

AGE WELL

Boulder
County:

Action
Plan

September
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A MESSAGE FROM ROBIN BOHANNAN

Dear Boulder County Residents,

We are experiencing an unprecedented change in our population: the proportion of older adults (people age 60 and older) is greater and growing faster than ever before. We're living longer, healthier lives. And our policies need to catch up. Our society isn't structured to help us thrive in our community as we age or when we care for loved ones who are experiencing health challenges. We need to advocate for services and social policies that help people make the most of their longer lives and stay active members of our community.

In May 2018, the Boulder County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and its partners continued a journey to gather stakeholder input as part of the Boulder County Age Well Strategic Plan process with the goal of making Boulder County an even better place for residents of all ages and abilities to live and thrive. The planning process shifted due to the pandemic in March 2020 to meet the needs of older adults and caregivers during this time, by focusing on the question, "What does aging well in Boulder County look like right now?" Older adults make rich contributions to our community. We want to ensure our older residents can age in the community with access to needed resources and opportunities to engage socially to combat social isolation, which was further highlighted during the pandemic.

The Boulder County Age Well Action Plan is the culmination of inclusive planning efforts and outlines how we are responding to the identified needs of our residents. The plan has grown out of service gap identification and a comprehensive community engagement process that involved nearly 1,500 community members and stakeholders about strengths and needs of the community.

The next step in this process is implementation. The Age Well Planning Team will continue working with existing partners around aging and caregiving issues, while also exploring how the network can expand to partners who aren't traditionally viewed as part of aging services. We invite you to connect with this process to advocate for the needs of older adults, informal or family caregivers, and formal or paid caregivers. The Boulder County Age Well Strategic Plan will be back on track for 2022 with quantitative and qualitative data collection to guide our path forward in a post-COVID world.

We are all aging. This action plan lays the foundation for building the community's response to a shifting demographic, providing opportunity for our residents to age well in our community as our community continues to recover.

Sincerely,



Robin Bohannon

Director, Boulder County Community Services

INTRODUCTION

The fourth iteration of the Age Well Boulder County Strategic Plan was set to be released in March of 2020. Like many organizations, our focus shifted due to the pandemic to meet the immediate needs of the community. Although we have undertaken community-wide planning efforts in the past, this time was quite different and not simply due to the pandemic. Aging is garnering greater societal attention than ever before. There is growing focus from the healthcare sector and healthcare policies on the social factors that contribute to physical and mental health, and the age-friendly communities movement is encouraging communities, states, and even the federal government to realize that "age-friendly" solutions are multi-disciplinary and multi-sector. An age-friendly community is friendly to all ages. COVID-19 has further exposed the oftentimes pervasive, silent, and harming impacts of ageism. The need to end ageism has perhaps never been more urgent, with COVID-era memes characterizing COVID as a "boomer remover," and critical care standards that move older adults to the back of the triage line.

Timeline and Development

The planning team began gathering data on, perspectives from, and stories of lived experiences of older adults, family and informal caregivers, and our professional communities to understand and articulate many of our challenges in May 2018. The planning team consisted of leadership from the Boulder County Area Agency on Aging, City of Boulder, City of Longmont, City of Louisville, City of Lafayette, and the Town of Erie.

The [Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults](#) and Community Conversations are foundational pieces of our strategic planning work that occur every four years. Unlike in previous strategic planning efforts, the information collected was synthesized into the [Aging Well in Boulder County: Past, Present, Future Report \(PPF\)](#) in the summer of 2019. The purpose of the PPF is to communicate demographic trends, perceptions, and experiences of older adults, caregivers, and service providers in Boulder County. The PPF helped inform local dialogues and planning activities.

In November 2019, the Age Well Boulder County Stakeholder Summit was held to engage the aging network in solutions-focused conversations. Stakeholder meetings, informant interviews, and an online survey were conducted to engage more than 200 individuals in this solutions-focused discussion, a new step as part of this community strategic planning effort. The consultant engaged in this effort, Joining Vision and Action (JVA), delivered their report to the BCAA in late January 2020.

Community Engagement Summary



Boulder County older adults

CASOA (representative of older adults across Boulder county)



Presentations

Past, Present Future Report



Sessions

Community Conversations



Organizations

Key Informant Survey



Participants

Summit

In March 2020, the Aging Well Planning Team decided to shift from strategic planning to action planning efforts to best address the immediate needs of the community due to COVID-19. This was clear in the broader aging network as well, including with our funded providers. What we are presenting in this document is interim direction from our Age Well Boulder County strategic planning efforts to reflect on COVID and to set short-term priorities. Priorities for each community within Boulder County may look different based on needs, funding, and community feedback. [This is a brief look at the shift in focus taken by the BCAA.](#)

The Pandemic Focus

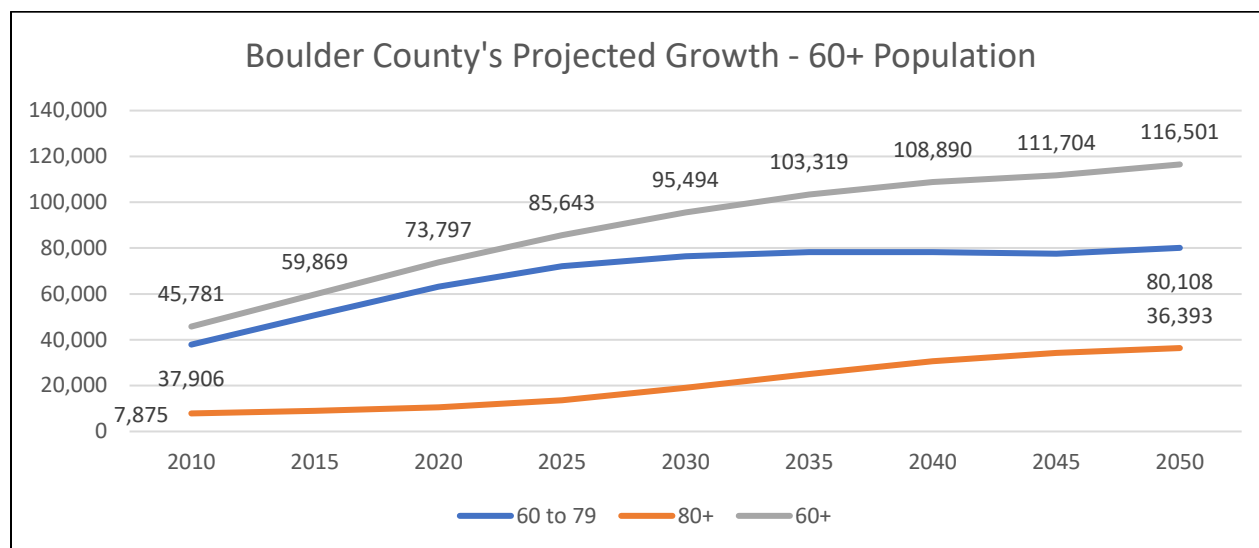
In discussions with the Planning Team regarding the necessary shift in focus to services and resources offered to the community a few foundational elements emerged.

- **Economic stability** is a social determinant of health that addresses elements such as poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and housing instability. During this time, addressing the basic needs of our community has become more crucial.
- While we and our partners saw a flurry of additional requests for assistance at the beginning of the pandemic, we were additionally concerned about those who are **socially isolated** without information about available resources. As a result, our **outreach** efforts moved to better reach isolated community members who may not know about available services.
- Reporting of the pandemic impacts brought forth stronger ageist language. As a result, our **anti-ageism** work has increased during this time.

As we move forward, one of the questions we continue to ask is, “**What does aging well in Boulder County look like right now?**” The answer to this question has shifted in ways we could not imagine over the past year. The initial, major shift was moving from in person to virtual services. As we continue to ground in this question, we prioritize addressing the basic needs of older adults in our community by continuing to recover from and address the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. Priorities include food security, housing stability, and overall economic stability and as these are addressed, exploring how we best support our aging community by going beyond the basics.

We Are Aging

Boulder County is experiencing an unprecedented change in its population: the proportion of older adult residents (people age 60 and older) is greater and growing faster than ever before. Between 2020 and 2050, the county's overall population increase is projected to be 33%. Compare that against the older adult population increase of 58% and the 80+ population increase of 244% over the same time period.



As a community, we may not be prepared for this demographic shift. Many of us and our clients, friends, and family members are victim to and perpetrators of explicit and implicit ageism. Older adults work, volunteer, and contribute to our community, yet too often those of us who are older are seen as deficits and drains on society rather than the assets we are. In addition, many of our legacy systems, policies, and ways of thinking are not oriented to meet the evolving scale and scope of aging-related challenges before us in areas ranging from transportation to health care.

Through a common “Age-Friendly Communities” framework developed by AARP and the World Health Organization (WHO), communities are drawing attention to shifting demographics occurring across the globe. Boulder County received the Age-Friendly Community distinction from AARP and the WHO in June 2016. We have adopted the framework of AARP and the WHO’s age-friendly communities initiative to align our strategic framework with that of hundreds of other communities around the world, including many here in Colorado under the Lifelong Colorado initiative. The framework for this plan consists of core domains regarding the quality of and improvement opportunities for our community’s physical and social environments as well as systems and services. The age-friendly movement is bringing residents, stakeholders, and the broader aging network together to understand, advocate, and enhance services to address community challenges and better support healthy aging for us all.

A lot of work is now happening at local and state levels around better understanding, addressing, and planning for ways in which we design systems, policies, programs, and services – and the ways in which we think and communicate – work that is more inclusive, responsive, and respectful of older adults.

PATH FORWARD

Guided by the wealth of data collected over the past decade in concert with this strategic plan, individuals and organizations across Boulder County can be a part of this process which acknowledges the diversity of experience of older age and how it contributes to our vibrant community. Boulder County and the communities that lie within are facing what lies ahead as our demographics shift and work to make aging well a priority in every facet of our communities. We will strive to collectively continue to provide the best in public service by meeting our clients where they are, with the services driven by client needs.

Participants in the last stages of the strategic plan process were asked to generate actionable and achievable ideas by sharing their perspectives and ideas to move the needle on the issues experienced by older adults and informal caregivers in Boulder County. What participants shared directly shaped the path forward and will subsequently shape other community strategic, master, and comprehensive plans, as well as organizational strategic plans.

We see tremendous opportunity to harness the strengths of our organizations, the community's mission-driven workforce, and our residents to reimagine a more age-friendly future. This plan is a call to action for our community to work together so that we may all age well. Every member of our community influences the lives of older adults. We invite the community to join us in acting on the priorities outlined here and in the future Age Well Boulder County Strategic Plan – to shape them and own them as a community.

GUIDING FRAMEWORKS, PRINCIPLES, AND THEMES

Within the most recent planning process, our team shifted from conversations about addressing the needs of the communities within four quadrants – basic needs, personal connections and community involvement, health and wellness, and aging in community – to the eight domains of livability as part of our Age-Friendly Communities work. The [PPF](#) was structured around the domain framework and included a focus on family and informal caregivers, LGBTQ+ older adults, long-term care residents, low-income residents, mountain residents, and racial and ethnic minority older adults.

As part of the Age Well Boulder County Stakeholder Summit, 130 professionals and advocates attended and participated in conversations centered around Community Living, Health, Housing, Mobility and Transportation, and Support Services.

In exploring the eight domains of livability through the CASOA, Community Conversations, Key Informant Survey, and the Summit to gather feedback, several recurring themes emerged with implications for solutions that crosscut any one domain. Themes include:

- A need for **buy-in from entities** to consider older adults and family and informal caregivers in their work in the community, which might show up as:
 - A need for **enhanced collaboration** across agencies, departments, organizations, and other stakeholders
 - A need for internal **education/cross-sector training** to increase understanding of the system of support
- A need to better **reach isolated older adults**
- A need to better meet the **needs of lower- and middle-income older adults** who are unable to keep up with the high cost of living in Boulder County
- A need to increase **leadership support** of age-friendly efforts
- A need to **address ageism**

Broad, crosscutting solutions emerged from the stakeholder engagement process in late 2019. These proposed, community-driven solutions are foundational to progress within the broad aging network.

- **Policy**
 - Mandate/enhance coordination across agencies, departments
 - Identify and advocate for policy decisions that positively impact (or consider) people living on fixed incomes; and/or advocate against policies that have a negative impact
- **Practice**
 - Research best practices for reaching isolated older adults and share with stakeholders, including identification of places of frequent access
 - Increase awareness of negative impacts of ageism and provide access to training that promotes an age-friendly lens
- **Resource Flows**
 - Identify and implement strategies to increase provider dialogue and learning, including with surrounding counties (e.g., lessons learned, identification of resources/services)
 - Compile lessons learned from other age-friendly communities and distribute to relevant stakeholders for identification of implementation implications in work
- **Relationships**
 - Build and strengthen relationships with county and municipal leadership and elected officials to increase buy-in with age-friendly efforts

ACTION PLAN

In this time of a global pandemic, the focus of the aging network has shifted to meet the immediate needs of our community. Pre-pandemic, when budgets were increasing and social distancing wasn't part of our daily vocabulary, each of the domains of livability was set to have a place in the Age Well Boulder County Strategic Plan. Shifting needs in the community combined with decreased budgets means a need to focus community efforts and funding where they are most needed and will have the greatest impact. We acknowledge that this list of priorities will shift as our world continues to change. This list is not presented in order of importance, as each are critical to healthy aging.

- Communication & Information
- Social Participation
- Respect & Social Inclusion
- Economic Stability
 - Food Insecurity
 - Housing Stability
 - Safe, Reliable Transportation Access
 - Community Services

Communication and Information

- Assets
 - Numerous services and resources in the community
 - Engaged community members and providers wanting to ensure communication is effective, and trying to identify alternative, innovative ways to reach older adults
- Challenges
 - Lack of knowledge of available services and resources, both among older adults and within the provider community
 - Disparate and difficult-to-navigate resource guides that are not always accessible
 - Lack of information available in languages besides English, particularly in Spanish
 - Lack of internet/technology in some areas

Communication and Information – Identified Solutions

Practice

Support development of centralized transportation information (e.g., call center, database)
Pilot provision of satellite resources (e.g., via library, gas stations)
Engage nontraditional referral sources by providing education on services/resources (e.g., salons)
Expand access to, use of, and comfort with technology

Resource Flows

Identify needed alternative modalities to promote better access to available information (e.g., video, audio, online); would require a coordinated effort
Develop online tool to help guide decision-making among caregivers when encountering crisis situations
Examine feasibility of “outgoing 2011” (i.e. when a person turns 60, they receive information on services)
Increase public awareness campaigns about what is available to older adults (e.g., library, newspaper, public transportation)

Relationships

Provide a venue to continue ongoing dialogue between stakeholders (i.e., regular opportunities to gather organizational representatives for resource sharing and conversation)
Connect with faith communities to reach harder-to-reach older adults and increase awareness of broader community

Social Participation

- Assets
 - Vibrant community with many opportunities for social engagement, including the number of arts, culture, and education organizations across the county
 - Generally active and healthy community with interest in health and well-being with programs to reflect this interest (e.g., walking groups)
 - Most of Boulder county's older adults consider the community a good place to live
 - Municipal Senior Services
- Challenges
 - Lack of awareness of the activities that are available, particularly among older adults not connected to senior centers and other providers
 - Difficulties reaching and engaging harder-to-reach populations and socially isolated older adults

Social Participation – Identified Solutions

Policy

Support and promote organizational policies that prioritize intergenerational programmatic designs

Practice

Identify deliberate strategies to engage solo agers (i.e., expand programming to those without family nearby)

Reconceptualize the term “senior centers” (e.g., to “Age Well Centers”)

Better utilize libraries as a community resources for older adults (e.g., social worker collaboration, free classes)

Provide education on fraud and financial literacy

Resource Flows

Increase awareness of available social opportunities

Relationships

Create peer support models whereby communities are connected to brainstorm solutions to address isolation experienced by older adults

Respect and Social Inclusion

- Assets
 - Access to educational opportunities, including through opportunities afforded by the University of Colorado and Front Range Community College
 - Changing the Narrative Initiative, which is the statewide effort to improve how people talk and think about aging
 - Countywide and regional workgroups to address elder abuse (Elder Justice Coalition)
 - Extensive network of support services
 - Dementia training opportunities and growing community education
 - Detectives within municipalities specifically focused on older adults
 - Work of the District Attorney's Office
- Challenges
 - Ageism and negative perceptions of older adults that permeate the broader community and seem to influence 1) the attention paid to the needs of older adults and 2) the ways in which organizations are prioritizing older adults
 - Limited availability of deliberate and meaningful intergenerational opportunities
 - Lack of financial literacy among older adults
 - Limited affordable supports for financial power of attorney (FPOA) and medical power of attorney (MPOA)
 - Serving vulnerable, at-risk older adults that may not want to be served
 - Misalignment of standards between the Mandatory Reporting Statute and APS Standards
 - Availability of mental health supports
 - Availability of prevention/safety net services accessible prior to crisis situations

Respect and Social Inclusion – Identified Solutions

Policy

Incorporate an age-friendly lens and language into new policies
Improve statewide public guardianship policies

Practice

Promote the development and adoption of intentional volunteer and recreational opportunities that bring younger and older residents together
Expand safety net services focused on prevention/designed to allow older adults to age in their community

Resource Flows

Increase education to community members, service providers, and elected officials to raise understanding of what it means to be “age-friendly”
Identify creative and innovative means to reach vulnerable older adults, particularly around fraud (e.g., including information on utility bills)

Relationships

Develop mechanism to better reach older adults that are isolated
Identify strategies to improve relationships between those in more remote communities and law enforcement
Strengthen working relationship among law enforcement, emergency services, APS, and District Attorney's Office
Increase prioritization of older adults (i.e., through education and awareness) with heads of law enforcement agencies to align resources with demand

Economic Stability

This topic was not discussed as a stand-alone during the stakeholder engagement work of late 2019. The following is a synthesis of information related to economic stability from our stakeholder engagement efforts.

Policy

Transportation

Lower costs of transportation options

Housing

Identify strategies to address rising property taxes

Work to offer incentives, such as tax breaks, for individuals participating in innovative solutions (e.g., co-housing)

Map available housing stock/need and advocate for waivers to address disparities (i.e., Medicaid waiver rules, voucher programs, federal housing mandates, planning fees to be income-based)

Develop programs that support downsizing without penalizing homeowners (e.g. Homestead Exemption)

Increase funding for personal care services and providers

Civic Participation and Employment

Identify opportunities to increase availability of flexible jobs (i.e. part-time jobs)

Community and Health Services

Develop or incentivize policies that support health, not intervention

Practice

Housing

Identify strategies to increase in-home care services and supports, including methods to address the gap in insurance coverage, specifically Medicaid

Resource Flows

Housing

Raise knowledge/awareness among community members *and* providers regarding the resources and services that are available, as well as the need within Boulder County

Increase loans to address code violations among older adult homeowners

Identify strategies (i.e., funding) to increase tenant attorneys in housing cases

Civic Participation and Employment

Host a career fair targeting older adults

Community and Health Services

Fund respite for caregivers

Increase financial supports for in-home care

Increase awareness of available resources among older adults

Relationships

None reported relevant to Economic Stability.

NEXT STEPS

This Action Plan is an interim document, meant to help guide the aging network through the end of the pandemic and into community recovery. Our Age Well Boulder County Strategic Plan process will begin again in 2022 with the Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults (CASOA), Community Conversations, and Key Informant Survey. We also look forward to sharing additional iterations of the PPF, which has been an incredible advocacy tool used frequently by community partners as they tell the story of aging in Boulder County, advocate for older adults and family/informal caregivers, and apply for additional funding. While many items from the Age Well Summit are included in our *Goals Matrix*, many items will be considered or addressed once the community is in recovery from the pandemic. Please stay tuned and make your voice heard!

By recognizing the population changes that are before us, by listening to the perspectives and experiences of older Boulder County residents, and by better understanding the resources and solutions our community has and that our community needs, we hope to see a strengthening of multi-stakeholder coordination, collaboration, and advocacy for a more age-friendly community. The voices of our older residents, which are growing in number, are asking for it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Boulder County Age Well Action Plan process would not have been possible without the contribution and dedication from our partners, including those who are new to this process and have now recognized their impact on the lives of older adults and informal caregivers.

Thank you to the older adults, caregivers, and many advocates from our community who shared their experiences and hopes for the future of Boulder County as part of this process.

Thank you to **Joining Vision and Action (JVA)** for working with the planning team to design an engagement process focused on creating new partnerships and exploring and setting actions to accomplish community goals around aging.

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Government Partners

Boulder County Adult Protective Services	City of Longmont
Boulder County Aging Advisory Council	City of Louisville
Boulder County Area Agency on Aging	Denver Regional Council of Governments
Boulder County Community Action Programs	Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council
Boulder County District Attorney's Office	High Plains Library District
Boulder County Public Health	Longmont Housing Authority
Boulder County Sheriff's Office	Louisville Fire Department
Boulder Housing Partners	Louisville Recreation and Senior Center
Boulder Veterans Center	Mountain View Fire and Rescue
City of Boulder	Town of Erie
City of Boulder Police Department	Town of Lyons
City of Boulder Public Library	Town of Nederland
City of Lafayette	

Community Partners

50 Plus Marketplace	Emergency Family Assistance Association
A Day Place	FirstLight Home Care
Accent Care Hospice	Folsom Family Dentist
Active Minds	Gold Medal Waters, Inc.
Adult Care Management	Halcyon Hospice and Palliative Care
Aging Services Foundation of Boulder County	Harmony Senior Referrals
Always Best Care	Home and Place Project
Association for Community Living	Home Care of the Rockies
Audio Information Network	Home Instead Senior Care
Avista Adventist Hospital	Hope Coalition
Boulder Acupuncture and Herbs	Hover Senior Living Community
Boulder Chamber	Hudson Integrative
Boulder Community Food Share	IntelliRide
Boulder Community Health	Latino Chamber of Commerce
Boulder County Legal Services	Life Spring Healing Arts
Boulder Creek Transportation	Longmont Meals on Wheels
Boulder Canyon Health & Rehabilitation	Longs Peak Hospital
Boulder Meals on Wheels	Lyft
Boulder Medical Center	Mental Health Partners
Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District	Mobility 4 All
Boulder Nutrition and Exercise	Mountain Peak Life
Boulder Transport	Nederland Food Pantry
Boulder Transportation Connections	One Colorado
Boulder Valley Care Network	OUR Center
Brains at Work	Out Boulder County
Bridge House	Peak to Peak Housing and Human Services Alliance
Bross Street Assisted Living	Personal Assistance Services of Colorado
Care Partner Counseling	Project Angel Heart
Carol Spar, Psy.D.	Project HOPE
Center for People with Disabilities	Rainbow Elders
Centura Health	Regional Transportation District (RTD)
Christ the Servant Lutheran Church	Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley
CircleTalk	Salud Clinic
Coal Creek Meals on Wheels	Senior Reach
Colorado Community Health Alliance	Seniors Blue Book
Colorado Legal Services	Seniors Helping Seniors
Colorado Recovery Outpatient Coordinator	Sister Carmen
Community Cycles	Sunshine Home Share Colorado
Community Foundation of Boulder County	The Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County
Community Reach Center	The Martin Law Office
Cultivate	TRU Community Care
D/J Brush Associates	TRU PACE
Dementia-Friendly Boulder County	United Way
Dental Aid	Via Mobility
Denver Hospice	Vintage Moves, LLC
Dignity Hospice	YMCA of Northern Colorado
eGo CarShare	zTrip