



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 9/10/2024

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Human Services

Staff Name and Phone Number: Paul Dunaway 707-565-5900, Kathleen Cortez 707-565-5903

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Sonoma County Local Master Plan for Aging

Recommended Action:

Adopt the Sonoma County Local Master Plan for Aging

Executive Summary:

The Human Services Department engaged a community driven steering committee to develop a local Master Plan for Aging to improve the health and well-being of older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers in Sonoma County. This local Master Plan for Aging is aligned with the State of California Master Plan for Aging in setting goal areas for establishing priority services, programs and policies. The plan highlights the community's top needs and corresponding strategies to address those needs. The goal areas for Sonoma County were developed by the steering committee, comprised of community members and industry professionals through a process of reviewing relevant county plans, needs assessment and survey data, and interviews with key stakeholders. The goal areas selected for the Sonoma County Master Plan are Housing, Transportation, Health, Equity and Isolation, Caregiving, and Economic Security.

Discussion:

In June 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order No. N-14-19, calling for the creation of a Master Plan for Aging (MPA), which seeks to prepare local communities for the year 2030 when 10.8 million Californians - one in four residents - will be 60 years of age or older. In January 2021, Governor Newsom released the California Master Plan for Aging affirming the priority of health and well-being of older Californians and the need for policies that promote aging with dignity and independence. The state MPA calls upon local communities to act by building their own plan and addressing the needs of their aging populations. The state MPA is a blueprint for state government, local government, the private sector, and philanthropic organizations to collaborate and prepare for demographic changes.

California's population of adults age 60 and over is projected to diversify and grow faster than any other age group. In the nine county San Francisco Bay Area, Sonoma County has the second largest population of older adults. According to the 2016-2019 America Community Survey 5-year estimates, Sonoma County adults age 60 and over account for 28% of the total population, a number that is projected to increase to 35% by 2030.

The growth of Sonoma County's older adult population has significant implications for both individual and community life by enriching the county with increased wisdom and a wealth of intergenerational connections,

while also challenging families and community organizations to provide planning and support related to an increased need for services. Sonoma County shares with state and nationwide counterparts the challenges related to affordable housing, caregiving services, and transportation solutions that meet the needs of older adults and adults with disabilities. Disaster planning and education remains a significant challenge for Sonoma County with power shutoffs and evacuation events from fires and floods that have led to both a loss of housing and a loss of lives of older adults. According to the Press Democrat article on December 27, 2017, [Remembering the Victims of the 2017 North Bay Fires](#), 24 Sonoma County residents lost their lives. Eighteen of them were over the age of 60 and 2 were wheelchair users. One year later, the Camp Fire in Paradise killed 86 people and of the ones who were positively identified, the average age of the victims was 72 years old. The rising cost of living in Sonoma County erodes the ability for older adults to purchase food, shelter, medications, transportation, and other basic needs. The pandemic highlighted issues of isolation, access to healthcare and digital technology that further amplify the need for responsive programs and services.

On February 28, 2023, the Board approved the strategic plan development for a local Master Plan for Aging. A 24-member Master Plan for Aging Steering Committee of community members and industry professionals was established to guide the plan development process, provide expertise, and recommend priority strategies for Sonoma County. The MPA Steering Committee along with Adult and Aging division staff, the Aging Together Leadership Team and Collaborative Consulting, researched and reviewed local survey and demographic data, local and national aging reports and action plans, and performed interviews of local professionals engaged in the MPA goal areas. This research and engagement led to the development of the local Master Plan for Aging.

The local MPA serves many purposes and brings together public and private sectors to collaborate and develop programs to serve older Sonoma County residents and those with disabilities. The local MPA can be used as a tool to inform regional planning for county and city general plans and help county departments to plan and prepare for the increasing aging demographics (e.g., County Transportation Plan, local Housing Element). Most importantly, adopting the local MPA demonstrates that the county is committed to creating an age-friendly community where older adults feel safe and supported as they age.

The demographic shift towards an older, more diverse population requires local and statewide systems and programs that do the following:

- Offer, coordinate, and integrate increasingly complex social, medical, cognitive, and behavioral health supports.
- Respond to the needs of a growing number of older adults, people with disabilities and family caregivers.
- Affirm the important values of race, ethnicity, language, culture, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

The MPA priority goal areas that emerged from the local research fall in line with the goal areas identified in the state MPA. The target areas of focus for the local MPA are:

- 1) Housing:** Affordable and accessible housing that can accommodate older adults and people with disabilities to comfortably age in place. This is a particular challenge for Sonoma County, and one that will continue to impact the aging population for the foreseeable future. According to the California Budget and Policy Center, older adults are the fastest-growing population experiencing homelessness and the largest share of individuals who are encountering homelessness for the first

time in their lives.

- 2) **Transportation:** Affordable and accessible transportation that can accommodate older adults and people with disabilities regardless of where they live. Sonoma County has very limited wheelchair transportation options and virtually none that are affordable for older adults on fixed incomes. Access to transportation for older adults in rural areas of Sonoma County mirrors these challenges. Without accessible transportation, older adults and people with disabilities are at risk of isolation and adverse health outcomes.
- 3) **Healthcare:** Older adults and people with disabilities need assistance in accessing the health services and supports they need to maintain and improve their health and well-being. Increased local partnerships with public health, community services, and private healthcare are needed to accommodate the demand for health services and to prepare the local health infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing population of older adults.
- 4) **Equity and Inclusion:** All Sonoma County older adults will need equitable access to information, resources, and opportunities for greater social connection. Language access and literacy levels remain a challenge to accessing information for many older adults, especially for those who are limited and non-English speakers. Feeling connected, included, and supported contributes to overall well-being. There is a fundamental need for older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers to know where they can go when support is needed and to have the ability to access information and support in multiple languages.
- 5) **Caregiving:** There is a need to illustrate the value of caregiving by improving the resources, supports, and training for paid and unpaid caregivers. As the population ages and more pressure is placed on care systems, the caregiver's role will increase in importance and necessity. Sonoma County's older residents will need an increased and steady flow of caregiving professionals. To meet the needs of many families, alternative caregiving options that are affordable will be essential to keep up with the increased need for in-home services.
- 6) **Economic Security:** Basic needs must be affordable and attainable for older adults and people with disabilities. The increasing costs of housing, utilities, insurance, and transportation have become a burden for low-income older adults and are now increasingly impacting middle income earning older adults.

The implementation of the local MPA Strategic Plan will be a significant effort designed to position the County with priority strategies to prepare for the needs of older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers. In preparing for an increasing older adult population, it is necessary to eliminate disparities and improve access to services and supports to meet the needs of all Sonoma County older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers.

The implementation of the identified priority MPA strategies will be a collaborative partnership between private sector businesses, community organizations and city and county departments. The Human Services Department (HSD) Adult and Aging Division will hire a program development manager (PDM) to oversee the MPA implementation and develop community action teams to address the six identified MPA goal areas. This Board approved the addition of a Time-Limited PDM in the 24/25 HSD budget. Each of these teams in their respective goal areas will further develop objectives and strategies as defined in the MPA. They will collaborate on ways to fund, advocate, and take action on the goals and strategies. The oversight of the MPA action teams and the overall strategic plan implementation will come under the direction of the Aging and Disability Commission (formerly the AAA Advisory Council) guided by the HSD Adult and Aging Division

Agenda Date: 9/10/2024

Director. Additional oversight will come from the Sonoma County Aging Together committee.

Aging and disability services in Sonoma County are currently inadequate to meet the growing demand. In the 2023, the AAA needs assessment revealed that 49% of respondents don't know what services are available to them or where to go to find services. The County must support and plan for the expansion and enhancement of older adult services and work towards creating an affordable and accessible age-friendly community, and the local MPA will be the vehicle for doing so in our community.

Strategic Plan:

This item directly supports the County's Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Healthy and Safe Communities

Goal: Goal 1: Expand integrated system of care to address gaps in services to the County's most vulnerable.

Objective: Objective 2: Identify gaps in the Safety Net system of services and identify areas where departments can address those gaps directly and seek guidance from the Board when additional resources and/or policy direction is needed.

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

6-14-2024: Approval of the Human Services Department budget that included the addition of the Program Development Manager.

02-28-2023: Approval of the Local Master Plan for Aging Steering Committee and strategic plan development.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY24-25 Adopted	FY25-26 Projected	FY26-27 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$0	\$0	\$0

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

None

Staffing Impacts:

Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

None

Attachments:

MPA Strategic Plan

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

None