

# A Five-Year Report 2017–2021

## Executive Summary



Globally, we are aging. The United Nations declared 2021–2030 the Decade of Healthy Aging, echoing the World Health Organization’s (WHO) call to create “age-friendly” communities around the world. In the Puget Sound region, the number of older adults is projected to grow by 85% between 2020 and 2050, eventually comprising more than one-fifth of the population.

Given this, Seattle set out to make our city a great place to grow up *and* grow old. In 2016, Seattle became the 104<sup>th</sup> member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. In 2017, following a City Council proclamation, we launched Age Friendly Seattle (AFS) as a mechanism to lead this effort. After evaluating local needs and soliciting input from more than 2,000 people, we developed the AFS 2018–2021 Action Plan. It was ambitious, tackling all eight “domains of livability” as defined by the WHO. Of the 29 distinct goals we set out to accomplish, we are proud to have made progress on 27; of the 87 action items contained within those goals, we have advanced 68. Below are a few highlights, with more detail contained in full report.

COVID-19 made our work both more challenging and more important. As we wrap up our first AFS Action Plan amidst a waning pandemic, we recognize the opportunity to recover and rebuild in ways that makes us a stronger, more connected, and more inclusive community. Older adults are both contributors to and beneficiaries of this important work. Moving forward together, we will reassess need and work alongside community partners and colleagues from around the city to create a Seattle where older adults thrive.

Domain of Livability	Actions completed or advanced
Transportation	15 of 18
Housing	11 of 13
Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	3 of 4
Social Participation	3 of 5
Respect and Inclusion	7 of 8
Civic Participation and Employment	8 of 10
Community and Health Services	12 of 16
Information and Communications	9 of 13

### Progress in Housing, Transportation & Built Environments

As people age, most prefer to continue living at home and enjoying familiar neighborhoods, hobbies, and friends. Affordable and accessible housing is critical, as are mobility and well-designed public spaces, all of which greatly impact older adults’ ability to safely enjoy their communities. To promote access to housing, transportation options, and accessible public spaces, AFS and our partners have made progress on a range of issues.

**Improved the age-friendliness of Seattle’s streets.** AFS conducted several walking audits in key locations frequented by seniors. The learnings from these audits have resulted in tangible improvements, such as better wayfinding at Pike Place Market and bus stop improvements near the IDIC Filipino Senior Center. We also supported Department of Transportation colleagues in creating a “Street Design Toolkit for Age-Friendly Neighborhoods” and co-hosted a Universal Design & Pedestrian Wayfinding Forum at City Hall attended by over 200 people.



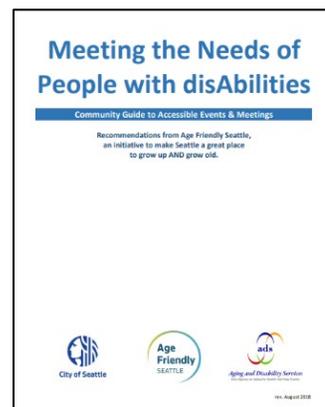
**Promoted Universal Design.** Partnering with the Northwest Universal Design Council, AFS supported multiple public events, industry networking opportunities, and demonstration projects aimed at educating key audiences about the importance of intentional design that allows older people to age at home and participate in public life. One highlight was the 2019 Seattle Design Festival, where AFS co-facilitated a demonstration called “Doorway to Inclusion and Independence.”

**Informed housing policy recommendations.** AFS played an active role in elevating the housing needs of older adults. Staff coordinated an interdepartmental project to map locations and concentration of available senior housing, suggested a “visitability” standard to promote affordability and social connectivity through housing development, and provided input on the housing recommendations put forth by the Mayor’s Council on African American Elders.

## Encouraging Social Participation, Respect, Inclusion & Communication

A growing body of research points to the strong links between social connectivity and positive health outcomes. When social distancing became a strategy to slow the spread of COVID-19, many people—particularly older adults who were most at risk—suffered from the loss of human connection. AFS worked to address this, bringing people together online and emphasizing language inclusivity. Celebrating Seattle’s diverse communities and understanding that as people age, they often experience disabilities, we have encouraged multicultural understanding and prioritized accessibility for all.

**Published *Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities: A Community Guide to Accessible Events and Meetings*.** This guide has been widely used and presented locally at several trainings for human services providers, as well as nationally at conferences hosted by AARP, the American Society on Aging, and the Hearing Loss Association of America.



**Connected and informed older adults during uncertain times.** In partnership with Seattle Public Library, AFS has held monthly in-person Civic Coffee events for several years. In a rapidly changing and isolating 2020, we pivoted and expanded efforts to foster social connectivity and disseminate accurate, timely information online. We added an additional bi-monthly event called Close to Home that featured local leaders and resources throughout Seattle. In 2020–2021 alone, our 55 events were viewed over 12,192 times.

**Improved inclusivity for immigrant, BIPOC, and non-English speaking older adults.** We routinely provided live interpretation at in-person events and brought this feature online during the pandemic: real-time caption translation was made available in 11 languages, and we now strive to bring live interpretation to online events.

**Nationally recognized as leaders.** In recognition of our intentional outreach to immigrant elders, AFS received the American Society on Aging Award for Excellence in Multicultural Aging, which recognizes high-quality, innovative programs enhancing the lives of a multicultural aging population. We also received an Aging Achievement Award from USAging for our online events, which have become a model for other Age Friendly communities to adopt.

## Contact

For additional information, visit [www.seattle.gov/agefriendly](http://www.seattle.gov/agefriendly) or e-mail [agefriendly@seattle.gov](mailto:agefriendly@seattle.gov).

