordable housing. There is one other incorporated city, San Juan Bautista, with a population of approximately 2,000. The County also includes several unincorporated towns including Tres Pinos, Paicines, New Idria, and Aromas. The latter is a census-designated location that is part of both San Benito County and Monterey County and is less than one mile from the Santa Cruz County line.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

Under 5 Years: 6.5%
65 Years and Over: 13.5%
Median Age: ~36.5 years

POPULATION & GROWTH

2020 Census Population: 64,209
2023 Estimate: 68,175
2024 Estimate: 69,159
Growth Since 2020: ~7.7%

HOUSING

Total Housing Units (2020): 20,965
Occupied Housing Units: 19,938
Homeownership Rate: ~67%
Median Gross Rent: \$1,523/month

EDUCATION

Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 22.6%

LANGUAGE & IMMIGRATION

Foreign-born Population: ~21.5%
Language Other Than English Spoken at Home: ~41%

RACE & ETHNICITY (2020 CENSUS)

Hispanic or Latino (any race): 61.1%
White (Non-Hispanic): 30.8%
Asian (Non-Hispanic): 3.4%
African-American (Non-Hispanic): 0.75%
Two or More Races (Non-Hispanic): 2.9%

INCOME & POVERTY

2023 Median Household Income: \$103,000
Poverty Rate: ~8.7%

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

Total Population Insured: 93.7%
Employee Plans: 51.8%
Medicaid: 21%
Medicare: 10%
Non-Group Plans: 10.1%
Military/VA Plans: 0.816%

2023 SAN BENITO COUNTY SENIOR FACT SHEET

Population Changes

- Seniors are the fastest growing age group in California and the United States.
 - The 60+ population has grown by over 40% since 2010 in California
 - The population of Californians aged 0-59 has increased less than 1% since 2010¹
- San Benito Co. has the third highest growth rate (67.2%) for the 65-84 population among all California Counties since 2010¹
- San Benito County has the highest projected growth rate in all of California for those 85+ between now and 2040²
- 242 more seniors in the County were Medi-Cal Eligible last year than the year before
- Medi-Cal's eligible over-60 population in San Benito County has grown 114% since 2011
- 1,000 Californians are turning 65 every day for the next twelve years

Senior Services Funding & the Cost of Long-Term Care

- The 2018 average cost of a nursing home in California was over \$100,000 per year
- Pre-COVID funding for local Older Americans Act programs has increased 10% in 35 years
- U.S. Inflation since 1984-85 is over 160%
- Baseline Funding for the AAA has 32% of the buying power that it had 40 years ago.
- Successful programs such as Linkages & Alzheimer's Day Care Resource Centers have been closed

Senior Loneliness & Isolation was a national crisis BEFORE COVID-19

- Being isolated has the health impact of smoking 15 cigarettes per day
- Senior isolation increases Medicare costs by about \$7 billion per year
- Lonely seniors have a 45% increase in their risk of death
- COVID is estimated to have tripled the senior isolation crisis
- Seniors in rural communities are twice as likely to be isolated as their urban counterparts

Seniors & COVID-19

- 65% of ICU beds have been occupied by individuals 61+
- 85% of deaths were individuals aged 61+

Homeless Seniors

- Homeless seniors over age 50 are growing at a faster rate than any other age group
- In the 55+ population, homelessness is identified as a trigger for Mental Health Issues.

¹ 2020 US Census Results

² 2025 California's Aging Population – A Report of Public Policy Institute of California

PLAYBOOK DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Planning Phase

Two efforts to improve the condition of older adults in San Benito County began almost simultaneously, and joined forces as an active partnership almost immediately. The Board of Directors of the Community Foundation for San Benito County (CFFSBC) established senior services and well-being as one of their top three priorities during a retreat, and made a three-year commitment to that effort, forming a board steering committee to focus on the effort. Meanwhile, the AAA was promoting the creation of a Master Plan for Aging Local Playbook. Recognizing the similarity of the two efforts, Executive Directors Gary Byrne (CFFSBC) & Clay Kempf (AAA) quickly joined forces and began working hand-in-hand to integrate each organizations efforts and impact. The two organizations initially planned to hire a part-time staff person to lead this planning process and other related efforts, and we quickly decided to combine the position into one full-time employee as a member of the Seniors Council staff.

The conceptual partnership turned into an active reality in early 2024 with the support of a Local Aging & Disability Action Planning (LADAP) grant, from the State of California. The Seniors Council and the Community Foundation for San Benito County partnered to engage local stakeholders, gather community input, and coordinate a strategic planning process rooted in the needs of older adults and individuals living with disability throughout the local area.

This planning effort drew on the Seniors Council's decades long advocacy, leadership, and planning experience, as the Area Agency on Aging for both San Benito and Santa Cruz counties, and was tailored to reflect the unique strengths and challenges of San Benito's aging, disability, and caregiver populations.

Additionally, in 2023, San Benito County participated in the California Department of Aging's (CDA) Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults (CASOA), the first-ever statewide assessment for Californians aged 55 and older to share their voices. The assessment was designed to gather critical information about how older adult strengths and needs will impact community planning throughout the state. Assessment results from the Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults will also help California develop and further establish programs, services, and supports that are inclusive and responsive to the strengths and needs of older adults, and San Benito County has benefitted from the information and planning data provided by the survey results to help develop its Local Playbook.

The CASOA measured six (6) community dimensions:

- Community Design
- Employment and Finances
- Equity and Inclusivity
- Health and Wellness
- Information and Assistance
- Productive Activities

These areas of community assessment, along with the Master Plan for Aging Five Bold Goals and their associated strategies, formed the basis of our local Solution Summit convening and initial planning efforts, and highlighted some major challenges for the Solution Summit Workgroups in areas of identified local aging and disability services and supports needs:

- Affordable Housing: Identified as a problematic issue by 48% of respondents
- Health Care Availability: Identified as a problematic issue by 43% of respondents
- Information on Available Services: Identified as a problematic issue by 38% of respondents
- Physical Health: Identified as a problematic issue by 36% of respondents
- Finances: Identified as a problematic issue by 34% of respondents
- Mental Health: Identified as a problematic issue by 32% of respondents

In response to these identified challenges, and in an effort to gather important input from stakeholders and other community members, key planning activities included:

- Identifying key stakeholders and organizations working with older adults
- Hosting informal outreach sessions and networking meetings
- Preparing for a formal public Solutions Summit
- Coordinating with city, county, nonprofit, and healthcare partners

Solutions Summit

The San Benito Solutions Summit was held on May 30, 2024, and brought together dozens of participants from across the county, including stakeholders, service providers, community members, caregivers, and elected officials.

The event began with a presentation on demographic data regarding San Benito County's older adult population; discussed the state of current aging services needs and supports in the County; and then proposed that the group use the California Master Plan for Aging – Five Bold Goals framework to create local aging and disability services and support priorities, and to develop local strategies, activities, and actions to help achieve these goals. Attendees were divided into breakout groups, based on their expressed areas of interests and/or expertise, to discuss each of the five goal areas:

1. Housing for All Ages and Stages
2. Health Reimagined
3. Caregiving That Works
4. Inclusion & Equity, Not Isolation
5. Affording Aging





Each group was led by a designated individual with prior knowledge of the process and questions, guided by prompts, and tasked with identifying short-term solutions that could be implemented locally. A designated note-taker recorded key ideas, which were then compiled and used to inform ongoing workgroup meetings.

Workgroups

Following the summit, five topic-based workgroups were formed. Each group has met monthly since June 2024 and is focused on the following:

- Developing locally driven strategies tied to the MPA goals
- Identifying gaps in resources and services
- Highlighting community strengths
- Creating pilot projects and short-term wins

The workgroups consist of nonprofit leaders, local government staff, healthcare professionals, and community members who bring lived experience and practical insight to each discussion.

LADAP Role

The Local Aging & Disability Action Planning (LADAP) grant played a key role in launching this local playbook. Through funding, guidance, and regular collaboration, LADAP helped create a structure that supported community engagement and ensured that San Benito County's playbook efforts aligned with statewide goals to improve aging and disability services. We would like to acknowledge the California Department of Aging's funding of this effort, as well as UC Davis' guidance in helping to produce our Local Playbook.

MPA Governance Body

Oversight and strategic direction for the San Benito MPA playbook process is provided by a collaborative team including representatives from the Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties/AAA, the Community Foundation for San Benito County (CFFSBC), key San Benito County Health & Human Service Agency departments, elected officials, and non-profit organizations. Leadership was informally shared by the AAA Advisory Council, the CFFSBC Senior Project Committee, and the San Benito County Aging and Long-Term Care Commission (ALTCC). After months of cooperative management, these entities embraced designating the ALTCC as the official MPA Governance Committee. This governance body ensured alignment with State goals, tracked progress across workgroups, and helped move strategies from planning to action. Not only is the ALTCC an official body of the County of San Benito, but it includes direct service provider staff, Board members the CFFSBC and the Seniors Council, and is open to guests and members of the public.

IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

Goal One: Housing For All Ages and Stages

GOALS AND CHALLENGES

California's Master Plan for Aging identifies housing as a foundational element of aging with dignity. The goal is to ensure that Californians of all income levels and abilities can access safe, affordable housing that supports aging in place. Challenges include rising housing costs, limited availability of senior-specific options, zoning/ regulatory barriers, and a lack of supportive housing services.



LOCAL STRATEGIC IDEAS

From the May 30, 2024 San Benito County Solutions Summit and community workgroup input.

Goal 1A: Increase Affordable Housing for Seniors

- Launch educational campaigns to inform the public and policymakers about the need and benefits of affordable senior housing.
- Counter NIMBYism with facts and community stories.
- Lobby state and local officials to prioritize senior housing and allocate funding accordingly.
- Create a full-time housing advocate position within local government to focus on senior housing needs.
- Streamline permitting and building processes, especially for ADUs and low-income developments.

Goal 1B: Enhance Support Systems for Senior Housing

- Expand access to affordable assisted living and Board and Care facilities.
- Advocate for Medi-Cal to include assisted living services.
- Form a dedicated housing committee that identifies champions and opportunities.
- Strengthen partnerships with non-profits by offering support and technical assistance.

Goal 1C: Ensure Safe and Dignified Housing for Seniors

- Implement case management for shared housing to prevent elder abuse.
- Avoid red-tagging vulnerable seniors into homelessness; provide alternative housing.
- Reopen senior housing waitlists and improve access to long-term housing solutions.
- Use localized data on senior homelessness and housing insecurity to advocate for funding and policy change.

Goal 1D: Mobilize Community and Religious Organizations

- Engage faith leaders and community-based organizations in senior housing advocacy.
- Promote age-friendly community design and aging-in-place policies.
- Seek federal support and model successful initiatives from other regions.
- Encourage cities to pilot creative, senior-focused housing strategies.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- Community education and housing advocacy initiatives are being explored.
- Outreach to nonprofit and commercial real estate developers/brokers, affordable housing organizations, & housing advocacy organizations.
- Discussions begun on identifying local champions and forming a housing-focused committee.
- Workgroups are actively reviewing regional development plans to integrate senior housing priorities.

STRATEGIC IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

- Launch a public awareness campaign around age-friendly housing.
- Advocate for an official Senior Housing Coordinator position within the County.
- Explore zoning reforms to incentivize intergenerational and senior-specific housing models.
- Develop a toolkit for cities and developers focused on inclusive design and senior housing best practices.

TOOLS AND CHAMPIONS

Existing Tools:

- California Department of Aging and AARP Livable Communities Data
- San Benito County General Plan
- Partnerships with Commercial Real Estate Developers/Brokers
- Nonprofit Affordable Housing Developers – CHISPA; MidPen; Community Services Development Corporation



Potential Champions:

- Local elected officials
- Aging & Long-Term Care Commission
- Nonprofit Affordable Housing Developers – CHISPA; MidPen; Community Services Development Corporation
- Commercial Real Estate Developers/Brokers, Faith Leaders, and Healthcare Providers
- Community Advocates and Volunteers
- Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties
- Social Services Advisory Committee
- Community Foundation for San Benito County

Goal Two: Health Reimagined

GOALS & CHALLENGES

California's Master Plan for Aging prioritizes health as a lifelong journey rather than a healthcare "event". The goal is to close equity gaps, increase life expectancy, and ensure that every older adult can access the care and services they need to live independently and thrive. Key challenges include provider shortages, rising healthcare costs, lack of in-home and geriatric services, and barriers to holistic and preventive care.



LOCAL STRATEGIC IDEAS

From the May 30, 2024 San Benito County Solutions Summit and community workgroup input.

Goal 2A: Bridging Health & Home

- Promote a holistic approach to healthcare that includes medical, social, emotional, and environmental well-being.
- Offer community education on health planning, self-care, and wellness.
- Improve affordability and access to in-home care services.
- Increase the availability of accessible and affordable housing that supports healthy aging.
- Organize local workshops and events to connect residents with health resources.

Goal 2B: Health Care as We Age

- Advocate for the retention and improvement of local hospitals and emergency care services.
- Support the long-term viability of skilled nursing facilities & their integration with hospitals.
- Establish an adult day health care center in San Benito County to provide daytime medical and social care for older adults.
- Identify funding opportunities and partnerships to support adult day services.

Goal 2C: Lifelong Healthy Aging

- Launch a campaign encouraging individuals to plan for aging, including financial, social, and medical preparedness.
- Promote cooperative housing models like the "Golden Girls" concept for shared care.
- Provide educational workshops on healthy aging practices & intergenerational connection.

Goal 2D: Geriatric Care Expansion

- Increase the number of local geriatric providers and healthcare professionals.
- Offer community resource education to existing providers.
- Recruit and retain in-home caregivers through workforce development programs and incentives.

Goal 3E: Dementia in Focus

- Explore and adapt European models of dementia care.
- Expand access to geriatric and neurologic specialists in the region.
- Develop an education and referral process for early detection.
- Incentivize health care providers to conduct dementia screenings.

Goal 3F: Nursing Home Innovation

- Advocate for Medi-Cal reimbursement rates that enable facilities to hire qualified staff.
- Support innovation in long-term care practices that enhance quality of life.
- Offer training and tools to improve the care environment and resident outcomes.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- Falls Prevention and Peer-Led Education: Continued success of evidence-based programs like Matter of Balance and Volunteer Coach Training workshops to support fall prevention and health aging.
- Community-Based Fitness Opportunities: Exploring partnerships to expand Tai Chi and other fitness classes of older adults, with ongoing efforts to identify instructors and community spaces.
- Transportation Access for Seniors: Transportation remains a top concern in San Benito County; senior resident surveys are informing strategies to address significant gaps in mobility and access.
- Healthcare Outreach and Education: The Alzheimer's Association and Health Projects Center are co-hosting educational workshops on dementia care and caregiver support, with additional programming under development.
- Advocacy for healthcare access and hospital retention in rural areas.

STRATEGIC IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

- Develop an adult day health care pilot program.
- Expand training for health providers on aging-related resources.
- Launch a planning-for-aging awareness campaign.
- Form a local task force for dementia and Alzheimer's care coordination.

TOOLS AND CHAMPIONS

Existing Tools:

- Community Health Needs Assessments
- County Managed Care Health Plans
- Senior & Disability Resource Directories
- Outreach: Health Fairs, Educational Events



Potential Champions:

- Local Hospitals and Health Clinics
- Aging & Long-Term Care Commission
- Alzheimer's Association, Del Mar Caregiver Resource Center, Gavilan College
- Community Health Workers and Primary Care Providers
- Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties
- Social Services Advisory Committee
- Community Foundation for San Benito County
- Local Transportation Authority (LTA)/Council of San Benito County Governments (SBCOG)

Goal Three: Inclusion & Equity, Not Isolation



GOALS AND CHALLENGES

The Master Plan for Aging emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive and equitable communities where older adults are valued, connected, and able to fully participate in society. Key challenges include social isolation, digital exclusion, underemployment of older adults, and limited access to culturally appropriate resources and engagement opportunities.

LOCAL STRATEGIC IDEAS

From the May 30, 2024 San Benito County Solutions Summit and community workgroup input.

Goal 3A: Promote Inclusion and Equity in Aging

- Develop programs that promote social inclusion and equitable access to services for all older adults, regardless of race, income, language, or geographic location.
- Ensure that programs are culturally responsive and address specific needs of underserved populations.
- Foster age-friendly community environments that encourage civic participation and belonging.

Goal 3B: Close the Digital Divide

- Increase access to digital devices like tablets, smartphones, and computers for older adults.
- Partner with local schools to provide student volunteers for one-on-one tech support and mentorship.
- Offer presentations, hands-on workshops, and office hours at senior centers and community hubs.
- Collaborate with partners such as libraries, AARP, ADRC, Latino Coalition, Rotary, and internet providers.
- Pursue grants and funding to support tech training and device distribution.
- Explore scholarship incentives for students who support senior digital literacy.

Goal 3C: Expand Opportunities to Work

- Create job opportunities tailored for older adults that are flexible, part-time, and skills-based.
- Educate employers on the benefits of hiring experienced older workers.
- Advocate for workforce policies that promote age inclusivity.

Goal 3D: Foster Volunteerism and Intergenerational Engagement

- Promote and support programs like the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs.
- Identify and recruit bilingual and culturally diverse volunteers.
- Partner with organizations such as schools, faith groups, In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program, and veterans' networks to expand outreach.
- Provide stipends to low-income volunteers to encourage participation.

- Launch a community campaign to elevate the value of older adults and promote volunteerism as a way to stay active and connected.

Goal 3E: Protect Older Adults from Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation

- Strengthen Adult Protective Services and related safety networks.
- Increase awareness through community campaigns, trainings, and provider education.
- Collaborate with law enforcement, healthcare providers, and advocacy organizations to address elder abuse.

Goal 3F: Elevate California as a Leader in Aging

- Support statewide advocacy initiatives that advance age-inclusive policies.
- Encourage participation in pilot programs, research, and leadership development for aging services.
- Celebrate California's commitment to equity and innovation in aging.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- Digital literacy and senior scam prevention workshops are in development with partners.
- Volunteer recruitment efforts underway through community centers and outreach events.
- On-going and annual updates to the San Benito County Aging & Disability Resource Directory.

STRATEGIC IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

- Create a Technology Ambassador Program pairing students with older adults.
- Form an Inclusion and Equity subcommittee under the Aging & Long-Term Care Commission.
- Expand bilingual outreach and multilingual resource materials.
- Launch a local awareness campaign on elder inclusion and volunteer engagement.
- Develop a senior transportation initiative, such as a volunteer driver or shuttle program, to improve mobility and reduce social isolation.

TOOLS AND CHAMPIONS

Existing Tools:

- San Benito County Free Library
- AARP and ADRC Digital Inclusion Resources
- Senior Volunteer Programs (CNCS Foster Grandparent & Senior Companion)
- Jovenes de Antaño Computer Lab



Potential Champions:

- Latino Coalition, Rotary Club, and Local School Districts
- Aging & Long-Term Care Commission
- Local Libraries, Senior Centers, and Community Organizations
- Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties
- Social Services Advisory Committee
- Community Foundation for San Benito County

Goal Four: Caregiving That Works

GOALS AND CHALLENGES

The Master Plan for Aging sets a bold goal to create and sustain one million high-quality caregiving jobs in California. Caregivers—both paid and unpaid—are the backbone of aging in place. Yet challenges persist: low wages, high turnover, limited support for family caregivers, lack of training pathways, and unequal access to services, particularly in rural and underserved communities.



LOCAL STRATEGIC IDEAS

From the May 30, 2024 San Benito County Solutions Summit and community workgroup input.

Goal 4A: Support Family and Friends as Caregivers

- Expand local support groups through partners like the Del Mar Caregiver Resource Center and Alzheimer's Association.
- Increase access to respite care services to reduce burnout and caregiver strain.
- Address the shortage of In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program providers by recruiting and training new caregivers.
- Conduct targeted outreach through resource fairs, high schools, radio, PSAs, social media, and storytelling.
- Collaborate with Gavilan College to engage potential caregivers early in their education journey.
- Offer skill-building and caregiving education through DMCRC, Gavilan College, and local nonprofits.
- Provide internships for caregiving through programs like Jovenes de Antaño.
- Build a local caregiver referral network using hospitals, churches, community groups, and word-of-mouth connections.
- Incorporate caregiving roles into welfare-to-work programs to provide financial assistance and job placement.

Goal 4B: Create High-Quality, Sustainable Caregiving Jobs

- Advocate for livable wages for paid caregivers to promote recruitment and retention.
- Improve digital access by providing caregivers with internet access, devices, and training.
- Leverage resources like the Jovenes de Antaño Computer Lab to support tech literacy.
- Seek grants to fund tools, technology, and continuing education for caregivers.
- Expand access to transportation for caregivers and clients through Dial-a-Ride and other services.
- Educate County Express drivers to serve as connectors and referral sources.
- Distribute a comprehensive San Benito County Aging & Disability Resource Directory with information on caregiver services.

- Conduct caregiver-related presentations for all agencies in San Benito County to increase awareness.

Goal 4C: Expand Access to Virtual Care and Technology

- Promote telehealth as a caregiving tool for remote monitoring and communication.
- Develop coordinated care plan systems to connect clients, caregivers, and providers.
- Expand access to programs like California Access and CTAP for free phones and digital tools.
- Provide grant-funded laptops and IT training to caregivers and their clients.
- Address rural transportation barriers to ensure equitable access to virtual services.
- Utilize local media (ie local digital newspaper *BenitoLink*) to share resources and amplify caregiver stories.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- Outreach and collaboration with Gavilan College on caregiver training and career pathways.
- Expansion of skill-building and internship programs with local nonprofits.
- Advocacy for caregiver wage increases and integration of caregiver support into existing community services.
- Resource guide development and coordination across health and social service agencies.



STRATEGIC IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

- Launch a Caregiver Resource Hub to centralize services, information, and support.
- Pilot a caregiving scholarship or stipend program.
- Host a caregiving careers fair in partnership with educational institutions and care providers.
- Expand transportation and digital access to strengthen caregiver infrastructure.

TOOLS AND CHAMPIONS

Existing Tools:

- Caregiver Support Resources (Alzheimer's Association, Del Mar Caregiver Resource Center)
- San Benito County Aging & Disability Resource Directory
- California Access and CTAP Tech Programs

Potential Champions:

- Gavilan College, Jovenes de Antaño, and Alzheimer's Association
- Faith-Based Organizations and Local Hospitals
- IHSS Leadership and County Workforce Development Programs
- Faith-Based Leadership, Service Providers, and Community Advocates
- Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties
- Social Services Advisory Committee
- Community Foundation for San Benito County

Goal Five: Affording Aging

GOALS AND CHALLENGES

Affording aging is a growing challenge in California, where older adults face increasing costs for housing, healthcare, and daily living - often while living on fixed or limited incomes. The Master Plan for Aging calls for closing the equity gap and increasing economic security for older adults. Key challenges include elder homelessness, food insecurity, underutilization of public benefits, and a lack of financial planning resources tailored to aging populations.

LOCAL STRATEGIC IDEAS

From the May 30, 2024 San Benito County Solutions Summit and community workgroup input.

Goal 5A: End Homelessness for Older Adults

- Regularly review and update income thresholds so more older adults qualify for support programs like In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program.
- Promote shared housing models to generate supplemental income and reduce isolation.
- Expand local safety net programs targeting older adults at risk of homelessness.
- Create “community-rich” support networks to provide connection and informal assistance to older adults without nearby family or friends.



Goal 5B: Strengthen Income Security as We Age

- Offer financial education workshops focused on budgeting, retirement planning, and fraud prevention.
- Advocate for a universal monthly stipend of \$1,000 for older adults to meet basic needs.
- Promote tax credits for caregivers to offset eldercare-related expenses.
- Implement income tax breaks for older adults who remain in the workforce.
- Allow tax-free withdrawals from IRAs for expenses related to elder care.
- Encourage socially responsible investing as a way to build financial resilience and community impact.
- Launch campaigns that celebrate the value and contributions of older adults to foster respect and inclusion.

Goal 5C: Protect Against Poverty and Hunger

- Provide tax incentives to families or caregivers who house and care for older adults - modeled after support for charter schools.
- Ensure robust local support systems are in place to connect older adults with food, housing, and medical resources.
- Create programs that tap into the skills and experience of “cash poor but resource rich” seniors, helping them contribute and earn in creative ways.

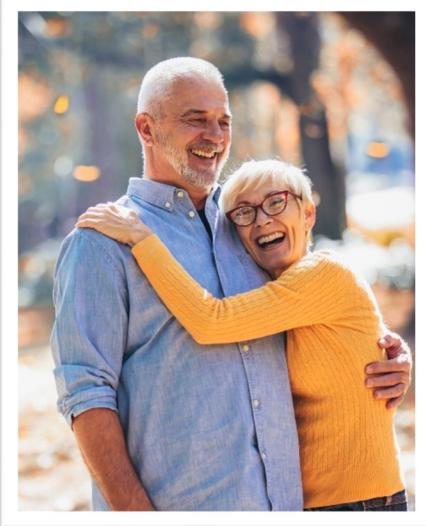
- Maintain and regularly update a comprehensive list of available safety net programs.
- Design a comprehensive “Affording Aging” plan that integrates public benefits, family support, and financial tools for long-term stability.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- Development of an Information Guide on tax deductions and financial assistance programs for seniors.
- Outreach efforts to expand shared housing opportunities.
- Partnerships forming to offer financial literacy classes at senior centers and libraries.
- Initial conversations underway about advocating for elder income support programs at the local and state levels.

STRATEGIC IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

- Launch a public-facing awareness campaign to reduce stigma and promote financial planning for seniors.
- Pilot a community-based universal stipend or microgrant program for low-income seniors.
- Partner with financial institutions and credit unions to provide age-friendly services and workshops.
- Create a “skills exchange” initiative allowing seniors to trade time and talent for resources, services, or stipends.



TOOLS AND CHAMPIONS

Existing Tools:

- In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program and Food Access Programs
- Local Nonprofits Offering Safety Net Services
- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program
- San Benito County Affording Aging Resource Directories

Potential Champions:

- Local Financial Advisors
- Local Institutions
- Aging & Long-Term Care Commission of San Benito County
- Community-Based Organizations
- Family Caregivers
- Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties
- Social Services Advisory Committee

CONCLUSION

The *San Benito County Master Plan for Aging Local Playbook* is a living document rooted in collaboration and care. By working together, our community can ensure that every resident - regardless of age or ability - has the opportunity to age with dignity, purpose, and connection. This Local Playbook marks the beginning of a bold journey toward a more inclusive and age-friendly future for all of San Benito County.

Creating this playbook is only one step in the process to aging with dignity and independence in San Benito County. Much has been achieved already, as described in the report. But ultimate success will only occur if the proposed champions and partners step up and commit the time, resources and passion to turn this vision into reality.

We look forward to seeing this vision evolve with changing opportunities and challenges, and we commit our leadership to the efforts needed to see them transition from goals into achievements.

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