

# 2021 AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PLAN

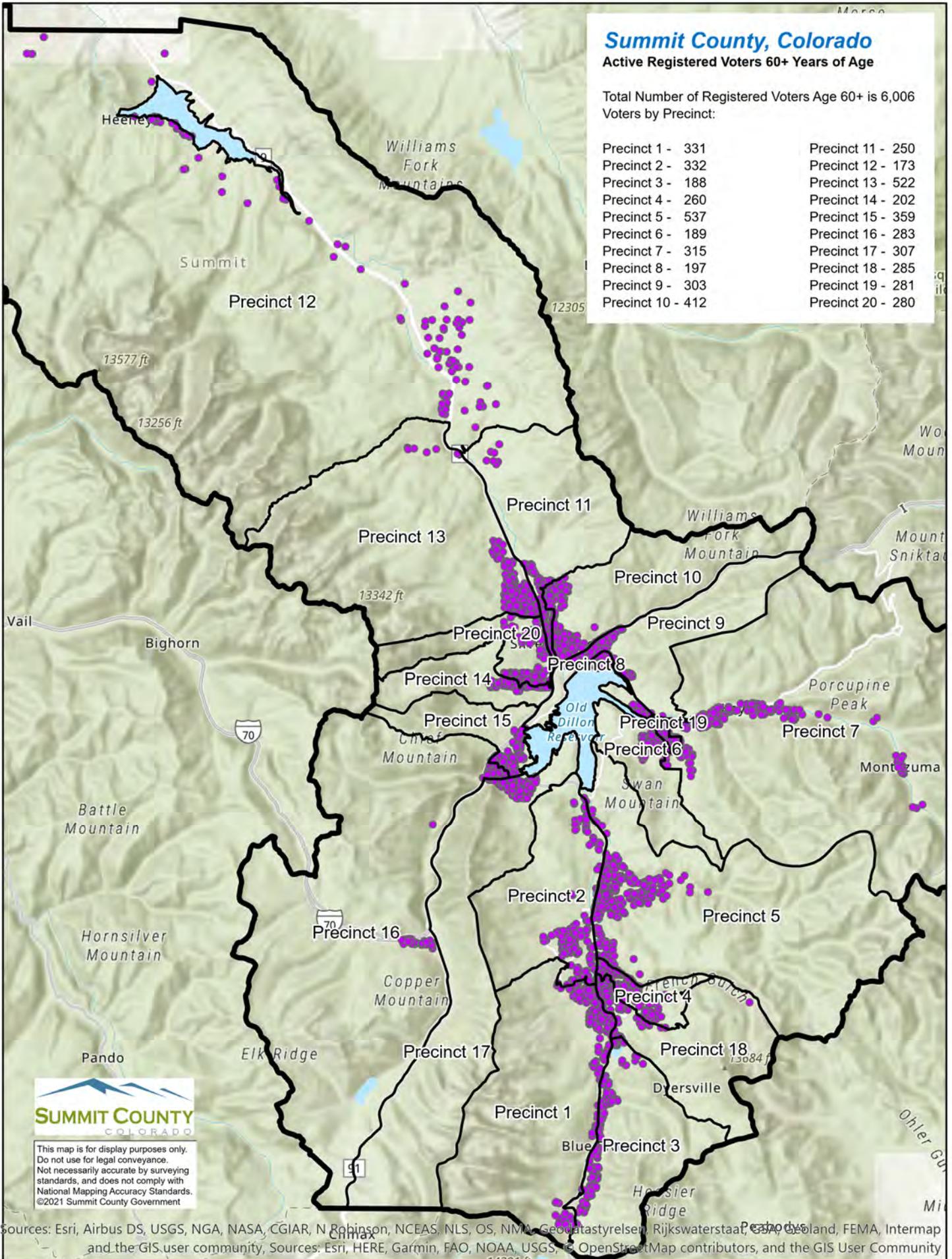


## Summit County, Colorado

### Active Registered Voters 60+ Years of Age

Total Number of Registered Voters Age 60+ is 6,006  
Voters by Precinct:

Precinct 1 - 331	Precinct 11 - 250
Precinct 2 - 332	Precinct 12 - 173
Precinct 3 - 188	Precinct 13 - 522
Precinct 4 - 260	Precinct 14 - 202
Precinct 5 - 537	Precinct 15 - 359
Precinct 6 - 189	Precinct 16 - 283
Precinct 7 - 315	Precinct 17 - 307
Precinct 8 - 197	Precinct 18 - 285
Precinct 9 - 303	Precinct 19 - 281
Precinct 10 - 412	Precinct 20 - 280



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Not necessarily accurate by surveying  
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# INTRODUCTION



## **A COMMUNITY PLAN FOR ALL AGES AND LIFE STAGES**

Summit County has always been a welcoming destination for all ages. In 2019, Summit County was designated as an Age-Friendly community, formally recognizing older adults as valued members of the community. Summit County is committed to developing new initiatives, while promoting the exiting efforts of partners, non-profits, County departments and the community members themselves, to make Summit County a livable community for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

In 2019, Summit Senior Services gathered input from officials, partners, professionals and community members, to identify four core focus areas to commence the age friendly work including Outdoor Spaces and Housing, Community Support and Health Services, Respect and Social Inclusion and Communication and Information, patterned against the World Health Organization's eight domains of livability. The pandemic of 2020 revealed additional gaps and opportunities for improvement and further illustrated the necessity for a purposeful plan moving forward. Although not exhaustive, the targeted priority areas provide a framework to begin the important work of identifying, coordinating and promoting available services, developing capacity for the growing older adult population, and addressing gaps in resources to allow residents to remain in Summit County throughout all their life stages.

## GEOGRAPHY

The 619 square miles (396,000 acres) of Summit County, at an altitude ranging from 7947 to 14,270 feet above sea level, include vast mountain ranges, rolling tundra, creeks, rivers and reservoirs that house abundant wildlife, fish and fowl. Eighty percent of the County's terra firma is federal public land, including the four world class ski resorts of Breckenridge, Keystone, Arapahoe Basin and Copper. While the natural and abundant beauty in and around Summit County is the primary reason for many who relocated and/or raised their families here, it can also create complex and limiting challenges to the activities of everyday living, especially as residents age.

While the tourist destinations of Breckenridge, Frisco, Dillon, Keystone and Silverthorne are widely known, the smaller and more remote towns of Blue River, Heeney, Montezuma and Dyersville are home to an equal number of notable landmarks and rich history of the region. Winding roads, hiking trails, mountain passes, native wildlife, colorful aspen groves and the unlimited ability to enjoy the outdoors, year-round, make Summit County's towns a desirable location for work, play and relaxation.

## POPULATION AND POPULATION GROWTH

The older adult population in Summit County is expected to increase significantly in the next few years as the Baby Boomer generation ages. In fact, in 2019, Breckenridge was identified as the fourth fastest growing 65y+ population in the U.S.. The Colorado State Demography Office estimates that residents over 60y will increase by \_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_ individuals. That equates to \_\_\_ additional older adults per day. The diversity among the aging population will also continue to grow, requiring programs and services that are culturally relevant, tailored to specific needs and communicated bilingually.

Although younger older adults continue to be active, engaged, employed and self-sufficient, the older-older adults (over 75) and those aging into this life stage are concerned about being able to stay in Summit County. This concern is rooted in existing or perceived issues surrounding mobility and transportation, in-home services, lack of home-maintenance support, lack of downsizing housing options and available healthcare.

An additional significant characteristic of an aging population is the number of older adults living alone. Loneliness and social isolation and their associated higher risk for health problems, are growing concerns, nationwide, and the geography of our mountain communities contribute to this challenge. The availability of programs and spaces to gather, socialize and participate is closely correlated to the older adult connection to the community.

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Making meaningful improvements in the creation and delivery of programs and services for older adults benefits the entire community of Summit County. This 2021 Age Friendly Plan is the first step towards a collaborative and inclusive commitment, among elected officials, county departments, business leaders, non-profit organizations and community members, themselves, to make Summit County a livable community for residents and visitors of all ages, cultures and abilities.

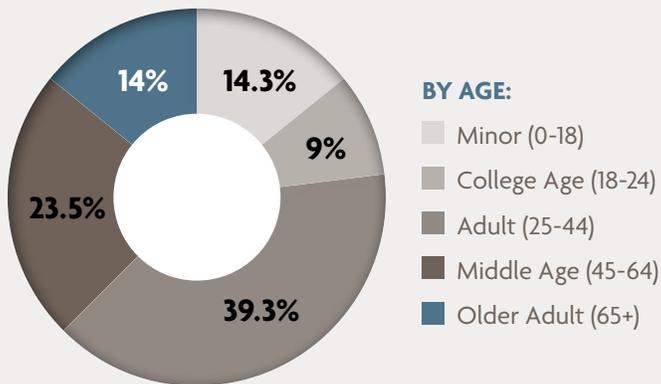
# AT A GLANCE

## POPULATION

### TOTAL POPULATION (2019)

30,983

### POPULATION GROUPS (2019)



### OLDER ADULT GROWTH

	2019	2025	2030
<b>Total Population</b>	30,943	33,386	35,972
<b>Age 60 to 64</b>	1,712	1,639	1,707
<b>Age 65 to 69</b>	1,496	1,542	1,449
<b>Age 70 to 84</b>	2,426	2,662	2,716
<b>Age 84+</b>	226	369	556

## PHYSICAL

### LIVING ALONE



Households By Age	2019	2024
<b>55 to 64</b>	2,719	2,760
<b>65 to 74</b>	2,163	2,474
<b>75 to 84</b>	760	1,158
<b>85+</b>	131	202

### HOUSING CHALLENGES

#### HOUSING BURDENED (retired & soon-to-be-retired)

- **57%** at less than 80% AMI
- **42%** at more than 80% AMI
- **56%** of monthly income spent on housing

#### AGING IN HOUSEHOLDS (with 2+ adults, age 75+)

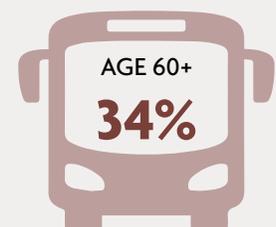
- **22** households with income less than \$25,000
- **33** households with income between \$25,000-\$49,999
- **78** households with income at least \$50,000

#### INDEPENDENT LIVING CHALLENGES

- **14%** experience difficulty maintain their home
- **18%** need help maintaining their yards
- **39%** need help with heavy or intense housework

### TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

Don't feel comfortable using public transportation.



# SOCIAL

# SUPPORT

## SOCIAL CONNECTION (AGE 60+)



feel lonely or isolated



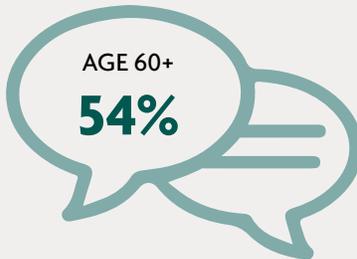
have issues with finding and getting to interesting events



report feeling depressed

## COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Don't feel their voice is heard in the community.



## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION (2018)



AGE 60+

■ Paid:	\$79,917,484
■ Unpaid:	\$46,336,617

**TOTAL**  
**\$126,254,101**

to the economy in Summit County

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- **34%** feel unable to find information about resources for older adults
- **35%** don't know what services are available for older adults in the community

## HEALTHCARE NEEDS



**44%** have trouble finding healthcare they need.



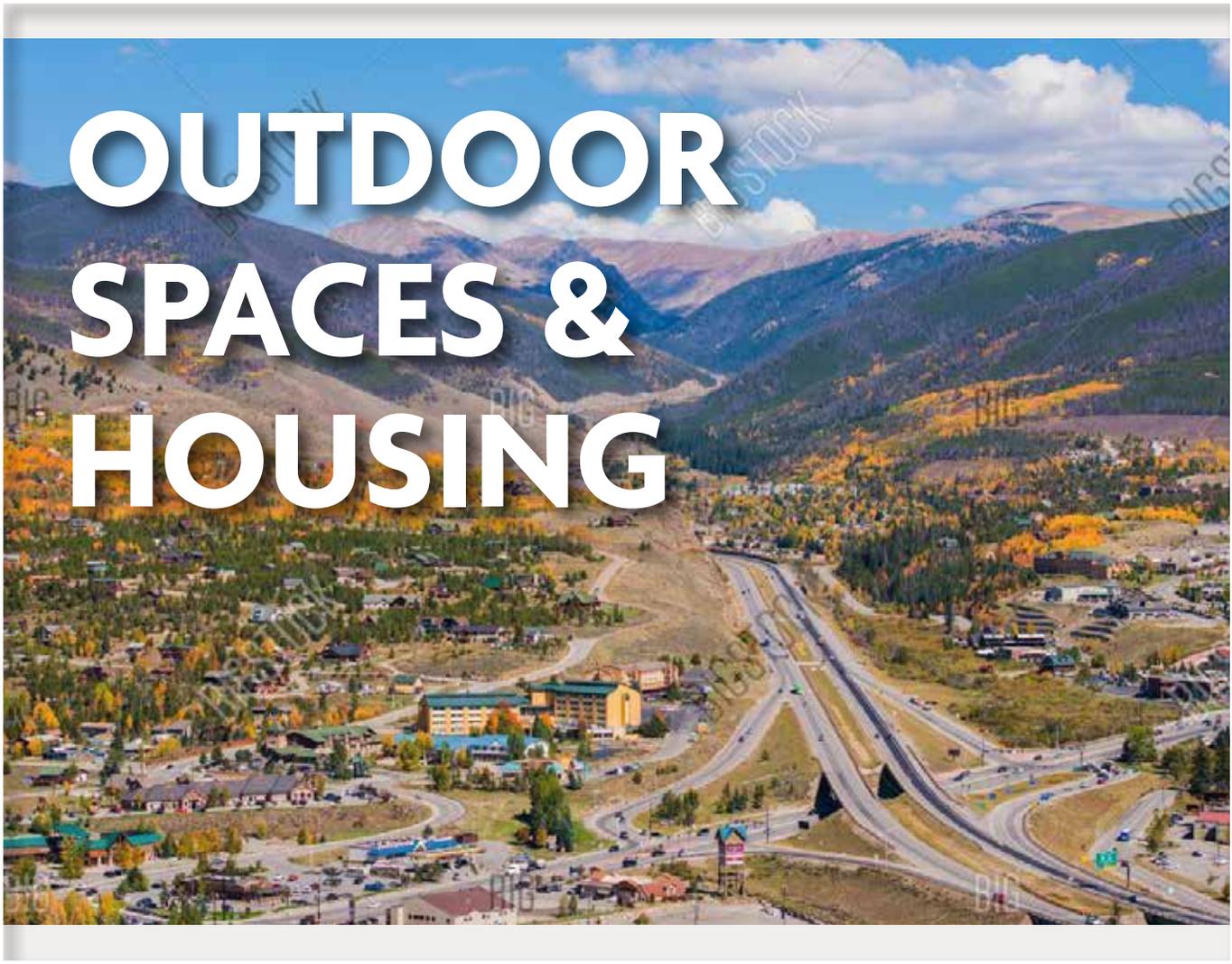
**58%** are unable to find available, affordable quality physical healthcare.



**79%** are unable to find available, affordable quality mental healthcare.



**18%** are unable to get vision care needed.



# OUTDOOR SPACES & HOUSING

In an age-friendly community, outdoor spaces are not only accessible and safe; they are welcoming to people of all ages and abilities. Housing in an age-friendly community is universally designed, affordable, free from harm, and in close proximity to transportation and other important services. Housing options are available, affordable for multiple levels of income and offer a variety of space configurations. Existing homes in an age-friendly community are upgraded for safety and livability by home modification, and supported by in-home services programs.

Summit County's livability score reflects a very healthy, educated and active population who are challenged with housing, transportation and the proximity of neighborhoods to the amenities to live, work and play in Summit County on a daily basis. The rural nature of much of the county creates additional challenges for adults who live just beyond the municipal boundaries and designated transportation routes.

The 5800 older adults living in Summit County have different preferences for what features they want in a house and the size and demographics of their neighborhood. A majority of older adults in Summit County enjoy their connection

to the welcoming community. Many elders, 673, live alone and 2175 of the occupied homes have a resident over 65 (couples and living with family members). Nearly half of (45%) of the older population in Summit County is over 70y at which age concerns about falling, access to in-home care and transportation when unable to drive one's self become more heightened.

The 2020 Summit County Housing Needs Update confirmed the national research and feedback collected at the age friendly community input sessions, that most older adults want to stay in their current home. Fifty two percent of these permanent residents live in the unincorporated areas of the County. Over half of the retired or soon-to-be-retired residents want to live in single-family homes, but if preferences were met (bedrooms, bathrooms, parking and affordability), condos, duplexes and townhomes become significantly more interesting. Among this studied group, the top housing preferences include affordability, quality of residences and storage/garage space. Ranking highest on location considerations are privacy, sense of safety and proximity to parks recreation and town.

Transportation is inextricably connected to housing and driving is the primary way many older adults maneuver around the County. Reliable options, public and private, are limited for residents who need to transition from driving to a different modality. While 36% of the older adults are able to use public transportation, the location and proximity of bus stops to services create barriers to this option. (More CASOA findings here)

## AGE-FRIENDLY LISTENING SESSIONS

Summit County is has an abundance of outdoor activities in expansive outdoor spaces. There is no shortage of places to hike, bike, ski/snowboard, and recreate in the great outdoors. In addition, there are several spaces where one may quietly observe the mountain and valley amenities and accompanying wildlife.

Environmentally-sensitive improved outdoor spaces including the Dillon Amphitheater, Frisco Marina, Frisco Historic Park & Museum, the Frisco Outdoor Park, along with the world class resorts of Breckenridge, A-Basin, Keystone and Copper, provide many options for all abilities. Miles of maintained paved and unpaved trails throughout the County connect residents and visitors to the surrounding region and the plethora of monthly and seasonal special events and activities. Local theater, outdoor dining, live music, and organized outings with local clubs and informal groups, contribute to the robust social outdoor offerings throughout the year in Summit County.

Outdoor Space features that benefit residents of all ages include:

- Sidewalks; walkable neighborhoods
- Lighting
- Resting areas including railings and/or benches
- Gathering areas to encourage interaction
- Flexible spaces with activities for low impact physical exercise
- Wayfinding, suggested routes and orientation placards
- Accessibility for all abilities and supportive equipment



Housing options to allow older adults to remain in Summit County are nonexistent. The influx of part-time residents coupled with the high number of residential short-term rentals has limited the availability of downsizing options for older adults, leaving them in multi-level, aging single-family homes in need of repairs, upgrades and modifications for health, safety and security. In home services and door-to-door transportation options are limited and/or cost-prohibitive.

Staying in Summit has been organized to address the challenges and perceived barriers to being able to continue to age in place in Summit County. The organization gathers input from planners and developers along with the older adults themselves and advocates for older adult needs and desires with the County leaders and community partners.

The Summit County Senior Center receives high praise for the amount of diverse older adult and intergenerational offerings and activities including meals (onsite and home-delivered), exercise, educational programming, cultural immersions, special interest clubs and social events, as well as being as a critical resource for community and referral information. Participants are concerned that as the aging population increases, the current facility, operating at capacity now, will need to be expanded, both physically and programmatically.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **OPEN SPACES**

1. Partner with Friends of Dillon Ranger District (FDRD) to create and distribute information on safe and accessible trails and hikes for older adults including options for resting and available restrooms  
(Cross reference: Communication & Information)
2. Collaborate with Open Space and Trails and Community Development to evaluate and investigate the needs of older adult using open spaces, including increasing accessibility and connectivity of current trails, additional paved trails, safe existing sidewalks, railings, lighting and resting areas for older adults
3. Create and promote organized opportunities for small group older adult outdoor activities

### **HOUSING & HOME MODIFICATION**

1. Advocate for & promote the need for a continuum of care facility for physical and mental health
2. Support the efforts of community groups, such as Staying in Summit, to investigate and secure the donation of land to build livable neighborhoods for older adults that are accessible, affordable, supportive and safe
3. Explore additional opportunities and continue to advocate for innovative, universally designed, independent options for older adult living in Summit County
4. Promote available and affordable living options within Summit County for transitional stages (retiring/financial changes, losing spouse, moving/downsizing, loss of friends) and life stages (injury or illness; physical and mental)

5. Investigate and advocate for innovative housing options for paid and unpaid in-home caregivers
6. Create and promote a program for retrofitting aging homes of older adults to make them safe for aging in place
7. Partner with Colorado Mountain College (CMC), Northwest Colorado Center for Independence (NWCCI), Vintage, Lowe's and Habitat for Humanity to create training programs for contractors and older adults that address age-friendly remodeling needs

## TRANSPORTATION

1. Promote the availability of medical rides for older adults to anywhere in the state, including Denver
2. Promote the availability of volunteer drivers and mileage reimbursement vouchers for older adult transportation needs
3. Enhance and promote affordable, accessible and on-demand multi-modal transportation options
4. Collaborate with Summit Stage, Mountain Mobility and other local and regional transportation partners to provide a centralized communication resource and bus schedules that are simple and easy to use for residents and visitors of all ages
5. Provide information and technological assistance for on-demand and real-time apps and programs associated with transportation



## DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

### GREATER UNDERSTANDING

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### INCREASED PARTICIPATION

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### IMPROVED PUBLIC OPTIONS

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### PROMOTIONAL PIECES

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### NEW PARTNERSHIPS

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# COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES

Community Support and Health Services in age friendly communities provides programs and services to allow residents to remain safely in their homes and delay and/or avoid premature institutionalization. Critical to this assistance is the knowledge about and access to local affordable care. To maintain good health, independence and wellness throughout all life stages, residents need clear means of accessing physical and mental health support, in their homes and at local facilities, accompanied by a plan for emergency preparedness.

Included in Community Support are nutritional programs, wellness programs, and educational programs about aging in place. As the population ages, more services are needed, especially for residents over the age of 75. Research suggests that many older adults would take advantage of community support programs including nutritional support, transportation, home modification, chore services and legal aid, but lack a clear path to engage them or the ability to pay for services.

The leading cause of hospitalizations and disability in older adult is falls. Yet, according to research published in March 2021 JAMA Internal Medicine, “about 12 million people over 65, living in their own homes, could use equipment to

help them safely bathe and use the toilet. About five million of them don't have those items, even though they generally cost less than \$50." Barriers to obtaining these simple safety measures include cost, lack of professional installers, resources for materials, perception of "loss of independence," the complexity of acquisition and usage processes.

Summit County Senior Center provides community support through meal service, resource referral, lifelong learning opportunities, intergenerational interactions and organized physical activities. Vintage, the local Area Agency on Aging for Summit County, provides funding made available through the Older Americans Act and a wide variety of supportive services including transportation, dental/vision assistance, options counseling, nutrition programs, caregiver support, respite services, evidence-based health programs, volunteerism, and educational programs.

Healthcare and access to affordable healthcare continue to be a challenge on the mountain communities of Colorado, including Summit County. Although Summit County ranks 6th in the State of Colorado for both health outcomes (length & quality of life) and health factors (behavior, care, social/economic factors & physical environment), ratios of primary care physicians (1610:1), mental health professionals (341:1), and dentists (1107:1), along with typical challenges of transportation and affordability, make it difficult for older adults in the area to access the healthcare they want and need.

When Summit County older adults were surveyed, while 36% are experiencing health problems, 44% reported at least a minor problem obtaining the healthcare they need and 22% are unable to afford their medications. When looking for assistance, 42% find available of affordable quality healthcare and 21% affordable quality mental healthcare. One in five (18%) of the older adults have problems performing "regular" activities including walking, eating and preparing meals. Emotionally, one quarter of older adults in Summit County (25%) feel depressed and 21% feel lonely or isolated. Over one third of the older adults (35%) do not know what services are available for them in Summit County.

Annually, Summit County older adults spend a lot of time outdoors with 89% visiting neighborhood parks. Indoors, older residents visit the library (70%) and the recreation center (62%), while only 40% visited the Senior Center. That being said, comparatively, Summit County's visits to the Senior Center are well above neighboring counties with the next nearest visitation rate at 22% (Jackson, Pitkin).

While 98% of older adults rate Summit County as an excellent or good place to live, only 61% say the same about the community as a place to retire. Just over half (57%) rated the quality of services for older adults as excellent or good and (56%) expected to remain in the community throughout their retirement. As with other mountain communities, it is not unusual for residents of Summit County to move out of the county to be closer to available and affordable healthcare providers. (Survey source: Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults, 2018)



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## AGE FRIENDLY LISTENING SESSIONS

Homebound and geographically isolated older adults have significant challenges accessing healthcare both in-person and over the internet. Transportation, to and from care resources, is not readily available for patients. Language barriers also present challenges to residents of all ages seeking healthcare in Summit County.

Telehealth gained more popularity during the 2020/21 pandemic but also uncovered significant gaps in connectivity, translation services (outside of the hospital setting), and technology/computer training for older adults. Particular to the immigrant community, technological options for healthcare were hampered by lack of computers (affordability), understanding of protocols and systems, lack of bilingual technical support and the availability of care.

The need to expand home health services and paid caregivers continues to be of major concern among residents in Summit County. One to two options currently exist with secondary challenges of accepting insurance and insurance coverage. New private-pay alternatives are considering and/or moving into the region but continue to be thwarted by the lack of professional, trained and unskilled personnel. The seasonality of the region, along with the unavailability of housing also makes it difficult to recruit and retain caregivers and qualified workers.

Socially and culturally, Summit County is a welcoming, inclusive community with expanded programming in the arts, education and community building events and activities. Although translation services are challenging, it is an issue that is being addressed by dedicated local organizations including Family & Intercultural Resource Center (FIRC), the Senior Center and local providers. Older adults, working and volunteering in a variety of organizations, are concerned with overcrowding, preserving the sense of community, and isolation of unengaged elder community members.



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Promote the Senior Center as a centralized resource for medical information that offers online, in-person, and bilingual referrals to the Community Care Clinic, Vintage, FIRC, local hospitals, mental health providers and more
2. Advocate to expand and promote available healthcare service options for older adults of all ages, economic status and abilities
3. Increase awareness of insurance options among older adults, their families and caregivers and available options counseling through Vintage, FIRC and a Care Navigator
4. Identify, inform and connect with older adults who are geographically, technologically and culturally isolated
5. Investigate and enhance accessible, affordable, supportive and safe transportation to medical treatments and care resources (public and private)
6. Advocate for and establish accessible, affordable, supportive and secure technology options for healthcare including in-home connectivity and telehealth options
7. Increase informational programming including preventative health & wellness, fall-prevention, dementia and Alzheimer's, palliative care & hospice, mental and behavioral health and resources for additional information
8. Advocate to expand home healthcare services and respite care, through innovative business, nursing and CNA incentive programs with Colorado Mountain College, the Chamber of Commerce, Department of Local Affairs, and/or the Small Business Association and partner agencies, to serve Summit County
9. Advocate for increased vision and dental programs for older adults including screening and treatment events
10. Advocate for and create incentives to increase the number of nurses living and working in Summit County
11. Encourage and/or create mentoring programs to facilitate recommendations 8-10

## DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

### **OUTREACH PLAN**

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### **TECHNOLOGY ACCESSIBILITY AND UPGRADES**

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### **NEW PROGRAMMING**

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### **NEW INNOVATIVE INCENTIVES**

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### **MENTORING PILOT PROGRAMS**

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# RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Age friendly communities value older adults and provide supportive ways for elders to continue to do what they are doing, retain their connection to the community, contribute to the community dialogue, participate in new and interesting programs and activities and financially contribute to the local economic vitality through paid or volunteer work. The ultimate goal of age-friendly communities is to address inequities in the physical and social aspects of a community, improve the health and wellbeing of all residents, and more particularly, older adults, and thereby create an environment of overall respect and social inclusion. Social inclusion includes the three characteristics of integration, support and access to resources and allows older adults to participate more fully in community offerings of all kinds. Community-based programs provide intergenerational engagement opportunities that underscore the unique and valuable contributions of older adults. In contrast, social exclusion leads to loneliness and isolation.

Loneliness and social isolation have become a public health issue affecting 1 in 3 US adults over the age of 45. Social isolation is defined as the objective physical separation from other people (such as living alone), while loneliness is the subjective distressed sense or feeling of being alone or separated. Being physically isolated is one of the top predictors

of loneliness. Transitional events such as experiencing death of a spouse, physical separation from friends or family, retirement, loss of transportation, and loss of mobility, increase the risk for health effects from loneliness and social isolation. Multiple research studies have linked social isolation and loneliness to higher risks of high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer’s disease, and even death. Lower income older adults are more at risk for these physical and mental conditions. A Brigham Young University study found that prolonged social isolation is as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and is more harmful than obesity. In addition, social isolation and loneliness have serious financial implications with Medicare spending an estimated additional \$6.7 billion each year on socially isolated older adults.

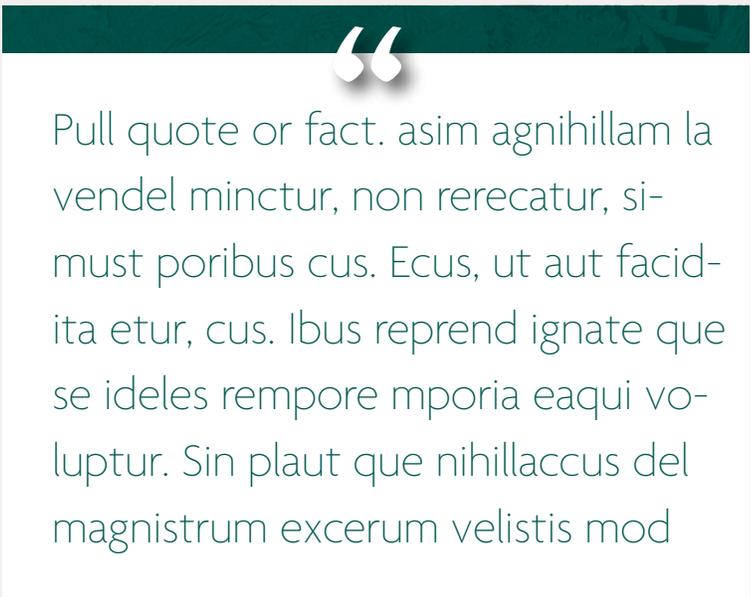
Walkability, transportation/mobility, and housing represent the physical aspect of social inclusion and are addressed in the Outdoor Spaces and Housing section of this plan. Improving community design by removing physical barriers to participation fosters social connection and engagement, neighborhood interest and involvement and gathering in places and spaces for social interaction of all ages.

In Summit County, approximately 31% of the older adults over 65 who live a house, live alone. The geographically expansive nature of the county contributes to the physical and technological isolation of many residents over 60, significantly affecting their ability to access existing needed services and contributing to their physical and cognitive impairments, depression, and good nutrition. Language barriers and few opportunities for comfortable engagement cause the elders in the Latinx community to be more affected than their non-Hispanic neighbors. Although 98% of older adults rate Summit County as an excellent or good place to live, only 61% feel it is a good place to retire. Only 56% feel they will be able remain in Summit County throughout their retirement.

Older adults in Summit County find plenty of opportunities to volunteer (99%) but less chances to be gainfully employed (49%). Recreational interaction (including games, arts and library programs) and fitness programs (classes and self-guided outdoor excursions) are known and available to all (100%). Community engagement and access to information are less fulfilling for older residents with only 57% being satisfied with the overall quality and availability of services for older residents.

Although 80% of Summit County’s elders feel there a good opportunities to attend or participate in public meetings, only 54% feel their “voice” is heard in the community. Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) feel they are treated unfairly or discriminated against because of their age.

Over one third of the older adult community (35%) do not know what services are available for them in Summit County, so it is not surprising that one fourth (24%) of the older adult population have difficulty finding interesting recreational, cultural and social events to attend and only 40% have visited the Senior Center.



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## AGE FRIENDLY LISTENING SESSIONS

Older adults in Summit County overwhelmingly gave high marks to Summit County's sense of community, proper values, inclusiveness, friendly, neighborly and generous community residents, and great respect and admiration for older adults. The robust and diverse programming at the Senior and Recreation Centers was applauded and collaboration among the jurisdictions was commended. Volunteerism was high among the attending residents as was their participation in indoor and outdoor monthly and annual events. Intergenerational and multicultural reading programs, activities at and in collaboration with the local animal shelter, mentoring by local clubs and in schools, and library activities, were cited as examples of the warm and welcoming neighborliness of Summit County.

Participants were somewhat surprised to learn that only 19% of the 5800 full-time older adult residents were frequent participants in events and activities at the Senior Center, resulting in discussions shifting to ways to encourage engagement initiatives.

Priorities include expanding the local school programs at both the elementary and high school levels. After-school mentoring and tutoring (broadening reach of Mountain Mentors and Rotary Club programs) create mutually beneficial experiences for the participating older adults and the students and their families. Connecting with students through school counselors and service clubs capitalizes on older adult wisdom and experience to fill gaps in math and science learning and special interests.

Invitations need to include Spanish-speaking members of the older adult population to develop trust and ongoing interactions and intercultural expression. Family Intercultural Resource Center (FIRC) was identified as a natural partner for collaboration on new programming.

Ageism continues to be a challenge throughout the State and Summit County is committed to creating and maintaining age-friendly work places where older adults are recognized for their significant contribution to the economic vitality of the region. More information will be created and distributed to highlight contributions of the community elders and opportunities to tap into their experience.

Addressing engagement barriers and ageist inequities, real or perceived, will provide meaningful roles for the older adults in Summit County and foster personal fulfillment, better physical and mental health, and mutually beneficial interdependence to allow more Summit County older adults to age in community.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to support and more widely promote the diverse programming and gatherings at the Senior Center including meals, exercise classes, single interest clubs, lifelong learning courses, wellness classes, intergenerational and multicultural programs, hospitality training and more
2. Continue to recognize and honor, in person and in media releases, the older adult volunteers and other older adult contributions in collaboration with the Summit Daily News, Vintage and the Summit Foundation
3. Investigate, initiate and create marketing campaigns, in local newspapers and other media outlets, that highlight respect for elders and reinforce that older adults are a valuable part of the Summit County Community
4. Continue to support, expand and promote older adult opportunities to volunteer and/or mentor with non-profit partners throughout Summit County, including, but not limited to Youth & Family Center, Summit County Animal Shelter, Teen Center, Senior Mentors home visits, in-school programs, service clubs, Colorado Mountain College vocational mentoring program, and more
5. Enhance and expand intergenerational programs with partners at the Senior Center, in the schools and throughout Summit County
6. Partner with FIRC and other interested groups to develop and promote intercultural programming that invites older adult members of the Latinx community to become involved in new and existing programming including cultural exchange dinners, art, dance and culinary exhibitions at the Senior Center, and intergenerational performances, film screenings and holiday traditions demonstrations
7. Conduct Changing the Narrative trainings to address ageism in Summit County

## DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

### MARKETING PLANS

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### ONGOING VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

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### INCREASED INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

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### NEW AND ONGOING INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMMING

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### QUARTERLY AGEISM TRAININGS

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# COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION



Older adults in an age-friendly community have access to relevant information in a variety of delivery methods, including in-person, printed and digitally. Staying connected with activities and people is vital to physical and mental health and wellbeing of all ages. A centralized resource and widespread distribution of timely information, reaching residents in all parts of the county, are important aspects of older adult connectivity to the guidance needed, and desire to age in community. Intuitive design and age-friendly formats eliminate barriers to receiving updates, news, important phone numbers and schedules.

Age friendly livable communities consider the communication barriers of an aging population including diminished capacity, challenges of learning new technologies, language interpretation, and access to Internet connection. In addition to keeping communications simple, short and in large type, the World Health Organization offers the following guidelines for making communications more manageable for residents of all ages:



## **BASIC INFORMATION NEEDS**

- Provide an accessible, coordinated, centralized, reliable resource center and/or system for community information
- Offer ongoing and frequent information of interest to older people
- Promote the availability of in-person communication, accessible to older people
- Provide one-on-one, trusted connections for at risk of socially isolated individuals
- Encourage friendly, person-to-person service, on request, for public meetings and commercial services

## **PRINTED INFORMATION**

- Feature large lettering in printed information, including official forms, captions and text on visual displays, with the main ideas shown by clear headings and boldface type
- Use simple, familiar words in short, straightforward sentences; avoid acronyms
- Promote the availability of printed versions of online and instructional information

## **EQUIPMENT**

- Provide answering services that give instructions slowly and clearly and inform callers how to repeat the message at any time; answering services provide options for speaking to a live person
- Provide large button and lettering on electronic equipment, including mobile telephones, radios, televisions, and bank and ticket machines
- Provide public access to computers and the Internet, at no or minimal charge, in public places such as government offices, community centers and libraries

Summit County regularly communicates with 1100 of the estimated 5800 older adults in the region through a widely distributed monthly newsletter, at events and activities of all kinds, at the regular nutrition program offered midday and in the evening at the Senior Center facility, and through public meetings. The pandemic of 2020/21 has revealed gaps and connection needs within the unengaged older adult population as well as the more rural and Latinx members of the community.

Older adults in Summit County report being connected and comfortable with online activities with 100% of those surveyed using Internet, email, texting or videos regularly. Internet usage among Summit County elders includes shopping (92%), banking (77%), researching (88%) and finding information on community information and events (71%), and use the Internet to answer a question (94%), but there is a large portion of the older adult population who are unable to find information specific to their age group and needs. Only 44% can find available information about resources for older adults and 35% do not know what services are available to them. That being said, 58% feel adequately informed about the services and activities available for older adults. Over half of the older residents of Summit County feel informed about planning for the future but only 26% are aware of any long-term care options. Over a quarter of the elders (27%) report having inadequate information on the available benefits of important public programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

## AGE FRIENDLY LISTENING SESSIONS

Community input sessions revealed several barriers experienced by residents in obtaining available information, including online and print methods. Traditional communication methods, including a monthly newsletter, informational flyers, website postings, radio and local broadcast station TV8, have been successful in engaging active older adults who attend programming at the Senior Center, amounting to 19% of the older adult population. All agreed that no one way reaches everyone and frequency is important for message recall, so a variety of mediums, along with diverse distribution partners and locations, were recommended.

Of great concern are the geographically more remote older adults who have not yet engaged in social or community programs offered by the county. In addition, members of the growing Latinx population do not access the programs and services available at the Senior Center. More effort needs to be focused on identifying remote and Latinx older adults to invite them to become connected with other elders in the region. Culturally relevant and intergenerational exhibits may attract family members who influence elder participation. Utilizing the younger-older adults' interests and experiences to pique and attract the curiosity and attention of older-older adults was also suggested as a way to create enjoyable interactions and foster new connections among the older adult population.

Lack of internet connectivity, resulting from broadband reach, lack of equipment and WIFI connection, and/or need for technology training, creates challenges for members of the community of all ages. Understanding the convenient and easy benefits of technology may increase the uptake among the older population, especially as systems are implemented at the Senior Center, where participants learn to use the systems from a practical perspective as they register for classes and sign up for meals.

Older adults continue to value and appreciate word-of-mouth, one-on-one delivery of information via telephone or in-person. Being able to process incoming information at their own pace from an unhurried, helpful and clear-speaking individual is the preferred way to receive communications. Trusted sources such as family, friends and members of their church congregation increase the success rates of the messages being absorbed. Especially for those older adults experiencing a life stage transition such as death of a spouse, downsizing or relocating their residence, close friends moving away and a sudden physical impairment, which necessitates connection to resources, the ability to speak to a live person is especially important and preferred.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Promote Senior Center as the centralized source of information, assistance, connection and programming, in English and Spanish, in person, online and on-demand.
  - Review materials annually with community focus groups
  - Create annual newspaper insert
  - Enhance social media presence
  - Create and distribute giveaways with central resource url
2. Redesign, translate and expand distribution of existing newsletter to reach isolated older adults and unengaged members, including the Latinx residents of the older adult community

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3. Create intergenerational engagement feature on timely topics for monthly newsletter and/or local press; collaborate with Respect & Inclusion initiatives
4. Develop and offer one-on-one programming in a variety of methods
  - Establish care call program supported by PEARL counselor training through Vintage
  - Foster opportunities to share stories, experiences and wisdom; creating connections
  - Creating connection through art, music, nature, theater
  - Develop programs including mentor/buddies, pen pals, interactive meet & greets
  - Review, enhance and promote online instruction for older adults, especially those in more rural and isolated settings
  - Collaborate with Respect & Inclusion initiatives
5. Partner with providers to develop, enhance and promote accessible, relevant and necessary information available to older adults in Summit County in the relevant topics of:
  - Legal advice
  - End-of-life planning
  - Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security
  - Weekly and monthly activities/events calendar
  - Transportation resources that are paid, fulfilled by volunteers and to a variety of destinations, near and far
  - Congregate and home-delivered meal options
  - Community Meetings
6. Develop printed materials that are distributed in places frequented by unengaged older adults; partner with locations/entities for distribution such as the library(s), recreation centers, places of worship and retail outlets frequented by older adults and their families
7. Support development of older adult-focused news and feature articles to address ageism issues on NPR and TV8; collaborate with Respect & Inclusion initiatives
8. Promote the availability of complimentary computer access at the Senior Center and technical training and assistance for older adults; explore practical technology training programs for older adults with local schools and service clubs; explore the possibility of in-home technical assistance for older adults, offered in English and Spanish
9. Create mechanism(s) for ongoing suggestions and feedback on older adult information and programming



## DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

### REDESIGNED AND TRANSLATED NEWSLETTER

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### ENHANCED PROGRAMMING

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### INCREASED NUMBER AND WIDELY PROMOTED PARTNERSHIPS

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### ONGOING COMMUNICATION FEATURES

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### INCREASED TECHNOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

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# SUMMARY

## ➤ NEXT STEPS: WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## RESOURCES & REFERENCE MATERIALS

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## Summit County Community & Senior Center

0083 Nancy's Place • County Road 1014 • PO Box 1845 • Frisco, CO 80443

970.668.2940

[summitcountyco.gov/93/community-senior-center](http://summitcountyco.gov/93/community-senior-center)