

Countywide Strategic Plan

We and other members of the community have been asked to help shape Marin County's future by sharing our ideas, priorities, and hopes for the years ahead.

About the Plan

- Marin County is developing its first Countywide Strategic Plan is more than 25 years.
- The plan will establish a shared direction for the future, align County priorities and investments, and improve transparency and accountability. It will serve as the County's long-term guide for decision-making while helping ensure resources are focused on the issues that matter most to the community.

Why it Matters

The decisions made today will help shape Marin County for years to come. The Strategic Plan will help the County focus on what matters most, make informed investment decisions, and ensure community priorities help guide future actions and services.

Project Timeline & Process



- **Early 2026:** Project planning, research, and preparation
- **Summer 2026:** Strategic Plan launch and organizational readiness
- **Fall 2026:** Community engagement, workshops, focus groups, and online input
- **Winter 2026-2027:** Development of draft goals, priorities, and strategies
- **Early 2027:** Draft Strategic Plan review and Board of Supervisors consideration
- **Spring-Summer 2027:** Implementation planning, performance measures, and public progress reporting

Community input is a critical part of this process. Over the coming months, Marin County will provide multiple opportunities for residents, businesses, community organizations, and other stakeholders to participate including Community workshops across Marin, Focus groups with key stakeholder groups, An online community forum, and Additional outreach and engagement opportunities.

They County wants to hear from us as well as other members of the community. The question is how can the Commission on Aging help Marin County better understand the perceptions and needs of older adults, caregiver communities, and those with disabilities that may be underrepresented in traditional surveys and the public

WHAT MATTERS TO OUR OLDER ADULT COMMUNITY



As we move through the seasons of life — childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, midlife, and later years — our priorities naturally shift. Each season brings its own challenges, goals, and perspectives, shaped by our age, experiences, relationships, and responsibilities.

Older adults 60+ years old currently represent over 30% of Marin County's population and projections indicate that percentage will 40% within the next decade. The greatest growth in older adults are those over the age of 80 that is expected to double during the next decade.

Medical breakthroughs have extended life spans and the savings older adults expected to last a lifetime may not be enough to cover an extra 10 to 20 years to support quality of life for living and medical care expenses as older adults age, especially for older adults whose income levels exclude them from qualifying for government assistance programs.

The following examines the challenges older adults are facing and strategic roadmap highlighting priorities.

ASSESSMENTS - Assessments can provide valuable insights into the community needs. One of the challenges is when different stakeholders and community members often hold opposing views on what are the most urgent problems and best solutions. For example, when weighing data for minority groups against the needs of majority groups, the central issue is balancing collective utility (the greatest good for the greatest number) with equity and protection for vulnerable populations. Compounding the process is when quantitative data (numbers) lack the context needed to explain *why* an issue exists and qualitative data (interviews) can be time-consuming and prone to subjective bias or social desirability effects. Turning collected data into useful insights is a challenging part of a any needs assessment. If the data is misunderstood. The bottom line is the lack of useful, accurate insights can lead to poorly designed programs and ineffective actions.

OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENTS

Marin County 2025 Public Health Assessment:

(<https://www.marincounty.gov/node/25026>):

- **Housing & Homelessness:** Access to safe, stable, affordable housing is essential to health and well-being. In Marin County, where housing costs far exceed the state average, many residents, especially low-income families, older adults, and essential workers, face growing housing insecurity, substandard living conditions, and displacement.
- **Access to Care:** Access to holistic, affordable, and culturally responsive health care is essential to community well-being. While Marin County ranks high in overall health, racial health disparities in Marin are greater than the state average, and many residents face significant barriers to care. These include high costs, transportation challenges, long wait times, language and cultural mismatches, and distrust in the healthcare system.
- **Behavioral Health is essential to overall well-being and includes mental health, substance use, and access to care.** While Marin County performs well on many health indicators, mental health needs have grown, and disparities have widened since the COVID-19 pandemic. Behavioral health is essential to overall well-being and includes mental health, substance use, and access to care. While Marin County performs well on many health indicators, mental health needs have grown, and disparities have widened since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Climate & Environment:** As climate change accelerates, its health impacts are becoming increasingly urgent and unevenly distributed across Marin County. Rising temperatures, extreme weather, and rising sea levels intensify public health risks, especially for disproportionately burdened communities.
- **Chronic Disease & Disability:** Many people in Marin County are living with chronic illnesses and disabilities. Chronic disease, disability, and premature death continue to impact many adults in Marin County, particularly communities of color, older adults, and residents of Marin City. While Marin has one of the highest life expectancies in the state (85.2 years), sharp racial disparities persist. Black residents have a life expectancy of just 77.1 years—an 11.6-year gap compared to non-Hispanic Asian residents (88.7 years). Cardiovascular disease (CVD), cancer, and accidental overdoses are leading causes of premature death, with CVD disproportionately affecting Black residents. Cancer is now the leading cause of death among white residents, highlighting shifting patterns of disease burden across the population.
- **Home & Employment:** Economic security is vital for health, well-being, and upward mobility, but many low-income families face significant barriers in Marin County, especially among Marin's communities of color. With limited financial resources, families often make difficult choices between essentials like rent, food, childcare, and health care. The high cost and limited availability of affordable childcare further restrict parents' ability to work, pursue education, or improve their economic situation. These strains lead to toxic and chronic stress, which has significant, long-term effects on both physical and mental health.

Marin County HHS 2023 Marin County Older Adults Needs Assessment

https://www.marinhhs.org/sites/default/files/files/servicepages/2024_02/marin_county_older_adult_needs_assessment_2023.pdf

- The Struggle is Real:
 - Since 2019, older adults have expressed elevated levels of concern across all areas (including affording healthcare, medications, housing; crime, financial abuse, scams; financial security, and feeling depressed)
 - Food insecurity among Marin County seniors has increased by 8 percentage points since 2019.
 - About a third of older adults feel isolated or lonely at least some of the time.
- Rising Costs:
 - As the cost of living continues to rise, many older adults on fixed incomes struggle to make ends meet.
 - 47% of those surveyed find it difficult to live on their total household income.
 - Financial security concerns have increased the most since 2019, rising from 13% to 29% in 2023.
- Housing and Daily Living Expenses:
 - Accessing affordable housing in Marin County is a growing concern as local real estate prices continue to increase.
 - Affording other living expenses such as utilities, groceries, and healthcare is a significant struggle.

Community Action Marin (CAM) 2025 Community Needs Survey

<https://camarin.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-Community-Needs-Assessment-Report.pdf>

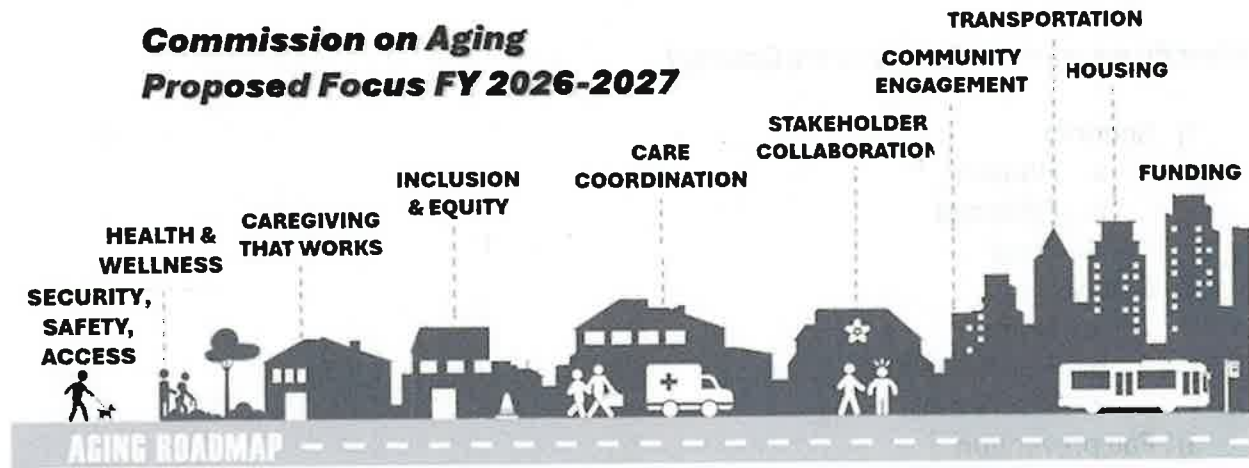
- While much of Community Action Marin's work focuses on families with young children, they recognized that Marin seniors face significant challenges due to the high cost of living & other issues. Their 2025 community needs survey aligned with 2023 HHS older adults needs assessment. CAM found 8.5% of respondents were aged 65 & older. Among these respondents, 38% identified Health as their primary concern, while 31% chose Housing as their top issue. Comments from participants in a focus group for older adults highlighted concerns about the cost of living, particularly utilities. One participant noted, "I keep the thermostat at 64 degrees in the winter & use blankets," while another shared, "I don't turn on the lights during the summer; I use c&les for lighting in the evenings." In addition, about 50% of the seniors who responded to our survey were food insecure.
- Additional comments highlighted concerns about employment and the desire for community. Focus group participants expressed frustration over the lack of good-paying job opportunities for seniors, and a respondent to our CNA survey added a comment in the Employment section: "I have experienced discrimination against older workers when hiring". The participants in the older adult focus group unanimously expressed a desire for housing that fosters community and social connections. Furthermore, seniors want to be heard and recognized for the value they bring to our community due to their life experience. They also emphasized the need for service agencies to recognize that low-income seniors have unique needs and require support in housing, healthcare, and other areas.

KEY TAKE AWAYS

Older adults are now considered to be those sixty years or older and often qualifies people for community services under the Older Americans Act. Gerontologists and researchers commonly divide older adulthood into specific sub-categories such as active, healthy, and recently retired, those tending to experience more health shifts or lifestyle changes, and those tending to face a higher likelihood of functional limitations or required support.

The question is what matters most for adults as they face the latter stage of their lives? Looking at the proposed aging roadmap, what do we see as the key items, and where they might fall on the roadmap?

Commission on Aging Proposed Focus FY 2026-2027



SECURITY

- Basic needs (housing, food, health, utilities, clothing, care, transportation) to be affordable and attainable and the opportunity to stay engaged in the community through paid work.
- Knowing and having access to all the resources available to support older adults.
- Financial Security in California stands as the top priority for voters, who face mounting challenges in securing their savings against a high cost of living and preserving their home equity. High taxes and daily expenses prevent the accumulation of a solid retirement fund in the current climate that severely limit expectations for a comfortable retirement.

SAFETY – Being safe in their homes as well as their community (Elder abuse prevention & awareness, protection for vulnerable adults, fall prevention, scammers, and fraud) and being prepared to be safe during disasters (fire at home or in community, earthquake, excessive heat).

HEALTH & WELLNESS – Timely access to support that will maintain & improve physical, mental, social, and emotional health & well-being today and for future decades.

CAREGIVING THAT WORKS – Access to the support & resources necessary to provide responsive & manageable care while also tending to their own well-being.

INCLUSION & EQUITY – Improving access to all information, resources, and opportunities for greater social connection and feeling connected, included, supported that can be easily found and accessed especially for those socially isolated, digitally challenged, English as second language, and facing financial challenges.

CARE COORDINATION – Collaboration between medial & social services to provide proactive, seamless, prevention-focused, and person-centered support for age friend health systems, improving care, supporting providers, and maximizing independence.

STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION – Identify & address existing resources, services, synergies, and collaboration opportunities to enhance services–

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – Identify and address challenges & barriers to participation to ensure access to range of social community engagement opportunities that promote active living, reduce isolation, and provide enriching experiences with others across all groups & generations. And utilize proven outreach & engagement strategies in decision making process.

TRANSPORTATION - Accessible & safe transportation to quality-of-life activities & services being available for older adults & people with disabilities regardless of where they live.

HOUSING – Affordability and impact of the cost of housing (ownership or rental, utilities, insurance, maintenance) on net income and ability to pay for other financial needs.

FUNDING – A key driver that will directly impact outcomes when funding is focused on targeted actionable objectives.

What do we want to identify to the County?

- 1) Security
 - a. Housing
 - b. Financial
 - c. Food
- 2) Safety
 - a. Home
 - b. Fire & disasters
 - c. Elder abuse
- 3) Fall prevention
- 4) Social isolation
- 5) Caregivers
 - a. Respite care
 - b. Labor supply
- 6) Addressing the needs of the forgotten middle.
- 7) Housing (Nowhere to go) 2026
- 8) Older adult community engagement recommendations.
- 9) Collaboration of social services and health care stakeholders to support older adult neighbors experiencing homelessness
- 10) Awareness and access
 - a. Health care & resources
 - b. Transportation resources
 - c. Older adult resources
- 11) Assessments
 - a. HHS four-year assessment 2023
 - b. Public Health assessment 2025
 - c. Aging & Disability assessment 2025
 - d. San Geronimo assessment 2025
 - e. MCIL assessment 2025
 - f. Missing Middle assessment 2026
 - g. Five-Year California Master Plan on Aging assessment - 2026
- 12) Demographic - California Aging – Marin County dashboards
 - i. Marin County
 - ii. Geographic area
- 13) Other organizations (e.g. Aging Action Initiatives)