

PROVIDING A COMPASS FOR ATTENDING TO THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY AS WE AGE



August 2024

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Several community members and leaders also contributed to the development of this plan by providing input through stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and survey participation.



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## INTRODUCTION

Sonoma County's population is changing. The number of older adults has dramatically increased over the last decade, and the shift will continue through the next decade. People 60 and over in Sonoma County comprise 28% of the population. By 2030, 35% of the population will be over 60, meaning more than one in three individuals will be an older adult. Combining this population shift with longer life expectancies, greater diversity within the older adult population, and changing expectations emphasizes the opportunity to better address this growing population's needs.



Recognizing the current opportunities to improve support for older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers and the even greater need as 2030 approaches, Sonoma County prioritized the development of the Sonoma County Master Plan for Aging (MPA). This plan represents the community's most pressing needs and outlines the top strategies to address them.

Sonoma County can use this plan to guide resource allocations, strategic efforts, and funding decisions to improve the lives of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers.

The following sections will explain why the Sonoma County MPA was developed, how it was developed, the top needs that emerged from the research, and the priority strategies selected in response. The strategies outlined within this plan are organized into six key goal areas that reflect the areas of greatest need and potential for impact in Sonoma County:



### **Goal Area #1: Housing**



### **Goal Area #2: Transportation**



### **Goal Area #3: Health**



### **Goal Area #4: Wellness, Equity, and Inclusion**



### **Goal Area #5: Caregiving**



### **Goal Area #6: Economic Security**



At the end of this plan, the next steps are outlined to move this plan into action. Implementing these strategies will result in a more age-friendly Sonoma County that provides older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers the support and services they need to age well in Sonoma County.

"Aging is something that we should all be celebrating. Having a plan for how to better meet the needs of this growing population is important to assist people in living in their homes for as long as possible."

-Paul Dunaway, Sonoma County Human Services  
Department Adult & Aging Services Division

## RATIONALE FOR THE SONOMA COUNTY MPA

The State of California catalyzed the local effort to develop a plan for aging for Sonoma County by leading the way in planning for the aging demographic at the state level. In June 2019, Governor Newsom issued an executive order calling for the development of a State Master Plan for Aging (MPA). The State MPA was released in January 2021 and is a ten-year blueprint for multiple sectors to build a California for all ages and stages. The State MPA calls upon local communities to act by building their own plan and addressing the needs of their aging populations. Collaborative efforts between state agencies, local governments, advocacy groups, and community stakeholders have provided resources and support for the local MPA planning process.



Additionally, state-level data and research on aging trends have informed local strategies, while public awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts have raised awareness about the importance of aging-related initiatives. These collective efforts have created an environment for counties like Sonoma to develop plans to address the unique challenges and opportunities facing their older adult populations.

“As Californians, we can 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.”

-California Master Plan for Aging, 2021

The state’s call to action and trends emerging at the local level provided the rationale for prioritizing funding and resources to move forward with the development of the Sonoma County MPA. These trends are highlighted below.

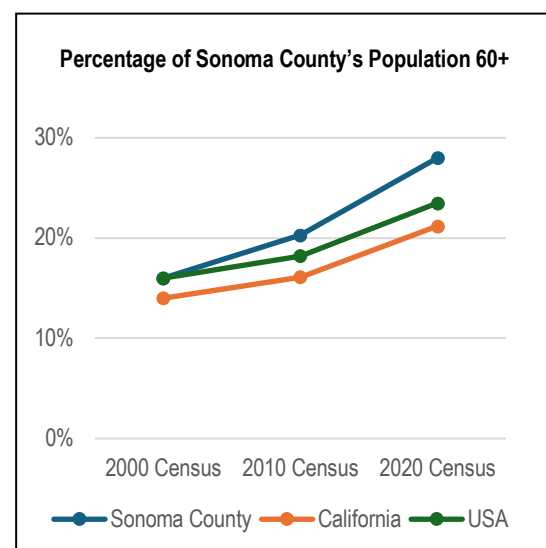
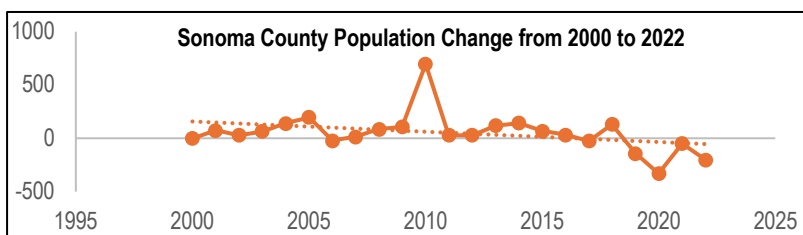
“The state MPA is saying all the right words. Now we need to take the right words and turn them into local action within our community.”

-Sonoma County MPA Steering Committee Member

### **Sonoma County is experiencing a demographic shift, with older adults representing more of the population.**

Since 2010, Sonoma County’s total population has been slowly declining. This is due to wildfires that destroyed homes and prompted relocations, the high cost of living making it difficult to afford housing, and economic factors where job opportunities have not kept pace with living expenses.<sup>i</sup>

While Sonoma County’s total population has been steadily decreasing, the proportion of older adults in the county is steadily increasing at a rate that is outpacing the state of California.<sup>ii</sup> Today, older adults comprise 28% of Sonoma County’s total population and are expected to increase to 35% by 2030. By comparison, older adults are expected to account for 25% of California’s population by 2030.<sup>iii</sup>



## Sonoma County's older adult population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.

In Sonoma County, individuals aged 60 and older have historically been a predominately White population, which is still true today (86.9%). However, the older adult population reflects increasing racial and ethnic diversity, including Hispanic and Latinx (10.3%), Black or African American (1.1%), Asian (3.5%), and American Indian (0.6%).

The aging population is culturally and linguistically diverse, with 15% of residents born outside the US. Of those born outside the U.S., two-thirds are from Latin America. Many Asian immigrants arrived after 2010, and African immigrants now make up about 3% of the foreign-born population, doubling since 2010.<sup>v</sup>

Racial and ethnic inequities exist, as demonstrated by differences in average life expectancy. For instance, Black residents have a life expectancy of 71.0 years compared to 85.5 years for Latino residents.<sup>vi</sup>

| Racial and Ethnic Diversity of 60+ Population in Sonoma County <sup>iv</sup> |               |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Race                                                                         | Number of 60+ | Percent of 60+ |
| American Indian & Alaska Native                                              | 829           | 0.6%           |
| Asian                                                                        | 4,834         | 3.5%           |
| Black or African American                                                    | 1,519         | 1.1%           |
| Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander                                           | 276           | 0.2%           |
| White                                                                        | 119,208       | 86.9%          |
| Some Other Races                                                             | 6,078         | 4.4%           |
| Two or More Races                                                            | 5,387         | 3.9%           |
| Ethnicity                                                                    | Number of 60+ | Percent of 60+ |
| Hispanic or Latinx                                                           | 14,228        | 10.3%          |
| White                                                                        | 113,406       | 82.8%          |
| Other                                                                        | 5,663         | 4.1%           |

"We talk a lot about the Latino community in Sonoma County, but there's also a big Polynesian, Fijian, and Cambodian community. We are a little bit more diverse than we talk about in Sonoma County."

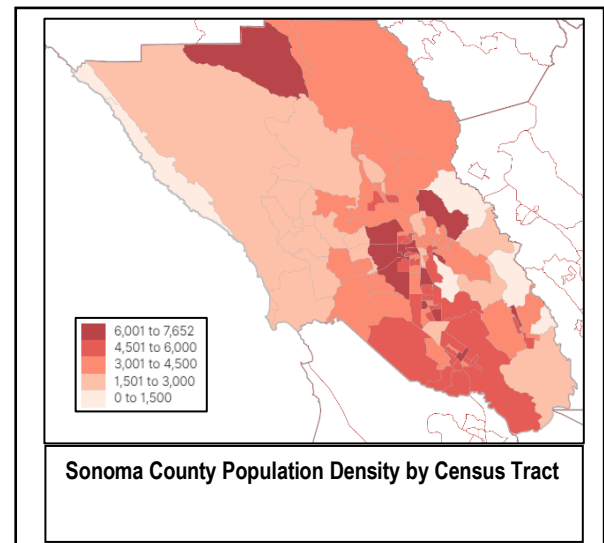
-Government Stakeholder Interviewee

## The urban and rural divide within the county is getting more pronounced.

Residents of Sonoma County live in nine cities and a vast unincorporated area, which includes numerous geographically isolated communities. Most of the county's population is concentrated in its cities, with the most populated areas along Highway 101.

Of the total older adult population in Sonoma County, more than 56,000 (42%) live in unincorporated towns and rural areas, 18,000 of whom (11% of older adults) are considered geographically isolated based on the federal Older Americans Act definition.<sup>vii</sup>

Essential services (e.g., hospitals, transportation) and supportive services (e.g., caregiving, senior centers) are clustered along the Highway 101 corridor. Those living in outlying regions often travel long distances to access resources and care. While some local senior centers and non-profits offer opportunities for engagement, more resources are needed in rural areas.<sup>viii</sup>



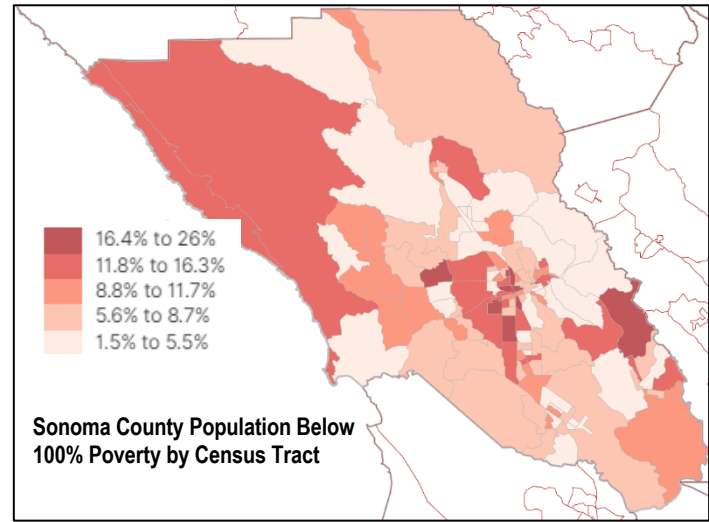
"There are older adults that have better access based on their geographic location. There are others that are extremely isolated because of where they are."

-Housing Stakeholder Interviewee

## Economic insecurity is disproportionately affecting older adults, people with disabilities, and minority racial and ethnic populations.

The high cost of living, driven by expensive housing and limited affordable options, exacerbates economic insecurity, making it difficult for low- and middle-income older adults to meet their basic needs.<sup>ix</sup> Approximately 8.7% of Sonoma County's total population lives in poverty, while 7.4% of Sonoma County's older adult population (60+) live in poverty.<sup>x</sup>

Many within the middle class struggle to afford basic needs and aging support services. This population is often called the “missing middle” or “hidden poor” as they struggle to afford the cost of living but fall short of qualifying for valuable benefits and support. Based on 2019 data, approximately 20% of the older adult population in Sonoma County qualified as “hidden poor.”<sup>xi</sup>



In the 2023 Point in Time Count, 33% of the county's population experiencing homelessness were age 51 and older. 10% were age 61 and older. Ten percent of those surveyed had experienced homelessness for the first time after the age of 50, an increasing trend of concern. The primary causes of homelessness were a lost job, eviction, and high cost of living.

Minority racial and ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness.<sup>xii</sup> A 2024 statewide survey on older adult homelessness found Black Californians to be overrepresented, accounting for 31% of the older adults experiencing homelessness, compared to 6% of all older adult Californians. Multiracial and Native American or Indigenous older adults were also found to be overrepresented.<sup>xiii</sup>

“If you are wealthy, aging is a delight as everything is available to you because you have the financial resources to live in an expensive area. If not, your finances are stretched because of the price of housing, food, gas, and utilities.”

-Aging Service Provider Stakeholder Interviewee

## Older adults' expectations are changing, impacting care delivery.

Older adults prioritize person-centered care, tailoring health and support services to their needs, preferences, and values. Many wish to remain in their homes as they age, preferring home-based services that provide medical care, personal care, and housekeeping support. Community resources, such as senior centers, social activities, and transportation, are crucial to aging in place.<sup>xiv</sup>

Technological savviness is also on the rise among older adults, with a growing use of health monitoring devices and apps to track health metrics. Telehealth services are popular for convenient access to healthcare, while communication tools like video calls and social media help maintain connections with family and friends.<sup>xv</sup>



Furthermore, a growing emphasis is on trauma-informed services in community and behavioral health. Recognizing the impact of past trauma, these services are designed to create safe and supportive environments. Building trust through transparent communication and involving older adults in care decisions are essential aspects of this approach. Empowering older adults and respecting their cultural backgrounds are also key components.

“Changing expectations are going to cause the industry to shift a bit. Technology is going to be huge. Curious to see how the systems and community respond to these changes in behavior.”

-Healthcare Stakeholder Interviewee

## DEFINING THE SONOMA COUNTY MPA

The Sonoma County MPA is a 10-year plan highlighting the community’s top needs and corresponding strategies based on robust stakeholder engagement, research, and input from Steering Committee members. By prioritizing strategies, the Sonoma County MPA provides guidance on allocating funding, resources, and energy within the community to improve the health and well-being of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. This is a call for all sectors—government, private, non-profit, and community members—to take part in making Sonoma County an ideal community to age. The Sonoma County MPA includes a range of strategies, including advocacy, program expansion, communication and outreach, and program development. There is a way for everyone interested to be involved.

This plan will be responsive to changes over the next 10 years. The next step is to identify the action items for each strategy. As further outlined in the later section titled “Commitment to Action,” an implementation oversight body will oversee implementation.



## THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of the Sonoma County MPA began in June 2023. Multiple stakeholder groups were involved in the development:

### Sonoma County Human Services Department

The Sonoma County Human Services Department provides programs and services to more than 150,000 older adults, veterans, adults, teens, children, and people with disabilities in Sonoma County. The department has four divisions: Adult and Aging, Economic Assistance, Employment and Training, and Family, Youth, and Children.

The Adult and Aging Division was designated the lead for this initiative, working closely with stakeholder groups. The Human Services Department was responsible for the final review and approval of the Sonoma County MPA before it was presented to the Board of Supervisors.

### Aging Together Leadership Team

The Aging Together Leadership Team for Sonoma County was created years before the Sonoma County MPA development process. It brought together aging experts across multiple sectors to discuss, address, and lead efforts related to aging within the county. Because this initiative naturally aligns with this team’s purpose, they served as an advisory group throughout the Sonoma County MPA development process.

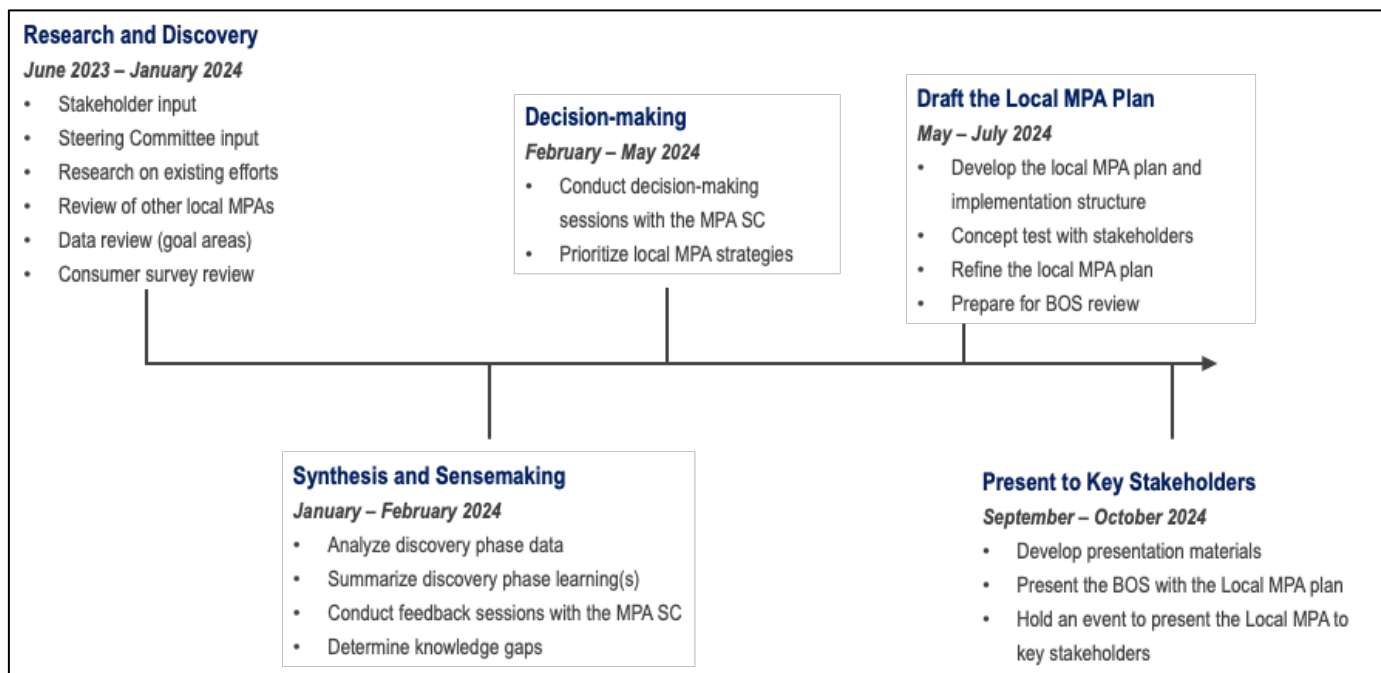
## Sonoma County MPA Steering Committee

The Sonoma County MPA Steering Committee was established for this initiative to guide the development process and provide perspectives based on experience and expertise. The Steering Committee was formed through an application process to encourage a diverse group of individuals and industry experts who could best represent Sonoma County.

## Collaborative Consulting

Collaborative Consulting is a California-based consulting group that works at the intersection of health and social care. Collaborative Consulting has extensive experience conducting stakeholder engagement and facilitating multi-stakeholder collaborations. In partnership with the Sonoma County Human Services Department, Collaborative Consulting facilitated the development process for the Sonoma County MPA, including conducting research, leading stakeholder engagement, and writing the plan.

The Sonoma County MPA development process comprised four key phases: Research and Discovery, Synthesis and Sensemaking, Decision-making, and Drafting the Plan. The project culminated with presenting the plan to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors and other key stakeholders.



## Research and Discovery

The Research and Discovery phase encompassed multiple methods of gathering information and input to identify the community's top needs and inform the development of priority strategies to address those needs. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered and captured within the following deliverables, which informed the Sonoma County MPA.

**Consumer Perspectives Summary:** This deliverable summarized the themes and findings from a review and analysis of recently administered surveys and community assessments to guide decision-making on the priorities to include in the Sonoma County MPA.

**Stakeholder Interview Synthesis:** Collaborative Consulting interviewed 43 stakeholders representing aging service providers and advocates serving Sonoma County to gather perspectives on the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. The themes from these interviews were synthesized to inform decision-making on the priorities for the Sonoma County MPA.

**Review of Other Local Models:** This summary reviewed a sampling of Local MPAs within and outside California to assess their approach to developing local plans, prioritizing strategies, and establishing an implementation structure. Collaborative Consulting completed online research and key informant interviews to develop this summary, which focused on identifying practices that could be integrated into the Sonoma County MPA development process.

**Summary of Strategic Plans and Reports:** This deliverable summarized research of existing strategic plans and reports relevant to developing the Sonoma County MPA, including age-friendly plans, organizational plans, and more. This identified efforts that could be part of the Sonoma County MPA strategies.

### Synthesis and Sensemaking

The deliverables highlighted above were completed by Collaborative Consulting and assessed by the Aging Together Leadership Team and Sonoma County MPA Steering Committee. The next phase involved analyzing the deliverables and synthesizing themes and findings. This resulted in an initial draft of the top needs and potential strategies to include in the Sonoma County MPA.



### Decision-making

After establishing a shared understanding of the research, sessions with the Aging Together Leadership Team and Sonoma County MPA Steering Committee were held in March and April 2024 to decide on the priorities for inclusion in the Sonoma County MPA. Criteria categories were established to guide the decision-making process:

- **Potential Impact in Addressing the Need:** What is the strategy's potential impact on the need it addresses?
- **Potential Reach for Those Underserved:** Does the strategy have the potential to impact those in greatest need and who have historically been underserved?
- **Funding and Resources:** Does the strategy require significant funding, resources, and commitment?
- **Community Readiness and Commitment:** Does the strategy align with the community's interests? Does it build on existing efforts or require new ones?



### Drafting the Plan

Collaborative Consulting drafted the plan in May 2024 and presented it to the Steering Committee in June 2024. Based on the feedback, the plan was refined and prepared for presentation to the Board of Supervisors in early September 2024.

During the Sonoma County MPA development process, the Sonoma County Human Services Department received a grant from the California Department of Aging to create a Local Aging and Disability Action Plan (LADAP) for Santa Rosa and Sonoma Valley, home to some of the highest concentrations of older adults who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Coordination between the LADAP project and the Sonoma County MPA resulted in shared learning. Additional insights from the LADAP project will be integrated into the implementation of the MPA strategies.

## WHAT WE LEARNED THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The research and discovery phase explored the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers from numerous perspectives within Sonoma County, including providers, advocates, and consumers. The [Consumer Perspectives Summary](#) and [Stakeholder Interview Synthesis](#) reflect the top needs.

The top needs informed the final goal areas and the strategies prioritized within each goal area. These needs are further summarized below in the introduction of each goal's strategies.

"We need to have every aspect of our community involved. We need broad input and commitment."

-Sonoma County MPA Steering Committee Member

## COMMITMENT TO ACTION

In response to the top needs from the research and discovery phase, the Sonoma County MPA Steering Committee selected 23 priority strategies organized within the six goal areas. Each strategy includes the following elements:

- **Timeframe:** The anticipated time needed for full implementation. The short-term is 1 to 2 years, the mid-term is 3 to 5 years, and the long-term is 6 to 10 years.
- **Key implementers:** These groups will be critical in implementing the strategy.

This section highlights the local MPA strategies and implementation planning. The implementation team will identify each strategy's actions, timelines, responsibilities, and desired outcomes.

Some themes cross all strategies and should be considered as the actions are determined for the priority strategies. These include:

- Achieve more coordination and communication between providers and organizations.
- Focus on the racial, socioeconomic, and geographic disparities in Sonoma County.
- Improve language access for information and services.
- Address cultural barriers that prevent the accessibility of services and supports.

"There's so much interconnection between the goal areas. You pull on one thread and it affects all areas."

-Sonoma County MPA Steering Committee Member

### GOAL AREA #1: HOUSING

**Increase the availability of preventive and supportive services to allow older adults and people with disabilities to age in place without concerns of safety and homelessness.**

Safe and stable housing is foundational to aging safely and comfortably in the community. However, there are challenges in Sonoma County related to the affordability and availability of housing that meets the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. The high cost of housing limits choices for residents and can make it even more difficult to manage the costs of maintaining and modifying a home, and the ability to afford recurring costs associated with housing, such as utilities and insurance. Older adults and people with disabilities in Sonoma County need more options for affordable housing, including options that are accessible (e.g., wheelchair accessible), near public transportation, and inclusive of supportive services. The risk of experiencing homelessness for the

"It's hard to find affordable housing, and it's even harder to find housing that's accessible."

-Disability Services Stakeholder Interviewee



first time is far too great for older adults and people with disabilities, and there are not enough strategies in place to mitigate this risk. The strategies prioritized in this goal area aim to impact the greatest areas of need.

| Strategy                                                                                                                                                            | Timeframe  | Key Implementers                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1 Advocate for policies leading to the development of affordable housing for older adults, including options near public transit and provide supportive services. | Short-term | Advocacy Groups, Aging & Disability Commission, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), County and City Departments |
| 1.2 Advocate for tenant protections at the local and state level, including protection of residents who live in mobile home parks.                                  | Short-term | Advocacy Groups, Aging & Disability Commission, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), County Departments          |
| 1.3 Grow and coordinate strategies that focus on keeping people in their homes and preventing homelessness.                                                         | Long-term  | Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), County Departments, Housing Providers                                       |
| 1.4 Expand housing options for low-income older adults like shared housing, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and adult family homes.                                | Mid-term   | CBOs, Consumers, County Departments, Home Sharing Programs                                                        |
| 1.5 Expand and support home modification programs for greater service areas and eligibility.                                                                        | Mid-term   | CBOs, Consumers, County Departments                                                                               |

## GOAL AREA #2: TRANSPORTATION

**Make accessible and safe transportation available for older adults and people with disabilities, regardless of where they live.**

Without accessible transportation, older adults and people with disabilities are at risk of isolation and adverse health outcomes if medical appointments are missed. This risk is greatest for those who live in rural areas and who are living with a physical disability. Transportation services, both public and private, are very limited or nonexistent in rural areas within the county. Transportation options for those who need paratransit, accessible vehicles, or assistance in getting to and from a vehicle are also limited. There are also concerns with public transportation safety, which deters the use of options to get around. In the 2023 Area Agency on Aging (AAA) survey, 27% of the older adult respondents felt the ease of public transportation was poor. This goal area focuses on working across the county to expand and improve transportation options.

“Even with as many transportation resources as we have in this county, it continues to be a large unmet need. This is partly because of the rural aspects.”

-Government Stakeholder Interviewee

| Strategy                                                                                                                                                                                  | Timeframe  | Key Implementers                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1 Advocate for improved transportation options for older adults and people with disabilities, including more accessible vehicles, safe bus stops, and expanded hours and service areas. | Short-term | Advocacy Groups, Aging & Disability Commission, CBOs, County Departments, Sonoma County Transit, Transportation Providers (including Paratransit) |
| 2.2 Expand voucher programs to address transportation barriers, such as gas vouchers, rideshare vouchers, or mileage reimbursement for caregivers.                                        | Mid-term   | CBOs, County Departments, County and City Leaders, Transportation Providers                                                                       |



### GOAL AREA #3: HEALTH

**Assist older adults and people with disabilities in accessing the health services and supports they need to maintain and improve their health and well-being.**

Access to health-related services is key to aging well. However, older adults in Sonoma County find it challenging to access the services they need due to limited offerings and capacity. Demand far exceeds availability, most pronounced with mental and behavioral health services. In other instances, accessibility is most limited by a lack of coordination across services, such as healthcare and community-based services. The strategies prioritized within this goal area focus on how these challenges can be best addressed through existing and new tactics.

| Strategy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Timeframe  | Key Implementers                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1 Foster collaboration between healthcare entities and community organizations to provide coordinated care that addresses health and social service needs.                                                                                                                            | Short-term | CBOs, County Departments, Healthcare Organizations                                                 |
| 3.2 Develop and expand mental and behavioral health services including through formal services and peer support groups.                                                                                                                                                                 | Mid-term   | CBOs, County Departments, Healthcare Organizations                                                 |
| 3.3 Advocate for funding to expand the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) program in the county by adding more centers.                                                                                                                                               | Long-term  | Advocacy Groups, Aging & Disability Commission, CBOs, County Departments, Healthcare Organizations |
| 3.4 Facilitate coordination of and involvement in multi-lingual outreach to consumers on health topics for older adults and people with disabilities, such as dementia awareness, COVID-19, the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), and mental and behavioral health. | Short-term | CBOs, County Departments, Healthcare Organizations                                                 |

### GOAL AREA #4: WELLNESS, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY

**Ensure that older adults and people with disabilities can easily locate and access information, resources, and opportunities for greater social connection.**

Feeling connected, included, and supported contributes to overall well-being. Many residents feel isolated and desire more social connections. In the 2023 AAA survey, 44% of the older adult respondents worried about having companionship. Improved social connection can be achieved through classes, events, and social opportunities within the community. Volunteering, employment, and skill-building opportunities can also help address the desire for more connections. An even more fundamental need is the ability for older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers to know where they can go when support is needed. This is especially true for those who need language assistance. The four prioritized strategies focus on better coordination and communication to improve support and services.



"There's a lot of good services in Sonoma County, but I think it's really hard for people to navigate those services."

-Service Provider Stakeholder Interviewee

| Strategy |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Timeframe  | Key Implementers                                                         |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4.1      | Expand efforts of the Aging & Disability Resource Hub (ADRH) to improve collaboration between community organizations and make it easier for consumers to access information and resources.                                                    | Short-term | CBOs, County Departments                                                 |
| 4.2      | Increase emergency preparedness planning and support for older adults and people with disabilities via outreach and coordination across programs.                                                                                              | Short-term | CBOs, County Departments, County and City Leadership                     |
| 4.3      | Expand training and educational resources on technology and improve access to technology for older adults, including more language offerings and providing technology devices and orientation.                                                 | Short-term | CBOs, County Departments, Education Providers                            |
| 4.4      | Develop an ongoing process to gather community input on the needs for older adults and people with disabilities (with a focus on underrepresented populations) and use the results to campaign for funding and resources to address the needs. | Short-term | Advocacy Groups, Aging & Disability Commission, CBOs, County Departments |

## GOAL AREA #5: CAREGIVING

**Reinforce the value of caregiving by improving the resources, support, and training for paid and unpaid caregivers.**

As the population ages and places more pressure on the care systems, the caregiver's role will only increase in importance. However, there is already a shortage of formal caregivers and a lack of resources to expand recruitment for this role. Caregivers need more opportunities for training and skill building. Higher wages are also necessary. The prioritized strategies reflect today's needs and prepare for the increasing need.

"Caregivers need emotional support, mental health support, a break. They need a skilled workforce for respite care. They need legal and financial information that they can trust. And training."

-Caregiving Stakeholder Interviewee

| Strategy |                                                                                                                                                        | Timeframe  | Key Implementers                                                                                                   |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5.1      | Increase awareness of and coordinate training resources and supports for paid and unpaid caregivers.                                                   | Short-term | Caregiving Organizations, CBOs, County Departments                                                                 |
| 5.2      | Expand the caregiver workforce through development programs, career pathways, and offering financial incentives/ stipends.                             | Mid-term   | Advocacy Groups, Aging & Disability Commission, CBOs, County Departments, Education Providers, Labor Organizations |
| 5.3      | Expand caregiver respite programs and adult day care programs.                                                                                         | Short-term | Caregiving Organizations, CBOs, County Departments                                                                 |
| 5.4      | Advocate for and develop programs that provide financial support to those that choose to leave the workforce to be a caregiver for family or a friend. | Long-term  | Advocacy Groups, Aging & Disability Commission, CBOs, County Departments                                           |



## GOAL AREA #6: ECONOMIC SECURITY

**Ensure basic needs are affordable and attainable for older adults and people with disabilities.**

As the cost of living in Sonoma County continues to increase, many people's ability to afford basic needs decreases. Housing, food, and transportation are the most cited affordability challenges. In the 2023 survey administered by the AAA, 57% of the older adult respondents cited concerns about having enough money to meet daily expenses within the past year.

For many older adults and people with disabilities in Sonoma County who must seek employment to afford basic needs, it is difficult to find and secure suitable employment. This causes many to worry. Others have no choice but to forgo employment to qualify for Medi-Cal, or spend down their savings to qualify for other benefits that help obtain basic needs.



"Some must decide whether they pay their rent or they get food – and that's hard to swallow. It's getting harder to retire in Sonoma County. It's no longer a retirement-friendly community."

-Service Provider Stakeholder Interviewee

| Strategy                                                                                                                                                                        | Timeframe  | Key Implementers                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6.1 Advocate at the local, state, and federal levels for streamlined processes and increased access of CalFresh (SNAP) and other nutrition benefits                             | Mid-term   | Advocacy Groups, Aging & Disability Commission, CBOs, County Departments |
| 6.2 Expand financial assistance to help older adults with medical bills, utility bills, and other out-of-pocket expenses through increased funding and eligibility for benefits | Mid-term   | CBOs, County Departments, County and City Leadership                     |
| 6.3 Increase funding and awareness of education and legal services for financial abuse cases                                                                                    | Short-term | CBOs, County Departments                                                 |
| 6.4 Offer and encourage volunteer, part-time, and flexible employment opportunities for older adults                                                                            | Mid-term   | CBOs, Consumers, County Departments, Private Organizations               |

## SONOMA COUNTY MPA IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

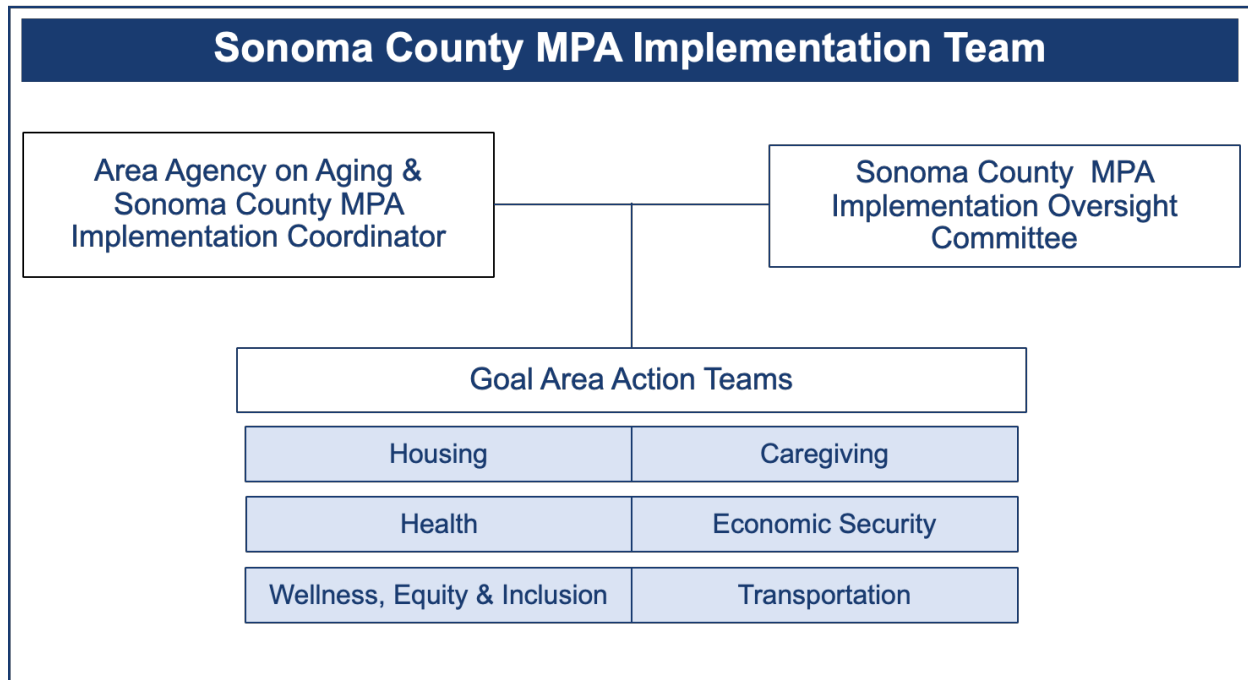
Successful implementation of the Sonoma County MPA will require involvement, resources, and commitments across sectors, organizations, and communities. Below is the proposed structure to guide its implementation.

The first responsibility of the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Team (AAA, Oversight Committee, and Action Teams) is to develop an implementation plan. The implementation plan will prioritize the strategies within each goal area, detailing the actions, timelines, and responsible parties.

"This can't be another plan that just sits on a shelf..."

When I run into people and they've heard about the plan, that's when I'll know that we've done something a little different."

-Sonoma County MPA Steering Committee Member



### Roles of the Implementation Team Bodies

The **Area Agency on Aging** remains committed to its role as the lead agency for the Sonoma County MPA and will be actively involved in its implementation. A time-limited position (the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Coordinator) will coordinate the implementation activities for the Sonoma County MPA. The Coordinator will be responsible for monitoring and documenting the progress of action items and will be the primary liaison to the bodies that comprise the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Team.

| Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Role</b>                              | Lead Agency that oversees the implementation of the MPA in partnership with the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Oversight Committee and Goal Area Action Teams.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Participants</b>                      | Adult and Aging Division Director and Staff, Sonoma County MPA Implementation Coordinator                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Example Responsibilities</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate the development of the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Oversight Committee and Goal Area Action Teams, including the recruitment of participants, defining roles and responsibilities, and developing processes for communication.</li> <li>• Facilitate the meetings with and provide support to the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Oversight Committee.</li> <li>• Facilitate the Goal Area Action Team meetings, which will include preparing meeting agendas, coordinating the logistics, and summarizing meeting notes.</li> <li>• Update the Sonoma County MPA and implementation plan to reflect progress.</li> <li>• Provide input and guidance to the Goal Area Action Teams on implementation (including prioritization, actions, responsibilities, and timelines).</li> <li>• Provide frequent updates on implementation progress to other county departments, county leadership, and other key stakeholders.</li> <li>• Develop annual reports demonstrating MPA implementation progress.</li> <li>• Generate interest and commitment from funders to support the Sonoma County MPA implementation, engaging the support of the Action Team members when needed.</li> </ul> |

The **Sonoma County MPA Implementation Oversight Committee** will oversee the implementation of the Sonoma County MPA. This oversight committee will consist of Aging Together Leadership Team members who would like to oversee the implementation and the leads from the Goal Area Action Teams (described below). The AAA and Sonoma County MPA Implementation Coordinator will work closely with the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Oversight Committee throughout implementation.

| Sonoma County MPA Implementation Oversight Committee |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Role</b>                                          | Oversee the Sonoma County MPA implementation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Participants</b>                                  | Aging Together Leadership Team members (representing county leadership, county departments, and organizational leaders) and Goal Area Action Team Leads                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Example Responsibilities</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide expertise, guidance, and decision-making on the implementation of MPA strategies (including guidance on approaches/actions, timelines, and stakeholders).</li> <li>• Make connections and advocate for Sonoma County MPA strategies</li> <li>• Attend monthly or bimonthly meetings with the AAA and Sonoma County MPA Implementation Coordinator.</li> </ul> |

The **Goal Area Action Teams (one team for each of the six goal areas)** will guide strategies within the respective goal areas. Each Action Team will have a designated lead, who will also serve as a member of the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Oversight Committee. The committees will work closely with the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Coordinator to coordinate and track the implementation of the MPA strategies. The Action Teams will draft the initial implementation plans for their respective goal areas and present them to the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Oversight Committee and AAA for input.

| Goal Area Action Teams          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Role</b>                     | Guide and document the progress of the Sonoma County MPA implementation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Participants</b>             | Industry experts, community members, and others representing multiple sectors.<br>Each Action Team will have a Lead that is responsible for representing the Action Team on the Sonoma County MPA Implementation Oversight Committee                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Example Responsibilities</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop implementation plans for the MPA strategies that include actions/tasks, responsibilities, timelines, and intended outcomes.</li> <li>• Support the Local MPA Implementation Coordinator in documenting meeting notes, implementation progress, and outcomes.</li> <li>• Connect with community stakeholders that will be involved in and/or responsible for the implementation of MPA strategies.</li> <li>• Attend monthly meetings for the Goal Area Action Team.</li> <li>• Participate in and support the implementation of MPA strategies.</li> </ul> |

## CLOSING

The Sonoma County Master Plan on Aging (MPA) identifies the primary needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers and suggests strategies for effectively addressing these needs. As this plan progresses toward implementation, it is a call to action for the Sonoma County community to participate and be part of the change. Taking action together to advance the MPA strategies can make Sonoma County a place where everyone can age well.



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- <sup>i</sup> Sonoma County AAA Transportation Discovery Report (2021)
  - <sup>ii</sup> California Master Plan for Aging Data Dashboard (2024)
  - <sup>iii</sup> USA Facts. Our Changing Population: Sonoma County, California (2022)
  - <sup>iv</sup> 2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates
  - <sup>v</sup> U.S. Census Bureau ACS table B05006, 2015-2019
  - <sup>vi</sup> Sonoma County Community Perspectives Summary (2023)
  - <sup>vii</sup> 2022 California Department on Aging Population Demographics by County and PSA
  - <sup>viii</sup> Portrait of Sonoma Report (2021)
  - <sup>ix</sup> Sonoma County Community Perspectives Summary (2023)
  - <sup>x</sup> 2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates
  - <sup>xi</sup> California Master Plan for Aging Data Dashboard (2024)
  - <sup>xii</sup> County of Sonoma 2023 Point-In-Time Count Results (2023)
  - <sup>xiii</sup> Toward Dignity: Understanding Older Adult Homelessness in the California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness (2024)
  - <sup>xiv</sup> National Institute on Aging (2023)
  - <sup>xv</sup> Portrait of Sonoma Report (2021)

Image Sources:

- Cover Page: Collaborative Consulting via Discord AI (2024)
- Page 4: Collaborative Consulting via Unsplash (2024) and Discord AI (2024)
- Page 7: Collaborative Consulting via Discord AI (2024)
- Page 8: Collaborative Consulting via Unsplash (2024)
- Page 10: Collaborative Consulting via Midjourney AI (2023) and Discord AI (2024)
- Page 13: Collaborative Consulting via Discord AI (2024)
- Page 15: Collaborative Consulting via Discord AI (2024)

