

ACTION PLAN

2023-2028

# AGE-FRIENDLY PIKES PEAK



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PREPARED BY  
AGING DYNAMICS

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# Letter from El Paso County



## Board of County Commissioners

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### Board of County Commissioners

Holly Williams, District 1  
Carrie Geltner, District 2  
Stan VanderWerf, District 3  
Longinos Gonzalez, Jr., District 4  
Cami Bremer, District 5

June 14, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

In partnership with Innovations in Aging Collaborative (IIAC), I am happy to support the designation of El Paso County as an Age-Friendly County through the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Our local leaders are committed to creating a livable and inclusive community where residents of all ages can thrive, including older adults.

In El Paso County, we are service-focused. We will work collaboratively with local communities, businesses, and residents to identify and address the challenges and opportunities of aging in order to better serve our older adults. Though it is not just older adults who will benefit from this designation. An Age-Friendly County benefits all residents by promoting healthy aging, social and economic participation, and community connection. By joining the Age-Friendly Network, we hope to learn from the experiences of other likeminded leaders, while also sharing our local strengths and success stories.

Since 2016, IIAC has been a trusted local partner in promoting healthy aging and improving the quality of life for seniors in the Pikes Peak Region. Their work has been instrumental in fostering social inclusion and connection, promoting accessible communities, and improving access to housing, healthcare, and other essential services.

Together through this partnership we will explore sustainable ways to design local communities for the support of adults as they age-in-place with dignity, respect, and independence. I look forward to an improved quality of life for all residents within an Age-Friendly El Paso County, Colorado.

Respectfully,

Cami Bremer  
Board Chair, El Paso County Commissioners

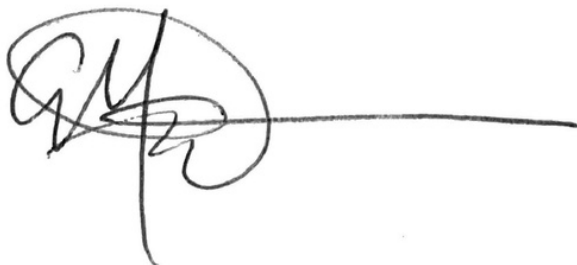
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# Innovations in Aging Collaborative

It is an honor to lead Innovations in Aging Collaborative as the new Executive Director, and what an exciting time to step into my role. The Age-Friendly Pikes Peak action plan is the culmination of months of community effort. Together with Rachel Cohen and her team at Aging Dynamics, the Innovations in Aging Collaborative board, our Age-Friendly Committee, and the many dedicated volunteers in our workgroups, I am thrilled for the release of this action plan and the renewal of our engagement with the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. This plan reflects The City of Colorado Springs's continued commitment to creating a livable environment that supports healthy aging, social inclusion, and civic engagement for everyone who grows up and grows older with us. It also prepares our organization for a broader Age-Friendly initiative across El Paso County, and I look forward to these growing partnerships.

The Age-Friendly Pikes Peak action plan builds on the overwhelming success of Age-Friendly Colorado Springs, which focused on creating a community that is accessible, inclusive, and safe for all ages. Our new plan expands on those previous efforts, both geographically and through a redesigned implementation strategy. We have outlined updated goals and tactics, along with the identification of untapped opportunities to serve our mission. For example, through the new key theme of innovation, we look to lead AgeTech initiatives in the Pikes Peak region. Tech-based solutions will not only benefit our work through data-driven decision-making and opportunities to scale efficiently, but also lay the groundwork for sustainable outcomes by reducing the digital divide for older adults and increasing our ability to reach into underserved rural areas.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of Age-Friendly Pikes Peak, as well as those who are committed to implementing this action plan together throughout our region. This is truly a community effort, and the success of this initiative belongs to all of us. We could not do it without you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'E' and 'M' followed by a long horizontal line.

Erin Maruzzella  
Executive Director, Innovations in Aging Collaborative



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# Letter from Colorado Springs



John W. Suthers  
Mayor

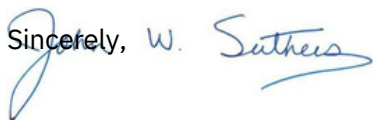
May 1, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

It has been my pleasure to support a partnership between the City of Colorado Springs and Innovations in Aging Collaborative (IIAC) for almost a decade. In March 2016, I was proud to announce the initial designation of Colorado Springs as an AARP Age-Friendly City. As my final term as mayor comes to an end, I am encouraged by the continued momentum of IIAC as they usher in a second consecutive Age-Friendly designation for our city. Our aging population is growing rapidly, and it is essential that we create an environment that supports the needs of our older residents. As a community, we have a responsibility to ensure that our seniors can age with dignity, respect, and independence.

Through multiple listening sessions, an active Age-Friendly summit, and countless hours of work donated by dedicated volunteers, IIAC has focused the brightest local minds on the future of aging-in-community, and what we might achieve together in the next five years. By creating an environment that is accessible and inclusive for all ages, we show respect for our older residents and ensure that our community remains vibrant and thriving for generations to come.

The innovative programs of IIAC, along with the work of convening elected officials, community leaders, and partner organizations have together been instrumental in promoting healthy aging, reducing isolation, and improving the quality of life for seniors in the Pikes Peak region. IIAC remain local leaders in Age-Friendly design, helping to build Colorado Springs into a livable community for everyone who grows up and grows older here. I look forward to watching the Age-Friendly program of IIAC continue to flourish in Colorado Springs.

Sincerely, 

John W. Suthers  
Mayor of Colorado Springs

30 South Nevada Avenue, Suite 601 • TEL 719-385-5900  
Mailing Address: Post Office Box 1575, Mail Code 610 • Colorado Springs, Colorado 80901-1575

# Contributors

## IIAC Board & Age-Friendly Committee Members

Name:	Groups:	Key:
Barbara Yalich	B	😊 Age-Friendly Committee
BJ Scott	B	🪑 Work Group Chair
Bruce Barron	🪑	B - Board Member
Dan O'Rear	B	
David Lord	😊 🪑 B	
Dayton Romero	😊 B	
Deb Kenny	😊 B	
Gail Nehls	B	
Hayley Gleason	😊 B	
Indy Frazee	B	
Jonathan Liebert	B	
Judy Scott	😊 B	
Lee Patke	B	
Lynne Jones	😊 🪑 B	
Magdalene Lim	😊 🪑 B	
Martha Barton	B	
Mary Duran	B	
Paula Pollet	😊 🪑 B	
Shawn Raintree	B	
Terri Cassidy	😊 🪑 B	

## Work Group Members

Name:	
Anne Jensen	Laura Douglas
Annie Hewitt	Maile Gray
Becky Medved	Marie Lambert
Carol Albert	Marla Luckey
Carolyn Matijevic	Mary Anne Kluge
Catherine Duarte	Melissa Marts
Derek Wilson	Michael Gallagher
Elisa Santos	Mary Galusha
Jan Johnson	Mike Neumann
Jennifer Horn	Naomi Folkerts
Jessica Brown	Pamela Haugard
Jim Scott	Pat Todaro
John Hood	Penny Whitney
Judith Rice-Jones	Rachel Martinez
Kathy Clinton	Sally Rothstein
Kathy Miller	Sheryl Scheuer
Kelsey Danekas	Susan Davies
Kent Mathews	Teresa Ornelas
Kim Bundgaard	Valerie Anders



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For nearly fifteen years, the Innovations in Aging Collaborative (IIAC) has been devoted to its mission of creating a more Age-Friendly Colorado Springs. To do this, we have worked closely with community members, the City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County elected officials, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), Pikes Peak Area Agency on Aging (PPAAA), and many other community partners.

During this time, Colorado Springs's population has continued to grow significantly; in fact, since 1992, the Colorado Springs population has increased by more than 69%. The segment of the population over age 65 is growing faster than the segment age 18 and younger, according to the State Demographer's office. The significant increase in the older adult population is also reflected in wider El Paso County. From 2021 to 2031, it is predicted that El Paso County's population of 65 to 74-year-olds will increase by 18.9% and the populations between 75-84 years old and over 85 years old will increase by 59.4% and 52.5% respectively. These population trends are happening as both Colorado Springs and El Paso County experience an increasing cost of living and sky-rocketing home values.

These demographic changes have several implications for older adults. One implication is the adverse impact of inflation on financial health and housing stability for long term residents living on fixed incomes, including many older adults. Additionally, as a critical mass of the workforce retires, further strain is placed on current labor shortages in essential professions such as healthcare. Within this context, we invited residents, businesses, nonprofits, elected officials, and community partners to help develop a plan for the next five years of our Age-Friendly efforts. Looking towards the future, IIAC plans to build upon the success of Age-Friendly Colorado Springs to grow sustainable initiatives throughout the Pikes Peak Region.

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## The Action Planning Process

To facilitate the action planning process, IIAC contracted Aging Dynamics to work in collaboration with the Age-Friendly Pikes Peak Steering Committee.

Hundreds of community members, leaders, businesses, government representatives, and nonprofits participated in the Age-Friendly Pikes Peak action planning process. Over the course of several months, we drew upon nearly 15 years of Age-Friendly collaboration as well as our collective expertise – from the personal experience of being a caregiver to the professional expertise of housing development and park design. The community listening sessions and Summit were pivotal in determining the true needs and interests of our community, unearthing the key themes of our Age-Friendly work and informing the selection of five strategic focus areas.

### Age-Friendly Action Plan Approach

- Outreach, Brainstorming, Listening, Researching, and Creating Solutions
- Recruit a Broad Representation of Community Members and Entities to Participate in Colorado Springs and El Paso County
- 5 Community Listening Sessions
- 1 Age-Friendly SUMMIT with 120 participants
- 50 community members participated in WORK GROUPS focused on the Strategic Focus Areas

The focus areas in the 2023–2028 action plan are housing, workforce, health and wellness, Age-Friendly environment, and social connections and communications. Fifty people volunteered their time and expertise to collaborate within unique work groups assigned to each strategic focus area. Work groups considered diverse aspects of each focus area to identify the needs and opportunities that most strongly justified the investment of available resources in Colorado Springs and in El Paso County, and leveraging partnerships for the most impact. This process resulted in the action steps presented in this report.



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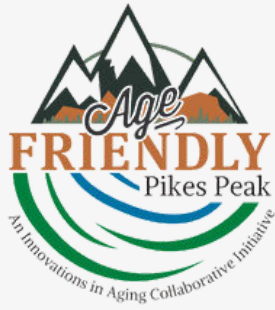
## Moving Forward- Together

The Age-Friendly Pikes Peak action plan includes 5 strategic focus areas, 15 key strategies, and 60 action steps.

Throughout the report, we reference community input and third-party research to demonstrate how we arrived at our conclusions. In the action plan, you will see how strategies naturally overlap and reinforce one another. Every step of the way, community engagement and strong partnerships are vital components of success, and we welcome the collaboration of everyone who works, plays, and lives here. We also anticipate that unforeseen challenges and opportunities will require the work we do together to evolve.

Whatever comes, we have seen the strength of Colorado Springs and El Paso County when our community comes together. We look forward to making our region a more Age-Friendly Pikes Peak for everyone who grows up and grows older.





# Action Plan Priorities 2023–2028

## Strategic Focus Areas

Community input informed the selection of five strategic Age-Friendly focus areas. Each focus area has three distinct strategies.

**Housing:** Accessible, affordable, and safe housing is central to an Age-Friendly community and benefits all residents. This means supporting aging-in-community, thinking creatively about existing inventory and living arrangements, and developing a wide array of housing options with universal design principles.

**Health and Wellness:** Colorado Springs and El Paso County residents need more choices and accessibility when seeking mental, physical, and emotional health services. Informal caregivers are a critical, yet often overlooked member of care teams that require additional support and resources.

**Age-Friendly Environment:** People of all ages and abilities should be able to easily and safely move between their homes, outdoor recreation areas, and public spaces. We can create Age-Friendly spaces by integrating universal design principles, helping programs become more inclusive, and building on existing solutions.

**Social Connection & Communication:** We enable civic and social connection by lowering those barriers that prevent healthy participation. This includes deliberately reaching people through diverse communication channels and ensuring they experience the felt-sense of belonging in our community. It is also imperative that community members, elected officials, and public and private entities have a deep understanding of what an Age-Friendly community is, which requires ongoing education and information sharing.

**Workforce:** An Age-Friendly community recognizes the valuable contributions that older adults bring to the workplace, creates inclusive intergenerational workplaces, and provides the training and upskilling necessary for professional transitions. Additionally, workforce shortages in health care, long term care, customer service and more require a focus on recruitment, retention, and training.

## Key Age-Friendly Themes

These themes intersect across strategic focus areas.

**Intergenerational Connections:** Bringing together youth and older adults benefits mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing.

**Diverse and Inclusive Outreach:** It is vital to provide opportunities for all who grow up and grow older in Colorado Springs and El Paso County to share their perspectives, and to weigh those perspectives equally.

**Education and Awareness:** Educate community leaders, elected officials, and partner organizations so that we can promote deeper understanding of age-friendly needs and solutions.

**Policy and Advocacy:** System-wide change is possible when leaders and advocates help create community buy-in and political change.

**Partnerships:** We will leverage the resources, knowledge, and efforts of our region to sustainably and responsibly create positive change.

**Ageism:** Ageism refers to the internalized beliefs that we have about age— whether about younger people, older people, or even ourselves. To see our neighbors and ourselves as individuals without the lens of stereotyping, we will work to educate ourselves and one another about the contributions of all ages.

**Innovation:** We will utilize cross-industry collaboration with leaders in industry-specific technological advancements in order to reduce isolation, increase access to services, and increase efficiencies in program delivery across all of our strategic focus areas.



120 El Paso community members, leaders, businesses, elected officials, and nonprofits participated in the November 2022 Summit.



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# Background



## Age-Friendly Pikes Peak Initiative

Age-Friendly Pikes Peak is an initiative of Innovations in Aging Collaborative (IIAC). These efforts require involvement from all sectors and types of entities to share knowledge, connections, resources and more. Innovations in Aging Collaborative works closely with community members, the City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County staff and elected officials, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), Pikes Peak Area Agency on Aging (PPAAA), and many other community partners. IIAC is proud to advance the work of Age-Friendly Colorado Springs exploring expansion throughout El Paso County and ensuring that communities are inclusive and accessible places where all people can grow up and grow older with opportunities to live a healthy, active, and engaged life.



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## History of Age-Friendly Pikes Peak

In 2009, Colorado Springs began a dynamic community-wide conversation about the importance of being Age-Friendly that has been expanding ever since. This conversation revolves around how to make the Pikes Peak region a place that supports community members at every stage of life. Planning discussions explored topics ranging from the built environment, including sidewalks that are both connected by curb cuts and wide enough to be accessible for both double-wide strollers and wheelchairs, to creating opportunities for intergenerational connections, and ensuring residents feel connected within their community.

These conversations were spearheaded by what would eventually become Innovations in Aging Collaborative (IIAC), formed by Barbara Yalich and BJ Scott. Through a series of community convenings and workshops, hundreds of community members, businesses, community-based organizations (CBOs), and elected officials began to identify ways to strengthen communities, leverage existing resources, and work together to achieve Age-Friendly status.

These community convenings helped prioritize the region's needs as participants brainstormed creative aging solutions together, recognizing that it would take strategy and time to realize the greater vision. IIAC then collaborated with stakeholders to implement solutions, reporting consistently on its progress. IIAC became a 501(c)(3) in 2012. Around the same time, it began exploring the AARP's Age-Friendly framework and network as a means to unlock resources and national-level support.

### **Between 2015–2040, the Pikes Peak Region will experience:**

179% increase in the number of residents 65 years and older

337% increase in the number of residents 85 years and older

(Adams, T. H., (2015). Aging in the Pikes Peak Region; A Report from the Innovations in Aging Collaborative, pg. 14)

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## 2016–2021 Age-Friendly Accomplishments



From 2016 to 2021, Colorado Springs’s Age-Friendly work was guided by the first five-year action plan. Alongside engaged community members, IIAC and partners created a communication action plan. Efforts included: the disbursement of a community needs survey, the development of impactful and achievable goals, and multi-sector committees focused on each of the eight domains of livability as defined by AARP.

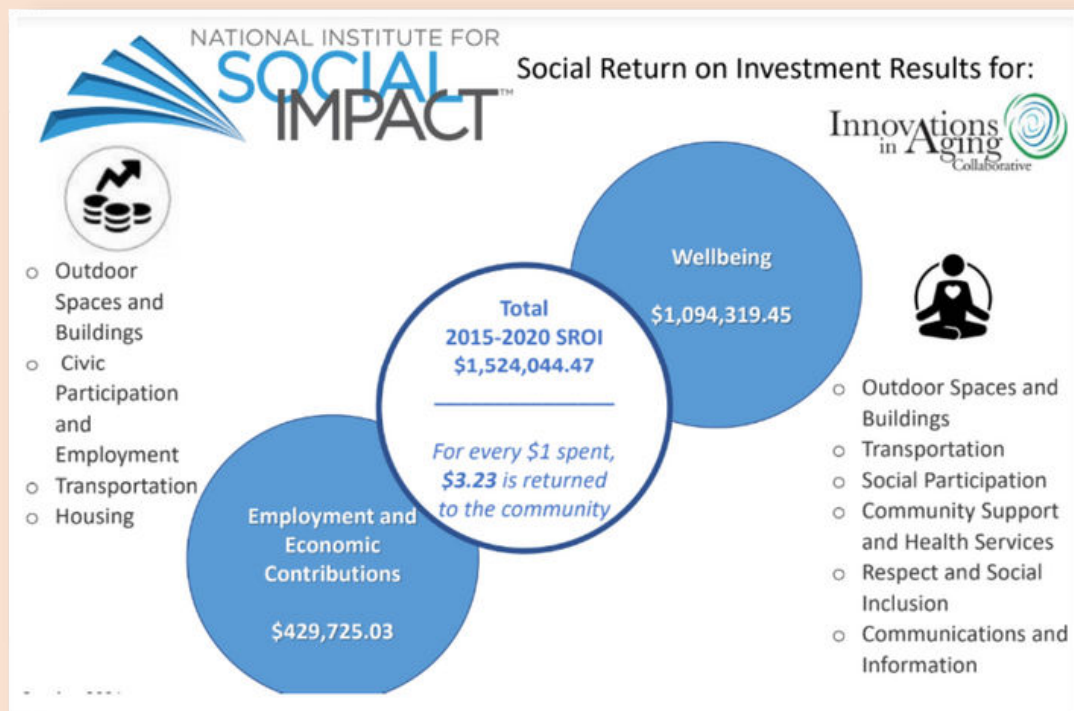
IIAC through extensive partnership and collaboration was successful in completing over 90% of the action steps laid out in that first plan, laying a strong foundation for the expansion of Age-Friendly efforts in Colorado Springs and exploration of expansion across neighboring cities, towns and communities throughout El Paso County. See Age-Friendly Colorado Springs: Five Year Progress Report for additional details on accomplishments in the first five years.

## Social Return on Investment

How can we measure our Age-Friendly impact? Social Return on Investment (SROI), a concept developed in 1996 by the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund (REDF), measures the positive value to a wide range of community stakeholders that an organization creates through its work.

This value can be tracked on a continuum from social to socio-economic to economic value, with dollar equivalents indicated, much like a business's Return on Investment (ROI).

**IIAC tripled the SROI! For every \$1 donated or received to IIAC's Age-Friendly efforts, \$3.23 has returned to the community through the impact of the work that IIAC does in the community.**



Social Return on Investment (SROI) measures community impact in dollars and cents. Dollars that IIAC and our donors have invested into Age-Friendly initiatives has been calculated by NI4SI to determine the impact IIAC has had on the entire community but specifically older adults.

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## Social Return on Investment

An example of an SROI formula can be applied to investing \$20,000 in an ADA-accessible park in 2023 and the eventual cost savings over time. A park benefits an entire community, supporting the mental health and social inclusion of all who use it. This ultimately prevents the need for the City of Colorado Springs or El Paso County to invest more heavily in providing mental health services for years to come.

### **IIAC's Social Return on Investment**

**Economic:** Affordable housing units built to universal design standards that benefit everyone.

**Socio-Economic:** Increased civic participation, Project Visibility Training Program.

**Social:** An increase in community members utilizing community centers, Parks re-designed to be ADA-compliant, 400 older adults connected with resources and assistance by Silver Key Senior Outreach Services.

IIAC worked with the National Institute for Social Impact to determine its SROI for Age-Friendly initiatives.

## Planning With the Community: Next 5 Years and Beyond

IIAC contracted with Aging Dynamics consulting firm to facilitate the planning process for the next stage of the Age-Friendly Pikes Peak initiative, creating this action plan that will guide efforts from 2023 to 2028. The intention for the next five years is to continue expanding efforts in Colorado Springs and to explore expansion with the cities, towns, and communities throughout El Paso County. This process was rooted in the belief that to be truly Age-Friendly we must listen carefully, plan inclusively, and act decisively. It was designed to engage broadly with residents, businesses, elected officials, public agencies and non-profit organizations to identify priority interests based on needs and opportunities across all eight domains of Age-Friendly communities.



Community engagement is an ongoing process that requires intentionality and flexibility. We recognize the need to continue to prioritize engaging more community members and ensuring that their voices are included in the Age-Friendly Pike's Peak initiative. A key element of community engagement is education and awareness of what it means to be an Age-Friendly community, and of how we all can contribute to and benefit from communities that support our interests and needs as we age.

As described below, the planning process included both opportunities to learn about Age-Friendly and to actively participate in the identification of priorities, strategies and action steps to move forward collaboratively towards a more Age-Friendly Pike's Peak.



PICTURE CREATED BY PARTICIPANT AT THE AGE-FRIENDLY PIKES PEAK SUMMIT ILLUSTRATING WHAT AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY LOOKS LIKE TO THEM.

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# The Age-Friendly Action Planning Process

From late summer 2022 through spring 2023, IIAC collaborated with partners in Colorado Springs and across cities and towns in El Paso County to engage a broad range of community members, listening to their ideas and concerns related to being or becoming an Age-Friendly community.

1. **Interviews:** Prior to engaging the broader community, interviews were conducted with elected officials, public agency staff, and nonprofit leadership in Colorado Springs, Monument, Fountain, Calhan, and at the El Paso County level. The purpose of the interviews was to provide an update on Age-Friendly Pikes Peak and hear from leadership about pressing issues, needs, opportunities and interest in Age-Friendly activity. In addition, this initial outreach created an opportunity to design community listening sessions that would be more inclusive and responsive to the communities beyond Colorado Springs.
2. **Community Listening Sessions:** Five informal listening sessions invited community members to share their perspectives on how Age-Friendly their communities currently are and to identify their most pressing priorities. These took place throughout the fall of 2022 in locations across the region and at various times of day. The listening sessions were planned in coordination with the Pikes Peak Area Agency on Aging's (PPAAA) listening sessions, which were being held at the same time, to ensure maximum involvement at both. IIAC and PPAAA shared information learned at the sessions further strengthening each other's planning processes.
3. **Age-Friendly Summit:** The entire Pikes Peak region was invited to participate in a full-day Summit on November 17, 2022, at the Colorado Springs City Auditorium. Speakers included elected officials and the state Age-Friendly policy advisor, who addressed over 120 community members. There were people who had long been involved in Age-Friendly work, newcomers who were excited to have their voices heard, businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and elected officials. Similar to the listening sessions, participants of all ages convened to share their thoughts and ideas about how to become more Age-Friendly.

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Building on the feedback from the interviews and listening sessions, seven potential focus areas for this action plan were identified including housing, social isolation, health and wellness, transportation, communication, built environment, and workforce. In facilitated conversations, community members discussed what they've experienced, areas needing improvement, offered suggestions for how to move forward, and identified common themes across potential focus areas. The result of these discussions was a compression of the areas of focus to five including Housing, Health and Wellness, Social Connectedness and Communication, Workforce and Age-Friendly Environment and beginning to identify initial strategies and action steps.

**4. Work Groups:** 50 community members representing residents, community leaders, businesses, government, nonprofits, and other stakeholders volunteered to participate in work groups for each of the areas of focus. In January and February 2023, each work group convened two times via video conference to explore overarching themes, set four to five goals for the next five years, and identify realistic and actionable steps. It was acknowledged that action steps requiring significant financial resources such as building housing or a new transit system would be beyond the capability of this initiative. However, advocacy and education for why those things are important would be possible. Additionally, all work group members were invited to provide feedback on the full set of action steps prior to its finalization.

## Guiding Themes for Implementation

Throughout the listening sessions and Age-Friendly Summit, participants thought creatively about how they could address Age-Friendly barriers and opportunities. Together, they brainstormed how to approach common problems with innovative solutions that build on existing assets, collaborations, and community will. No matter the specific focus area, work group members revisited several themes that arose over and over again.

These themes are guides for examining and addressing challenges and opportunities to build a more Age-Friendly Pikes Peak region. During implementation of this plan, these themes will be applied across all the focus areas, strategies and action steps.

### The Themes Include:

#### **Intergenerational Connections**

Intergenerational connections improve the lives of everyone involved. Intergenerational connections between youth and older adults have a positive impact on mental, physical, and emotional well-being. These connections can be created through structured intergenerational programs or develop organically when generations gather in Age-Friendly community spaces. As community members explored topics such as aging in community alongside housing affordability for college students, intergenerational connections were presented as viable solutions.





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### **Broad and Inclusive Outreach**

It is vital to provide opportunities for all who grow up and grow older in Colorado Springs and across El Paso County to share their perspectives; and find their place in the Age-Friendly Pikes initiative. The Pikes Peak region has many different communities, cultures, abilities, and languages. In order to develop and promote inclusive innovations, it is necessary to bring everyone into the conversation and the implementation of the action plan. IIAC is committed to initiatives that will advance the well-being of a multidimensional community. By embracing policies, practices, and administration that is guided by open discourse, respect for differences and accessible to all, we can ensure we are creating a genuinely Age-Friendly community that prioritizes and responds to the needs of all people who grow up and grow older.

### **Education and Awareness**

One of the challenges of Age-Friendly initiatives is a lack of understanding of what it means to be Age-Friendly, how to be part of the changes needed and why becoming Age-Friendly is so important both now and in the future. Educating the general public, media, funders, community leaders, and elected officials about Age-Friendly community issues and opportunities is critical so that we can promote deeper understanding, broader awareness, and build greater support. This is applicable to every focus area, strategy, and action step.

### **Policy and Advocacy**

System-wide change is possible when leaders and advocates help create community buy-in and political responsiveness. Across the focus areas, there are opportunities for leaders and champions to advocate for Age-Friendly policies and solutions in community and political forums. This theme is an invitation to those who want to think creatively and collaboratively about various aspects of Age-Friendly initiatives such as healthcare access, housing development, and more.

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**Partnerships and Collaboration:**

This work will not be possible without strong partnerships and collaboration. We each bring different expertise, connections, resources, and experiences. By working together across sectors, city and town lines, and organizations, Age-Friendly initiatives will be efficient with our existing resources, streamline efforts, and maximize our return on investment. IIAC is a convener and the organizer, but the work of implementation of this plan will require the time, resources, and collaboration of many different El Paso County community stakeholders.

**Ageism:**

Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) toward others or oneself based on age. These internalized beliefs can be stereotypes that an individual places on people of any age- from their feelings about teenagers to their beliefs about older adults, even if they belong to one of these groups. Ageism alters the way community members see one another and, sometimes, how they behave. When employers, developers, and other key decision makers have internalized ageism, they overlook the significance of older adults. Age-Friendly communities work to educate their members about the value and contributions of all ages.

**Innovation:**

We will utilize cross-industry collaboration with leaders in industry-specific technological advancements in order to reduce isolation, increase access to services, and increase efficiencies in program delivery across all of our strategic focus areas. We will encourage creativity and curiosity, openness to new ideas, and trying new approaches.

# Strategic Focus Areas and Action Steps

To guide the next five years of our Age-Friendly efforts, we are pleased to present the following Strategic Focus Areas and action steps. Within each focus area, there are numerous actionable steps that help us leverage resources, strengthen partnerships, and build sustainable change informed by the unique needs and opportunities of cities and communities across El Paso County. As discussed above, the guiding themes will be applied to each of the strategic focus areas. The strategies and action steps were developed to be realistic ensuring they can be implemented. Some will require identification of new funding sources, new partnerships, and focused effort while others are simple, quick actions. This balance of the easy and more complex is intentional and will allow IIAC and its partners to grow and expand over the next five years.

## ICON MAP

Icons are used to reference when an action step impacts one or all focus areas, builds on the previous five-year plan, or is a role for an Age-Friendly champion. These are used throughout this section.



**HOUSING**



**SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND  
COMMUNICATION**



**CHAMPION**



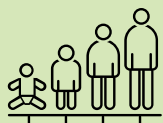
**WORKFORCE**



**HEALTH AND  
WELLNESS**



**ALL FOCUS AREAS**



**AGE-FRIENDLY  
ENVIRONMENT**



**BUILD UPON PREVIOUS  
EFFORTS**

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## HOUSING

Accessible, affordable, and safe housing is central to an Age-Friendly community. However, the regional cost of living is increasing and housing inventory is declining. Experts predict that more and more people will move to the region over the next several decades with the adverse effect of increasing costs. Additionally, housing design needs to be flexible to accommodate changing needs, family size (increase in multi-generational households), and offer variable pricing through trying new methods of construction to reduce costs.



According to the AskCOS survey, which tracks Colorado Springs residents' feelings about their quality of life, satisfaction with the cost of living and housing has decreased by 38 points since 2017. This is by far the greatest change among people aged 60 and over during this time period, followed by safety at 15 points; (AskCOS, 2022).

### **El Paso County residents who are age 60 and older report:**

- 78% plan to stay in Colorado Springs
- 55% see this community as the place where they want to retire

But 49% report unmet housing needs.

[2022 Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults (CASOA) survey of El Paso County residents]

**Only one in every three respondents aged 60 and over was satisfied with the cost of living and housing.** This is understandable as most retired older adults live on a fixed income and the COVID-19 pandemic and recent inflation have created economic instability. As IIAC explores expanding Age-Friendly efforts across El Paso County it is important to note that El Paso County's median value of owner-occupied homes is \$397,900, or \$116,500 above the total for the United States.



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One of the core principles of an Age-Friendly community is that residents can age in the community, either in their current home or in a new home. To make this possible requires a range of housing options that are economically and physically designed to be accessible and visitable for diverse needs. Often, universal design is referenced as guidelines for development of new housing stock. For additional information on universal design see the Appendix.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS OF AGE-FRIENDLY HOMES**

An Age-Friendly community is a way of being. Age-Friendly Pikes Peak seeks to raise public awareness on the significance of integrating Age-Friendly principles and planning into all facets of community life, including Age-Friendly housing characteristics and the barriers to aging in community. In particular, we seek to raise awareness of key principles e.g., visitability, universal design standards, and lifetime housing that positively benefit individuals and the broader community. When homeowners and developers understand and commit to integrating Age-Friendly housing standards, we will see more older adults in safe and accessible living conditions.

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## PREVENTING HOUSING INSTABILITY

Housing instability is increasing among older adults, but needs and circumstances affect individuals differently. In the United States, approximately 25% of older adults are considered socially isolated or lacking a social network or contact. A natural consequence of social isolation is that it is not always obvious to others when an older adult is experiencing or at risk of housing instability.

IIAC seeks to help multi-sector entities and the broader community deepen their understanding of the nuances of housing instability, preventions, and resolutions. IIAC has an opportunity to step in by increasing awareness of existing solutions, preventing homelessness before it occurs, and supporting the development of housing solutions.

It is vital that we focus on short- and long-term solutions that prevent housing instability and housing loss. To prevent housing instability, we can take measures long before someone is at risk. One preventative solution is to provide community members with affordable and early education and financial planning services to increase individual financial health at much earlier ages and create financial stability. By partnering with financial education services, we can leverage existing resources and help families and individuals plan responsibly for their futures and to make course corrections when necessary.

In the development of this action plan and building upon previous work, we continue to unearth solutions for those older adults who are already unhoused.



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## Support Aging-in-Community



- Convene multi-sector stakeholders to identify, adapt, and develop resources and a toolkit on how homeowners can prepare a home for aging in place. Coordinate an awareness campaign that delivers accessible digital and print resources across websites and at key community locations, including resource fairs.
- Collaborate with community partners such as Habitat for Humanity, Brothers Redevelopment, Energy Resource Centers, government agencies, and professional consultants to help select resources and coordinate efforts. This includes working with nonprofits and healthcare providers on toolkits to renovate a home for residents to age in place, working to ensure resources are centralized, regularly updated, and easily accessible.



- Provide financial planning to community members and older adults by partnering with trusted community partners such as Silver Key and Greccio.
  - Focus on financial wellness, early interventions, and budgeting seminars/webinars for older adults and their families.
  - Create or promote an existing online library for recorded webinars and resources.

- Build on partnership with Pikes Peak Housing Network (PPHN) to assist in advocacy, prioritize the needs of older adults, and provide expertise on Age-Friendly initiatives and aging in community.
- Highlight issues and opportunities such as home modification, making different types of housing options available for diverse needs, accessible housing and communities, transferability of Homestead Tax Waiver, development incentives, expansion of rental and utility assistance programs, conversion of underutilized or vacant buildings for affordable housing, and a special focus on housing instability of older adults.

## Design with Intention: Expand the Supply of Age-Friendly Housing

Building more Age-Friendly or “universally designed” housing would result in more housing that is appropriate for all community members. This type of investment ensures that no matter who moves into a home, they will be able to live safely, amongst community, and at ease. (See: Universal Design Principles in the Appendix)

Identify stakeholders in Residential Assisted Living (RAL) and create or join a community collaborative to share education, better practices and resources.



Partner with PPACG to offer training to Age-Friendly champions to get involved with planning and zoning efforts, e.g. Citizen Academy. Offer existing planning and zoning staff the opportunity to take the training and learn alongside the community champions.

Conduct zoning code and Homeowners Associations (HOA) standards reviews to identify allowances for Age-Friendly opportunities such as home sharing of unrelated individuals, diverse housing types such as accessory dwelling units, and universal design.

- Co-host an annual education and networking event for architects, developers, interior designers, and builders in partnership with PPHN and Habitat for Humanity.
  - Highlight different aspects of Age-Friendly building practices inside and outside of the home.
  - Create a “Parade of Age-Friendly Homes” to showcase those already prioritizing Age-Friendly housing.





Work with developers, entrepreneurs, and product designers on new designs for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), modular designs, and 3D-printed homes that can build housing at lower costs. Advocate for changes in building and zoning codes to permit these new products and expand the supply of housing available to a variety of income levels (affordable, moderate, and middle).

Expand availability of home modifications and rehabilitations by partnering with community organizations such as Habitat for Humanity.

## Address Housing Instability for Unhoused Older Adults

Older adults who are living today did not receive equitable opportunities to purchase properties, gain equity, and earn generational wealth. Social Security benefits rose just 6% between 2006 and 2016, with rent more than doubling, according to a Hastings Report.

- \$319,200: Net worth of the median older homeowner in 2016, with home equity of \$143,500
- \$6,700: Net worth of the median older renter

Pikes Peak Housing Network (PPHN), acts as an education and advocacy group. Formed in 2019 through efforts led by IIAC, it unifies residents and organizations who want to advocate for, increase, and/or maintain the supply of affordable units. It has four roles:

- Develop partnerships
- Leverage existing resources and cultivate new ones
- Act as a unifier among stakeholders
- Take a holistic approach to housing affordability, including related: economic, health, and racial equity issues

**25% of El Paso County older adults have mobility needs (CASOA).**



Convene nonprofits who serve the unhoused to develop a unified voice and advocate together to increase resources and assistance for older adults.

- Create a plan for early intervention to help older adults before they experience housing instability in the first place.
  - Conduct scenario planning to identify opportunities for early intervention.
  - Connect with older adult widows/widowers upon the death of their spouses in order to prevent housing instability. Develop educational materials and prepare first responders, hospital staff, and coroners to ensure older adults receive support.

Identify key partners who lead programs and can help provide housing for low-income adults with long term case management.

#### **In El Paso County,**

- 1,443 people reported experiencing homelessness\*
- 396 people experiencing chronic homelessness (for 12+ consecutive months or long bouts over the past 3 years, and have a self-reported disabling condition)\*
- 401 households on average have at least one veteran experiencing homelessness every month\*\*
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\*2022 El Paso County Point in Time Survey

\*\* 2022 Built for Zero

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## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The Pikes Peak Region is a desirable place to live thanks to the high quality of life and physical health that its residents enjoy. Clean air and access to the outdoors are part of what draws people to visit and keeps them here. In fact, among El Paso County residents age 60 and older, **78% rated their physical health as excellent and good**, and 89% rated their mental health as excellent or good (CASOA). It should be noted that the 60+ population is not homogenous and while this statistic represents the experience of a portion of the older adult population, there can be significant differences in terms of physical and mental health challenges with more rural residents, residents over the age of 85+ and others living in assisted living or skilled nursing facilities.



### ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

When someone is experiencing physical, mental, or emotional health challenges in Colorado Springs and El Paso County, however, there are not enough affordable and accessible healthcare resources. Rural regions, historically, lack the same level of mental and behavioral health resources as their urban counterparts, and they have fewer choices and poorer accessibility of physical healthcare. Cross-county coordination and collaboration of service providers can help ensure that older adults are not overlooked and can receive the continuum of services that they need. Through interviews with leaders in Monument and Fountain, gaps in services and support for caregivers, veterans and older adults were identified highlighting the need for coordination and collaboration when assessing needs and planning for new services or programs.

In a Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults (CASOA) survey of El Paso County older adults,

- 40% reported physical health challenges
- 23% reported mental health challenges
- 37% of respondents indicated that they needed some form of healthcare.

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## CAREGIVERS

A topic that repeatedly came up in listening sessions and work groups was caregivers and the resources they receive. **Caregivers formally or informally provide care to another person, generally a family member or friend, and can often shoulder an emotional, mental, or financial burden that is invisible to the rest of the world.**

Providing community support to these residents is vital to Age-Friendly initiatives, and involves everything from raising awareness of the warning signs of dementia to ensuring availability of respite support. Informal caregivers are addressed through the Health and Wellness strategic focus area and formal caregivers are addressed through the Workforce strategic focus area.

Ensuring that older adults and their caregivers are better supported requires targeted educational campaigns that raise awareness about the crucial roles that informal caregivers play in our community. Education should focus on caregivers, employers, and the general public. There are three specific opportunities that could drastically improve the lives of caregivers:

- Increase caregiver awareness about community services available to them;
- Help employers understand how to support employees and encourage them to welcome caregivers back into the workforce; and
- Reduce and eventually eliminate fear of negative consequences of caregiving including being fired, being passed over for raises and positions, or having resume gaps.

Below, we address the specific resources, including increased respite care, that are needed to better support informal caregivers in the community.





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## PRIORITIZING VETERANS

Across communities in the Pikes Peak region, veterans make up anywhere from 9% to 15% of community members. This group of citizens is deeply valued, yet underserved. It is important that we enhance the understanding of veterans' unique needs to ensure that they have improved access to care, skilled nursing, assisted living, and aging-in-community services. More broadly, our efforts over the next five years include educating and building awareness around topics and needs specific to veterans, e.g., healthcare availability, transportation, and eligibility, as well as diseases such as diabetes and prostate cancer that are linked to combat exposure to toxic chemicals including Agent Orange.

## REIMAGINING WELLNESS AS A COMMUNITY

In listening sessions, the Summit, and work groups, community members recognized a need to reexamine notions of success and wellness. It is now an Age-Friendly goal to shift the notion that a human's existence revolves around constant productivity and "doing"; instead we want to establish a cultural understanding that health and humanity exist in the state of "being." To help further this message, our Age-Friendly efforts include creating a publicity campaign about the dimensions of wellness and "beingness" to emphasize a whole-person approach. This whole-person approach includes raising up the contributions of older adults and being thoughtful about the way we reduce ageism through communications efforts such as those championed by *Changing the Narrative*.



### Changing the Narrative Reduces Ageism for a Better World

Changing the Narrative is a campaign of the NextFifty Initiative to end ageism, using evidence-based strategies, strategic communications and innovative public-facing campaigns. It envisions a world without ageism.

### Of the El Paso County older adults surveyed:

- 34% provide care to someone who is 55 years or older
- 18% provide care to someone between the ages of 18-54
- 20% provide care to a person under 18 years old
- 13% report challenges with caregiving

## Elevate and strengthen the role of the informal caregiver

Respite care provides short-term relief for caregivers. It can be arranged for just an afternoon or for several days or weeks and can be provided at home, in a healthcare facility, or in a senior living facility.



- Convene community partners, faith organizations, and others such as the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) Aging Center, Senior Resource Council, PPACG and Jumpstart the Aging Workforce Solutions (JAWS).
  - Help providers align and streamline services to eventually reduce redundancies and inefficiencies.
  - Collaboratively promote resources and training for caregivers to become well-educated and confident health and wellness advocates.
  - Explore the creation of a community-based caregiver network designed to reduce isolation through a variety of mechanisms:
    - Development of a friendly check-in program
    - Creating caregiver cafés to create community
    - Making respite services more available
    - Providing resources such as food distribution and transportation
    - Creating opportunities for deeper social connection
    - Connecting with patient advocates for older adults and caregivers

Identify the needs of diverse caregivers and various community-supported caregiving models by coordinating supporting research performed by the UCCS Aging Center and graduate students.

In partnership with primary care providers, adapt intake forms to identify if a patient is a caregiver, has served in the military, and/or if end-of-life care planning is complete. Provide referral information to these healthcare partners.

**Ensure access to health and wellness services**, acknowledging that each community will experience its own challenges due to geography, resources and population characteristics.

Colorado Springs is officially a Dementia-Friendly Community!

- Dementia-Friendly Colorado Springs is an initiative to create a local community where people living with dementia are supported to enjoy a high quality of life with meaning, purpose, and value. We seek to foster a dementia-friendly community by educating the community on the signs of dementia and how best to interact with a person living with dementia and by encouraging all sectors of the community to adopt dementia-friendly practices.
- The Alzheimer's Association predicts that the number of Coloradans living with Alzheimer's Disease will increase from 71,000 people in 2018 to 92,000 in 2025.
- 40+ community members participated in the creation of the Dementia-Friendly Colorado Springs action plan.



- Partner with Dementia-Friendly Colorado Springs to explore expansion across El Paso County. Employ the most effective and innovative ideas locally by monitoring statewide Alzheimer's, dementia care, and Age-Friendly health system efforts that align with these strategies.
  - Work to create a local community where people living with dementia are supported to enjoy a high quality of life with meaning, purpose, and value.
  - Provide tools to customer-oriented professions to help assist the unique needs of community members who have dementia i.e. retail, health, wellness, health and human services, banking, and transportation sectors.

Forecast the growing healthcare needs for the aging population, to achieve early identification of gaps in healthcare services, and find potential solutions by partnering with organizations such as CIVHC and Colorado Health Institute.

- Raise up and increase access to AgeTech or gerontechnology, i.e. technology that supports successful aging, and expand healthcare connectivity and options throughout the Pikes Peak region.
  - Establish connections with strategic partners in tech and local entrepreneurship.
  - Identify opportunities to increase and inform local AgeTech expertise, participate in Age-Friendly tech incubators and provide input to early-and late-term developers and entrepreneurs.
  - Advocate for the expansion of telehealth and technology support, especially for those who are homebound or live in rural areas.
  - Explore existing technology that can improve quality of life, mobility access, and social connection.
  - Provide more computer training to older adults living in the region by expanding the Seniors Engaged Program, a partnership between IIAC, the Myron Stratton home, and high school students.

Gerontechnology links existing and developing technologies to the aspirations and needs of aging and aged adults.

Gerontechnology supports “successful aging” and is a response to the combination of the aging of society and rapidly emerging new technologies (van Bronswijk et al., 2009; (Lee, Peng, Lin, Loh, & Chen, 2020).

- Increase responsive Age-Friendly healthcare in Colorado Springs and other cities and communities across El Paso County.
  - Promote existing Age-Friendly healthcare trainings such as the UCCS Gerontology Center’s Professional Advancement Certificate in Gerontology.
  - Identify or partner with UCCS and/or others to develop training for healthcare staff.



During the pandemic, federal, state, and local networks coordinated efforts to ensure that older adults received the various services they needed. This included a coordination of services, bringing services to older adults' homes, and leveraging networks to maximize resources.



## Reimagine wellness

Develop or adapt an Age-Friendly mental health first aid training building upon the experience of other communities in partnership with Silver Key, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), first responders, and the UCCS Aging Center. Explore offering specialized content for veterans, rural communities, and caregivers.

- Reach more older adults through fitness programs designed specifically for a broad spectrum of wellness needs.
  - Collaborate with fitness professionals to create Age-Friendly messaging and campaigns designed to encourage increased participation.
  - Expand adult wellness class partnerships with YMCA, local senior and community centers, Silver Sneakers, and other fitness professionals.

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## AGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Community members of the Pikes Peak Region envision a future where communities are accessible and meet the diverse mobility and sensory needs of all who live, work, and visit here. An Age-Friendly environment considers how we design our indoor and outdoor spaces to be inclusive physically and culturally. It also ensures that people of all ages can move easily and safely between their homes and these locations and gatherings, in effect enjoying and accessing the whole community.



Age-Friendly living is about ensuring that all residents can enjoy community amenities and socialize with friends and neighbors. To welcome everyone into this experience requires meeting people where they are, by planning for all types of mobility and lifestyles.

**3,226 miles of sidewalk; 603 miles without sidewalk. Colorado Springs as of March 2023]**

One example of an Age-Friendly resource is the Colorado Springs Sidewalk Infill Program which identifies opportunities to install new sidewalk segments, often funded through the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA), and leverage opportunities to fill other transportation gaps. The Colorado Springs Citywide School and Neighborhood Pedestrian Improvements project involves the construction or reconstruction of ADA accessible sidewalks, ramps, crossing improvements, and safety enhancements for improved pedestrian mobility, and accessibility.



## MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

It is necessary to raise awareness of the lived experiences of community members who encounter barriers to participating in civic, social, and recreational life. Age-Friendly Pikes Peak endeavors to educate community members about the barriers that prevent community members from accessing their community and physical environment within the context of the diverse needs of older adults, caregivers, care recipients, and intergenerational groups. We will also create community buy-in to support Age-Friendly solutions that benefit all who live, work, and play in our region- e.g., sidewalks, crosswalk timers, benches in the shade, and ADA-accessible bathrooms. We will learn from other communities to inform the Mobility for All Campaign within PPAAA similar to that in Boulder County, Colorado.

### **Age-Friendly Colorado Springs**

#### **Accomplishments to Date**

- 36 miles of on-street bike lanes were installed by Colorado Springs's Bike Program
- 5 local parks were redesigned or developed with universal design principles
- 10 residents participated in Project Visibility: Person-Centered Care for LGBTQ+ Older Adults

## Remove mobility barriers to aging in community

Identify and address the barriers that keep community members from using public transit by collaborating with the Mobility Coordinating Committee of PPACG and Mountain Metro Transit. This could include assessing the Seniors Ambassador Program's effectiveness, advocating for more microtransit options for neighborhood connectivity, and ensuring Age-Friendly representation in the planning and development for the new Colorado Springs transit center.

Identify leading organizations and existing collaborative efforts that provide alternative transportation options to help people navigate the community without the need for a personal vehicle. Options could include tricycles, rideshare options, and more. Identify various options that account for diverse geographies, economic situations, and accessibility. Ensure that the older adult perspective is represented in these discussions through the efforts of Age-Friendly Pikes Peak.

Explore the potential of establishing a fund to support transportation stipends for older adults to participate fully in community programs.

Explore interest in pursuing the Complete Streets Initiative with Colorado Springs and neighboring cities and towns. Partner with El Paso County Public Health and Planning and Community Development Department to apply for funding.

### The Complete Streets

**Strategy** is an approach to planning, designing, building, operating, and maintaining streets that enables safe access for all people who need to use them. This includes visible and clear crossings, safe bike lanes, ADA-accessible sidewalks, and turning lanes for vehicles.







Conduct mobility and safety assessments of community spaces and connections (trails and sidewalks) in order to develop recommendations and action plans. Do this in partnership with Council of Neighbors & Organizations (CONO), resident groups, homeowners and community associations, and law enforcement agencies. Recommendations could include zoning changes, sidewalk plans to include allowances for wheeled devices and open design, and the incorporation of universal design elements.

Publicize the infrastructure repair reporting portals e.g., GoCOS!, See Click Fix, El Paso County Citizen Connect and request user feedback to make these sites easier to use.

Identify and partner with a transportation provider for veterans to more easily access care services in Denver, Colorado.

## **Ensure that indoor and outdoor spaces as well as community programs are welcoming and inclusive to diverse groups of people**

Identify and provide tools and guidance to assess existing community recreational and commercial spaces for accessibility, safety, and adaptability for diverse uses and participants. For example, provide guidance on how to create a dementia-friendly space or utilize a space for caregiver respite. Incorporate guidelines into the Age-Friendly Business designation.



Explore the expansion of the Age-Friendly visitor's program in partnership with the Age-Friendly business designation. Help interested businesses become more visitable, increase shuttle services, and achieve Age-Friendly designation for tourism-focused businesses.

## Design and improve outdoor spaces such as parks and natural areas for accessibility and enjoyment by all ages and abilities.



- Collaborate with Parks and Recreation staff to identify parks and other outdoor spaces that need accessibility improvements; advocate for funding for improvements.
  - Conduct safety and accessibility audits with community residents, and use the audits to develop safety improvement plans with local law enforcement and local Parks and Recreation departments.
  - Evaluate Panorama Park as an intergenerational destination, sharing lessons and successes with the community and local and county government agencies.



Panorama Park, in Colorado Springs is an Age-Friendly and inclusive community space. It has a universally designed playground, an event lawn with shade for community members to gather intergenerationally, ADA-accessible bathrooms, and adult and youth fitness and activity areas.



Recruit an Age-Friendly champion to serve on the Trails and Open Spaces Working Committee and Parks and Recreation efforts in partner cities and communities throughout El Paso County.

Partner with PPACG, Parks and Recreation, and other community partners to conduct focus groups to more deeply and accurately understand the ways in which older adults and diverse cultures engage in outdoor spaces. Determine the unique interests, needs, barriers, and opportunities that exist around community programs so as to improve the attendance and experience of all who want to participate more fully in their communities.



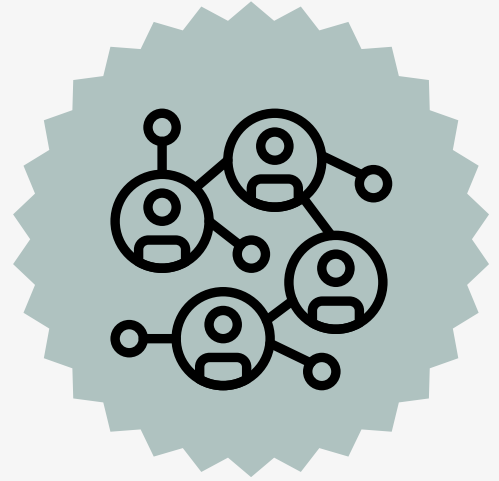
Pilot 2-3 intergenerational community gardens by partnering with Pikes Peak Urban Gardens and other community organizations.

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## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND COMMUNICATION

Community can be defined simply as a group of people who live in the same place. Our community seeks to craft and renew the sense of community that so many people are seeking: a feeling of fellowship with others and belonging to a place. Yet, only 37% of El Paso County residents above the age of 60 believe that their community values older adults.

Older adults who live in fragmented communities or who are physically disconnected are at increased risk of being socially disconnected and not having their social needs met, especially those who experience poorer health, live alone, have mobility or sensory challenges, or experience additional marginalization.



Through the action plan process, the community considered how to deepen social connection across our region. While providing opportunities to socially engage is vital, we also need to ensure we are actively encouraging and enabling people to:

- participate in social and civic opportunities;
- create meaningful connections across generations;
- explore existing passions and new interests; and
- be active in their communities in a variety of different ways.

We enable civic and social connection by lowering those barriers that prevent healthy participation. This includes creatively reaching people who are homebound, have limited access to transportation, or have caregiving responsibilities. We also need to activate every communication channel so that we are inclusively distributing information, translating information into a variety of primary languages, communicating multi-culturally, and thinking beyond just digital dissemination. By educating our community, we can build collective will and drive momentum to accomplish these short and long-term goals.

A key strategy to create greater connection for community members is to cultivate a highly communicative and transparent regional ecosystem where entities and individuals can build trust and share knowledge and resources across sectors and communities. As a critical mass of entities and people representing and living Age-Friendly principles sign on to work together, we can more clearly identify gaps in social networks.

**Of El Paso County older adults who were surveyed,**

- 51% rated the sense of community as excellent and good
- 50% reported a positive neighborliness
- 47% said that El Paso County is open to diverse backgrounds
- 37% believe that their community values older adults

*(CASOA 2023 Survey)*





## Raise awareness about Age-Friendly efforts

- Create a marketing and public relations plan for the Age-Friendly Pikes Peak program that helps us reach more of our community members where they seek information and spend their time.
  - Increase IIAC's own educational authority through a website redesign, a newsletter, engaging with local podcasts, social media campaigns, and more.
  - Work with local and regional media sources to reach their audiences through regular written and audio spots that highlight Age-Friendly topics.
  - Connect with neighborhood, faith, and community-based organizations to give presentations and distribute resources that help communities integrate Age-Friendly practices and increase connection and belonging.

Host an annual Age-Friendly Pikes Peak Summit with a resource fair highlighting a different strategic focus area each year. Take time to celebrate accomplishments and partners.

Update the Age-Friendly Business designation to highlight health and wellness, and a visitor's guide. Redesign the online database of local Age-Friendly businesses and web presence for a more user-friendly design.



Develop or adapt a resource guide of Age-Friendly principles about each strategic focus area.



Develop and share Age-Friendly conversation starters to prompt and guide Age-Friendly discussions in community meetings of existing social networks- e.g., CONO, Kiwanis, Rotary, faith-based institutions.



Create a Speakers Bureau with trained volunteers who present on behalf of IIAC with representatives from each focus area. Provide short presentations of Age-Friendly customized content that include ways for community members and partners to get involved in Age-Friendly work.



Expand the presence of IIAC and our Age-Friendly efforts through recruitment and training of Age-Friendly champions. Educate champions who may also be members of the Speakers Bureau to attend events and advocate for Age-Friendly issues.

## Strengthen collaboration



Regularly convene community partners such as faith organizations, the UCCS Aging Center, the Senior Resource Council, Silver Key, PPACG, and JAWS to help providers align and streamline services to eventually reduce redundancies and inefficiencies.

Develop partnership documents for Age-Friendly Pikes Peak to recruit new partners. Outline the value of collaboration, opportunities to get involved, and shared resources e.g., marketing, media contacts, fundraising, public outreach, and other benefits of working in collaboration.

Host an annual funders event to share Age-Friendly initiatives, funding opportunities, and the value of and return on investment. Emphasize the power of collaboration from the perspective of funders and grantees to increase coordination and help secure funding for high-impact programs that sometimes get overlooked.

Continue building upon and formalizing the Age-Friendly Pikes Peak work groups with community recruitment across sectors, cultures, communities, and ages. Solidify and clarify the roles and engagement expectations of participants.



- Make it easier for older adults to access and understand available information and services by redesigning PPAAA's Senior Resource website.
  - Source and add relevant resources and opportunities, such as emergency services and programs.
  - Clearly indicate restrictions or special cases, such as when an available opportunity is governed by income restrictions.
  - Identify gaps and opportunities for greater coordination and distribution of resources.
  - Explore a partnership with Community Assistance Referral Education Services (CARES).
  - Increase marketing and promotion of the website.

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## Facilitate authentic connections between community members to increase community support, respect, and a sense of belonging.

**Low-income older residents are more likely to feel isolated and depressed and are less likely to consistently feel happy.** (*AskCOS 2022 Survey*)

Encourage community partners to join the LinkAGES Collaborative network to receive training and resources on how to design and offer high quality intergenerational programs.



Review and update the full list of existing intergenerational programs available in our community.

Conduct a network mapping assessment of social connectivity across communities and address any gaps.

Explore a partnership to support the creation of an intergenerational-friendly check-in program for homebound individuals.

Advertise Age-Friendly volunteer opportunities through partnerships with organizations such as CityServe and VolunteerMatch. Develop partnerships with senior living facilities and organizations serving older adults to identify potential projects. Identify a transportation partner to make it easier for volunteers to reach project destinations.

Explore a partnership to create a traveling intergenerational community center in partnership with Pikes Peak Library District, PILLAR Institute, UCCS, Silver Key, The Science Fairy, PPAAA, and YMCA.

Conduct outreach with communities across the region to identify interests in Age-Friendly community initiatives and increase connections across neighborhoods and communities.

Belonging: a feeling of being happy or comfortable as part of a particular group and having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome you and accept you: A sense of belonging is one of humanity's most basic needs. (Cambridge University)

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## WORKFORCE

The concept and timelines of traditional retirements are shifting as Americans live longer. **The term retirement opens up the idea that individuals may seek encore careers, greater community influence, or start businesses even after “retirement age.”** In fact, 45% of people expect to retire late or never and 23.5% of older adults stay involved in their communities through volunteering.

According to the Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults (CASOA), of the older adults surveyed in El Paso County, 20% reported that they have employment needs and 30% report financial challenges.

Persistent ageist stereotypes, however, impede the hiring of older adults (Age Discrimination Among Workers Age 50-Plus, AARP, 2022). This problem negatively impacts the prospects of older adults, and it also limits employers' options as we see critical workforce shortages in the fields of retail, hospitality, healthcare, and customer service.

Through this strategic focus area, an education campaign will demonstrate the value of older workers in the workforce, quantifying financial benefits to individuals and entities and communities. Through partnership with Chambers of Commerce and the UCCS Economic Forum to develop evidence-based materials to inform Age-Friendly design in the area of workforce development.

An Age-Friendly community recognizes the valuable contributions that older adults bring to the workplace. **As part of the first five-year Age Friendly Pikes Peak action plan the Better Business Bureau of Southern Colorado designed an Age-Friendly Business Certification in alliance with IIAC and the City of Colorado Springs.** This certification promotes Age-Friendly business practices including the Age-Friendly built environment, hiring staff who are older adults, marketing to diverse audiences, and an Age-Friendly customer experience. In the next five years, we look forward to exploring the expansion of the Age-Friendly Business designation and filling critical employment gaps in the local workforce with skilled older adult workers.



Jumpstart the Aging Workforce Solutions ([JAWS](#)), a program of the Johnson-Beth El College of Nursing and El Paso County is connecting long term care (LTC) and homecare professionals, K-12/community college educators, higher education at UCCS, and community service organizations to bring innovative awareness to LTC career opportunities. Internships, campus programs, tours and career fairs are changing the narrative about careers working with older adults.

## Normalize an intergenerational workforce

Explore the creation of a Work Force Council in partnership with the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, AARP SCSEP, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Council, and PPAAA. Collaborate to create a local **Age-Friendly Employer Certification** to raise up the efforts of local businesses that prioritize Age-Friendly practices.

Review the AARP Employer Pledge Program and the Certified Age-Friendly Employer Program through Changing the Narrative and the Age-Friendly employer guidelines from the Encore Network to either choose one of these for local implementation or develop a new one. Explore midternship opportunities and encore fellowship opportunities as a requirement for becoming an Age-Friendly employer.



Prepare a community presentation about the value of an intergenerational workforce and Age-Friendly workplace principles, including resources on how to support employees who are caregivers in partnership with the UCCS Economic Forum, Better Business Bureau, and local chambers of commerce.

### Of El Paso County older adults who were surveyed:

- 20% have employment needs
- 30% report financial challenges
- 18% think there are excellent opportunities to build work skills
- 19% said their quality of work is positive

*(2023 Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults)*



## Shift the definition and understanding of retirement and the professional journey.



Help employers intentionally recruit and support older adult employees in partnership with community partners such as the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, JAWS, PPACG, Colorado College, UCCS, Pikes Peak State College and the Colorado Workforce Development Council, Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council.

Potential opportunities to train employers include:

- Co-creating a series about older adult reirement, including profiles of older adults exemplifying finding new purpose;
- Providing older adults with job-search resources, including a special focus on Veterans' employment and transitions;
- Creating and/or adapting resources for employers about intergenerational workforces; and
- Publicizing programs that focus on professional transitions.

Support the creation of a printed and online resource guide for training and skills building for older adults in partnership with the Pikes Peak Workforce Center and PPAAA.

## Rebuild and sustain a professional caretaker workforce.



Develop career interest and talent recruitment of careers serving older adults alongside JAWS to support efforts with high schools, community colleges, tech programs, and other educational programs.

Participate in JAWS' quarterly convening of long term care, healthcare, and other related businesses to identify opportunities to collaborate and provide better support for employees. Highlight these efforts through local media channels.

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# Looking Ahead



IIAC is proud of the Age-Friendly accomplishments we have achieved thus far in collaboration with community members, the City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County staff and elected officials, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), Pikes Peak Area Agency on Aging (PPAAA), and many other community partners. As we explore the expansion of this work through these strategies and action steps, we will continue to build on this strong foundation of collaboration to strengthen efforts and build upon successes. To achieve an Age-Friendly Pikes Peak, we will need the input, expertise, and partnership of all who live and grow older here. Through establishing trust and leveraging our resources, we are confident in our collective ability to achieve this shared vision of building and sustaining an Age-Friendly community.

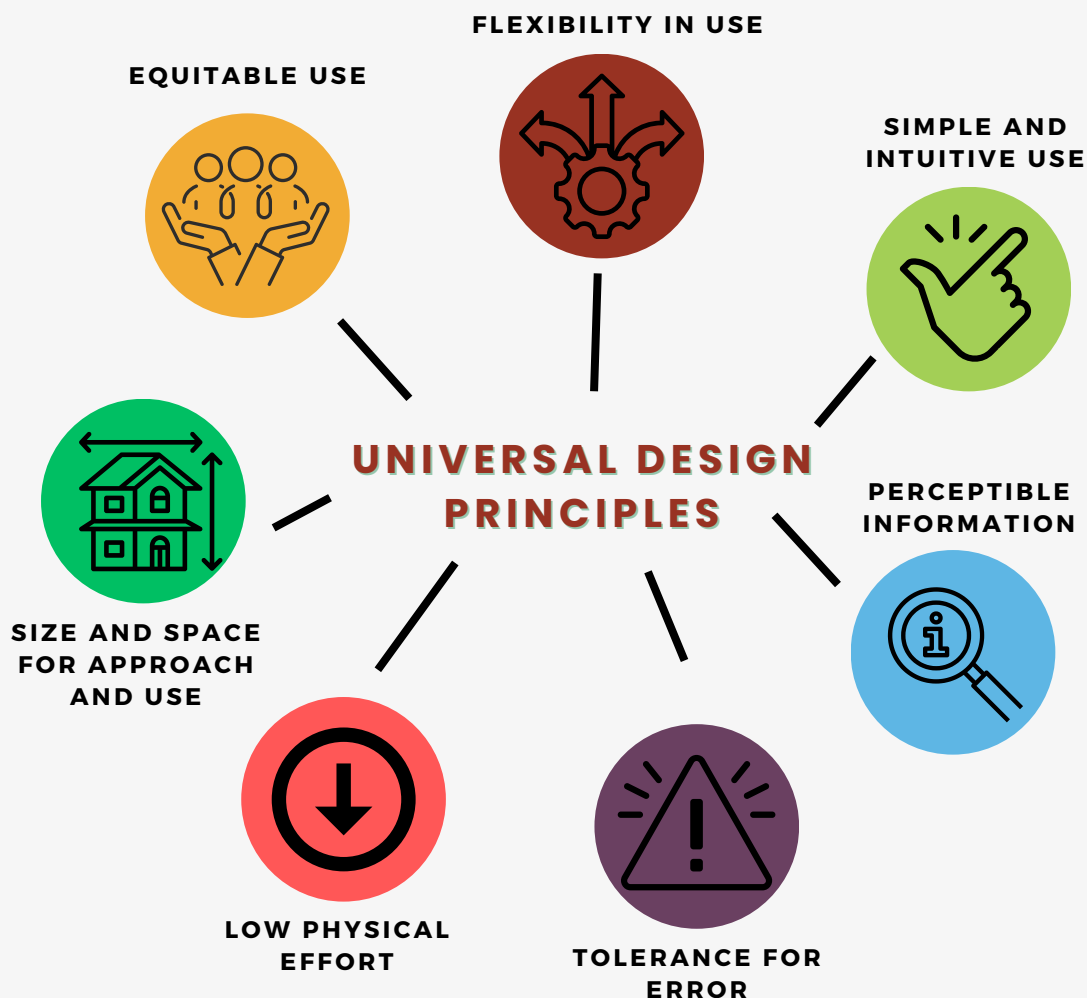
IIAC will work to build on the work group stakeholders and other interested community members to move ahead with the implementation of the plan. Annually the work groups will evaluate the progress in coordination with IIAC to respond to changing needs and priorities in the community. Annually IIAC will prioritize the strategies to focus for the coming year and determine capacity needs to advance the work.

# Appendix: Universal Design Principles

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## UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Universal design is a framework for the design of living, working, and social spaces. These principles account for the needs of the widest possible range of people and our unique needs. Investing resources in universal design principles ensures that our community assets are leveraged for the maximum benefit of all community members. The seven (7) Principles of Universal Design were developed in 1997 by a working group of architects, product designers, engineers and environmental design researchers, led by the late Ronald Mace at North Carolina State University.



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## **PRINCIPLE ONE: EQUITABLE USE**

The design is useful to people with diverse physical abilities.

- It provides the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not.
- It avoids segregating or stigmatizing any users.
- Make provisions for privacy, security, and safety equally available to all users.
- The design is appealing to all users.

## **PRINCIPLE TWO: FLEXIBILITY IN USE**

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

- It provides choice in methods of use.
- It accommodates right-or left-handed access and use.
- It facilitates the user's accuracy and precision.
- It provides adaptability to the user's pace.

## **PRINCIPLE THREE: SIMPLE AND INTUITIVE USE**

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

- It eliminates unnecessary complexity.
- It is consistent with user expectations and intuition.
- It accommodates a wide range of literacy and language skills.
- It arranges information consistent with its importance.
- It provides effective prompting and feedback during and after task completion.

## **PRINCIPLE FOUR: PERCEPTIBLE INFORMATION**

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

- It uses different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) for redundant presentation of essential information.
- It provides adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings.
- It maximizes "legibility" of essential information.
- It differentiates elements in ways that can be described (i.e., make it easy to give instructions or directions).
- It provides compatibility with a variety of techniques or devices used by people with sensory limitations.



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## **PRINCIPLE FIVE: TOLERANCE FOR ERROR**

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

- It arranges elements to minimize hazards and errors: most used elements, most accessible; hazardous elements eliminated, isolated, or shielded.
- It provides warnings of hazards and errors.
- It provides fail safe features.
- It discourages unconscious action in tasks that require vigilance.

## **PRINCIPLE SIX: LOW PHYSICAL EFFORT**

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

- It allows user to maintain a neutral body position.
- It uses reasonable operating forces.
- It minimizes repetitive actions.
- It minimizes sustained physical effort.

## **PRINCIPLE SEVEN: SIZE AND SPACE FOR APPROACH AND USE**

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

- It provides a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user.
- It makes reaching to all components comfortable for any seated or standing user.
- It accommodates variations in hand and grip size.
- It provides adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance.

National Disability Authority. (n.d.). *The 7 Principles*.

<https://universaldesign.ie/what-is-universal-design/the-7-principles/>