

Cultural Shift

We envision a community with a full, honest understanding of the entire range of the realities of aging. Our community will converse openly about aging, will embrace aging, and will provide a full spectrum of choices that support aging well.

Policy Strategies:

- 1 Secure commitment from all governmental units to consider all policy and operational decisions through an Aging Well lens; develop a set of recommended Aging Well criteria to aid in this review.
- 2 Ensure that representatives of older adult groups are given a voice in policy discussions.
- 3 Advocate for inclusion of older adults in city, county and agency advisory groups and commissions that address issues relevant to older adults (zoning, transportation, housing, internet connectivity)

Information & Navigation

We envision a community with a robust and easily accessed system for information and navigation to help all residents get the support and assistance they need. This system will include multiple points of access and creative methods of communication. Local partners will coordinate together to ensure that information is up-to-date and that navigation services are cohesive.

Policy Strategies:

- 1 **Ensure that City and County representatives are aware of and committed to addressing issues affecting older adults.**
- 2 Support the advancement of older adults as Community Health Workers in Washington State, including assessing what compensation is needed to make this a viable and sustainable role.
- 3 Maintain existing funding streams for older adults, including Older Americans Act and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP).
- 4 Advocate for Medicare to pay for navigation services.
- 5 Advocate for increased Medicaid rates and payment of navigation services.

Housing

We envision a community that has an adequate supply of safe, stable, affordable housing, including options that can provide the appropriate levels of care when needed.

Policy Strategies:

- 1 Strengthen partnerships among housing providers, developers, local governments, and the State to attract providers/facilities to fill identified housing gaps.
- 2 Promote the development of adult family homes (homes providing long-term care for up to six individuals, licensed by DSHS) by providing additional resources, such as owner and staff training or funding for building improvements.
- 3 **Prevent conversion of existing subsidized senior housing stock to non-senior or market-rate.**
- 4 Utilize local funding sources to address financial barriers to aging in place (rental assistance, property tax abatements, utility cost assistance).
- 5 **Revise land use and building codes county-wide to facilitate fostering accessibility and diversity of housing** (flexibility around roommate arrangements in single family homes, construction of Accessory Dwelling Units, development of adult family homes, etc.).
- 6 Forge public-private partnerships to set aside land and for co-housing or other innovative housing.

Intergenerational Community

We envision a community where intergenerational interactions are the norm. Our communities will intentionally promote healthy living by providing opportunities for sharing information, support, and connections between generations.

Policy Strategies:

- 1** Governmental entities, community institutions and nonprofit organizations adopt policies and regulations that facilitate intergenerational shared sites in housing, childcare and other settings. This may include revising policies that currently hinder intergenerational spaces and activities, such as different safety codes for children and elders.
- 2** Governmental entities, community institutions and nonprofit organizations prioritize investing in programs and services with an intergenerational focus, such as those in housing, faith communities, and education (including higher education).
- 3** Local foundations and other funders establish funding priorities that incentivize intergenerational housing, childcare and other programs.

Transportation

We envision a community that meets the transportation needs of all residents of Whatcom County through a combination of public, commercial, and community-based options. Meeting older adults' transportation needs is essential for their ability to access health and social services, secure food and other necessary supplies, engage in employment, volunteer roles, or social activities, and connect with friends and family.

Policy Strategies:

- 1** Prioritize the mobility and other access needs of seniors and people with disabilities by advocating for funding to implement the Whatcom County and City of Bellingham ADA Transition Plans for the Public Right-of-Way.
- 2** Work with jurisdictions within Whatcom County to adopt a Complete Streets policy to improve accessibility and safety for people of all ages and abilities.
- 3** Ensure that all local jurisdictions' transportation plans (including the transportation chapters of comprehensive plans, and bicycle and pedestrian plans) engage older adults and people with disabilities and highlight policies and projects that prioritize their mobility and other access needs.
- 4** Advocate for planning that connects transportation, land use, and housing, such as siting housing for older adults in close proximity to services, and developing neighborhood infrastructure and services that support older adults to age in place.

Wellness & Healthcare

We envision a community where people are meaningfully connected to others, where older adults have ready access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity, where a full array of healthcare services is available and affordable, and where healthcare providers and caregivers are well-trained and supported.

Policy Strategies:

- 1** Encourage healthcare organizations to assess and prioritize addressing older adults' behavioral health needs, including psychiatric care.
- 2** Expand local organizational, governmental, and philanthropic funding to wellness programs that serve older adults in our community.
- 3** Advocate for changing the payment model so that health outcomes, rather than services delivered, are the focus of our healthcare system.