

Eagle County Aging Well Community Report

2017



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Executive Summary

Background

Like other communities in Colorado, the fastest population growth in the Rural Resort Region (including Pitkin, Garfield, and Eagle Counties) will be among residents older than 65.ⁱ The region's overall population is projected to almost double between 2010 and 2035, while the population of adults aged 65 and older is expected to more than quadruple during that time.ⁱ As a result, Eagle County Public Health (ECPH), along with community organizations and citizens, have identified Independently Aging in Place as a top community health priority, recommended for targeted resources and community focus through 2017.

Since 2014, ECPH and community partners have been working together on the Aging Well Community Planning Initiative, with the goal of realizing systems which allow Eagle County older adults to independently age in place. The Initiative focuses on an improved quality of life, a reduction of healthcare costs, and healthy equity.

According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Report (2003), "The increased number of persons aged 65 years will potentially lead to increased health-care costs... However, these increases will be less if public health interventions decrease disability among older persons, helping them to live independently."

Older adults who are supported by their community in remaining independent are likely to experience an improved quality of life and have fewer hospital visits and lower rates of disability.ⁱⁱ It is, therefore, in the community's best interest to support aging in place so that older adults are able to live independently for as long as they wish to do so.

The Current State

Across the US, the vast majority of older adults have said clearly that they prefer to remain in their own home—not a group setting—as they age.ⁱⁱ The good news is that older adults in the mountain region rate their quality of life, mental health, and physical health positively overall.ⁱⁱ This region, including Eagle County, is not devoid of gaps which present barriers to aging well. These gap areas include:

- **Community Design:** Future developments should take into consideration design elements, such as accessibility, paved walkways, and lighting, which accommodate an aging population in a way historical design in the region has not.
- **Connection to Resources:** While there are some existing programs serving older adults in Eagle County, research shows that 70 percent of older adults in the region struggle to find information about these programs, and as a result do not utilize available services.
- **Employment:** Older adults are increasingly remaining in, or re-joining, the workforce and rank employment opportunities high on the list of what contributes to making a community a good place to live in retirement. Unfortunately, there is a lack of availability of employment opportunities for older adults in Eagle County and the surrounding region.
- **Healthcare:** The gap in healthcare is twofold and refers to both preventive and specialty healthcare—medical specialists, dental, and mental health—for older adults. Those living in Eagle County cite accessibility as a hurdle to obtaining the care they need (i.e., they often have to travel from a medical office in one town to see a doctor for a diagnosis and to another medical office in another town for more specialized treatments).
- **Housing:** There is currently a lack in the variety of affordable and appropriate housing options which meet the unique needs of older adults.
- **Social & Community Engagement:** While there may be a variety of opportunities for community engagement—from educational lectures to volunteer opportunities—in Eagle County, older adults are often unaware of these opportunities and/or the event organizer does not take into account appropriate accommodations for an older adult audience, who often experience sensory challenges such as hearing or vision loss.
- **Transportation:** Older adults living in Eagle County cite challenges to using public transportation such as safety concerns and accessibility (i.e., older adults may be unable to climb the steps required to board a bus), as a result 58 percent do not use public transportation.

i. Sources: (Northwest Colorado Council of Governments 2011), Eagle County Public Health Aging Well Initiative Key Informant Interviews, (Hispanidad 2015)

Conclusions & Recommendations

To address these gap areas, ECPH assembled a Steering Committee comprised of community and partner organization leaders to help identify priority areas. In addition, ECPH conducted a Community Conversation to gather additional community input to help with prioritization. From these two groups, the following areas were prioritized (listed below in no particular order) for immediate focus by Action Teams, composed of community members and representatives from community organizations:

- **Connection to Resources:** Older adults know about and use programs and services, including, but not limited to, those for critical needs.
- **Specialty Healthcare:** Healthcare providers and key specialists serve, educate, and advocate for aging adults, and consider the unique needs of the aging population within their services.
- **Housing:** Older adults have ample options for safe, high-quality, and accessible independent housing.
- **Social & Community Engagement:** Older adults enjoy and benefit from an array of relevant, accessible programs and events that consider their unique needs and interests.

Addressing these goals will build a foundation for future work on other gap areas, including Community Design, Employment, and Transportation.

To begin addressing the current goals, Aging Well Action Teams created an inventory of current Eagle County organizations (“assets”), who have existing programs or services addressing or relating to the priority areas. The action plans for achieving the priority area goals are largely focused on making older adults aware of the services and programs available to them and/or on giving assets the information and tools they need to better serve the older adult population.

Meeting the objectives for these goals is a critical first step toward ensuring there are systems that enable Eagle County older adults to age in place. It will be equally critical that the work continues beyond the current action plan. The needs of older adults will change, and new needs and gaps will present themselves in the coming years and decades. Meeting those needs will require a continued effort from all sectors of the community.

Current State of Aging Well in Eagle County

The overall goal of embarking on an Aging Well Community Planning Initiative is to realize systems which allow Eagle County older adults to independently age in place, focusing on an improved quality of life, a reduction of health-care costs, and health equity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines aging in place as “the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.”

Chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and disabilities due to falls limit activities for 12 million elderly individuals living in community settings; 25 percent of these individuals are not able to perform basic activities of daily living, such as bathing, shopping, dressing, or eating.ⁱⁱ Life satisfaction has been found to drop dramatically once an individual becomes dependent on others for their activities of daily living.ⁱⁱ

Additionally, chronic conditions account for seven out of ten deaths and more than three-quarters of all healthcare costs in the US.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2009, direct healthcare expenditures for chronic conditions in the US totaled more than \$262 billion.ⁱⁱⁱ Subsequently, not only will promoting independently aging in place in Eagle County improve the health and quality of life of its residents, it is also fiscally responsible for the county. (See Appendix A: Healthcare Costs and Savings.)

Demographics

The overall population of Colorado’s Rural Resort Region (RRR), which includes Pitkin, Garfield, and Eagle Counties, is projected to almost double between 2010 and 2035. The population of adults aged 65 and older, however, is expected to quadruple between 2010 and 2035,ⁱ from 3,005 to 14,160 (Figure 1).^{iv} This rapid growth of adults 65 and older is due to the current age distribution of the population and the projected number of those who may choose to age in place.

The median age of the population in Eagle County is 35.1 years,^v compared to Colorado at 36.9^v and the US at 37.8 (2015).^{vi} However, the county has experienced a demographic shift since 2000, when the median age was 31.^v And, according to 2010 Census data, the population of older adults, defined as 65 and older, has increased by 135% (Eagle) since 2000, thus ranking Eagle County third in the state for the greatest growth during that decade.^{vii}

Hispanics and Latinos represent the largest growing subset in Eagle County, with approximately 15,738-16,787 total residents, 3.2 percent of which are over the age of 60.^{viii}

| Eagle County | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Age 65+ | 3,005 | 4,928 | 7,199 | 9,874 | 12,292 | 14,160 |
| All Ages | 52,057 | 53,303 | 57,226 | 65,046 | 74,776 | 84,565 |
| % Aged 65+ | 6% | 9% | 12% | 15% | 16% | 17% |

Figure 1: Eagle County population estimates and projections 2010-2035

Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs State Demography Office online population data tool (<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dola/population-data>).

Gaps Analysis

92 percent of older adults living in the RRR rate the region as a good or excellent place to live,ⁱ but only 67 percent rate it as a good or excellent place to live in retirement.ⁱ 72 percent said they would recommend the community to other older adults.ⁱ

Older adults living in the RRR cite several factors as key drivers to making a community a desirable place to live in retirement, including: a sense of community, neighborliness, the availability of affordable, quality food, a variety of housing options, the availability of information about resources, and employment options.ⁱ Figure 2 shows additional key drivers, highlighting those to which residents gave low ratings for the quality of the amenity in their community.

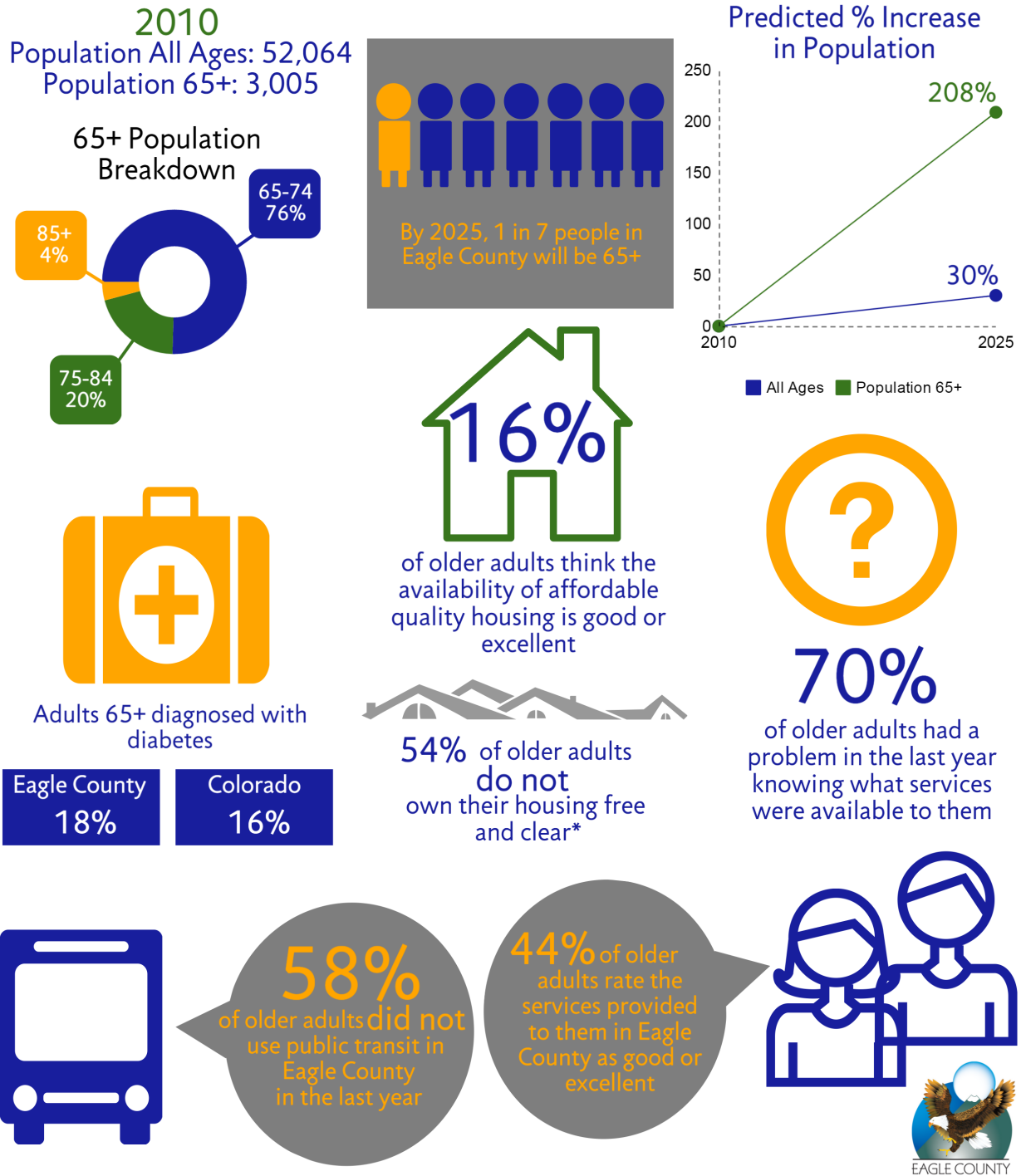


Figure 2: Ranking of key drivers amongst older adults living in the RRR that contribute to making a community a good place to retire

Source: Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, Rural Resort Region Gaps Analysis of Services for an Aging Population (January 2011).

AGING WELL

Current State in Eagle County



*in the Rural Resort Region (Clear Creek, Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Pitkin, Summit, Lake, & Routt Counties)
Data Sources: Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Rural Resort Region Senior Gap Analysis
Created 2016

Figure 3: Infographic depicting an overview of the current state of aging well in Eagle County

Aging Well Community Planning Initiative

As part of the Aging Well Community Planning Initiative, Eagle County Public Health (ECPH) conducted focus groups and key informant interviews of Eagle County residents aged 60 or older (see Appendix B: Key Informant Interviews, Focus Groups, and Community Engagement). Results from those interviews aligned with findings in the Northwest Colorado Council of Government's 2011 Rural Resort Region Gap Analysis of Services for an Aging Population. This report includes survey responses from both older adults and key actors—defined as senior service providers, government staff, and elected officials—contributing to the base data for the Initiative. A summary of data from the report, key informant interviews, and focus groups follows.



Affordable, Independent Housing

Housing and home services were found to be key gap areas preventing older adults from aging in place in the RRR (Figure 4). When asked what one change they would make in their county to help older adults age in place, 14 percent said housing.

Older adults living in Eagle County report experiencing a lack of variety in housing options, particularly those that are senior-specific. “[There are] waiting lists for Seniors on Broadway,” said one individual. “It’s challenging to find a place to live that has facilities for seniors. [I am] amazed at how few places there are for seniors compared to Minnesota.”

Others expressed a desire for more resources to help with maintenance and upkeep projects, such as snow removal, yard work, and small home repairs.

Quality of Older Adult Housing in the RRR

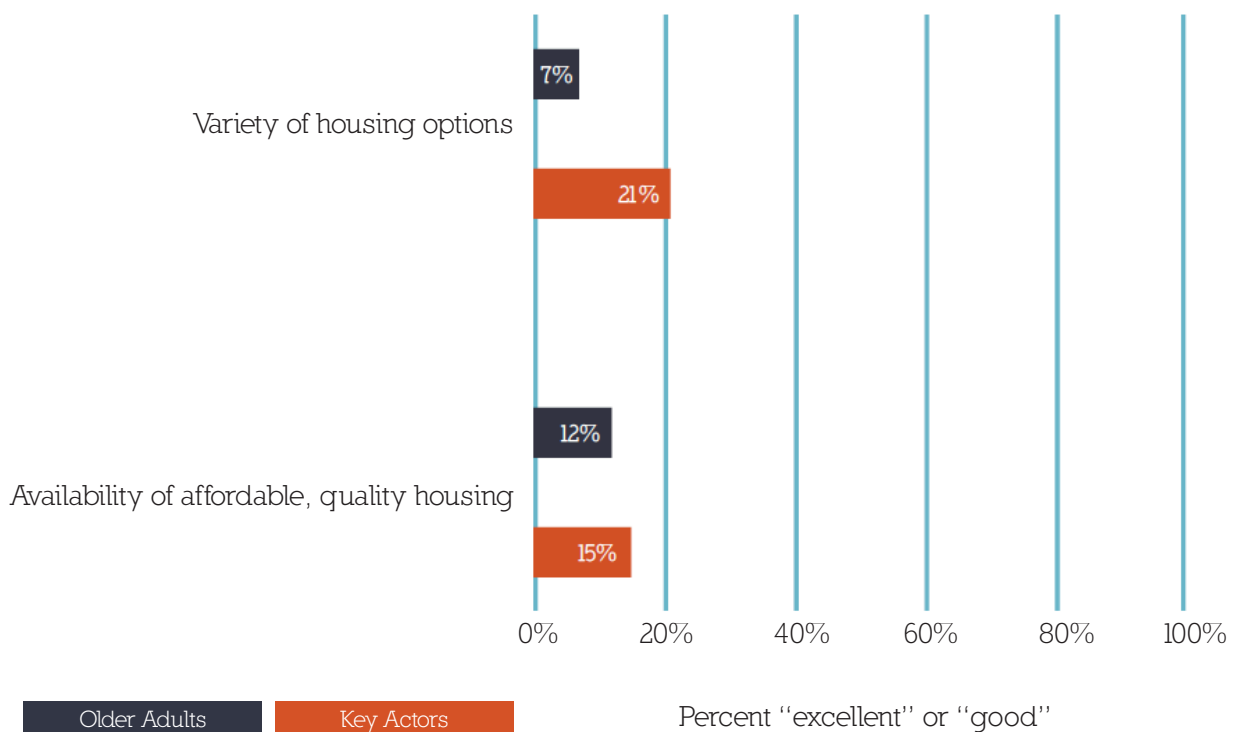


Figure 4: Quality rankings by older adults and key actors of affordable, independent housing options and availability in the RRR.

Source: Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, Rural Resort Region Gaps Analysis of Services for an Aging Population (January 2011).

Access to Healthcare

The availability of and access to affordable, quality mental and physical healthcare also received low quality ratings by older adults and key actors in the region (Figure 5). Older adults in the RRR additionally report struggling to find affordable health insurance and/or information about Medicare and Medicaid.

“Going to a doctor is so expensive... I’d rather wait it out, like the issue I am having with my eyes right now, and wait to see if I get better,” said one Eagle County resident.

Older adults living in Eagle County also cite challenges in accessing the specialty healthcare they require. “I have to travel to Glenwood or Vail to have specialty medical care, and to Edwards for the dermatologist and eye doctor,” said one individual. “[I] had assumed that services would be more central.”

Another stated, “[I] have arthritis and osteoporosis and am looking for a good doctor for hips. [I] went to Glenwood [Springs] for care and go to physical therapy in Eagle.”

Quality of Specialty Healthcare in the RRR

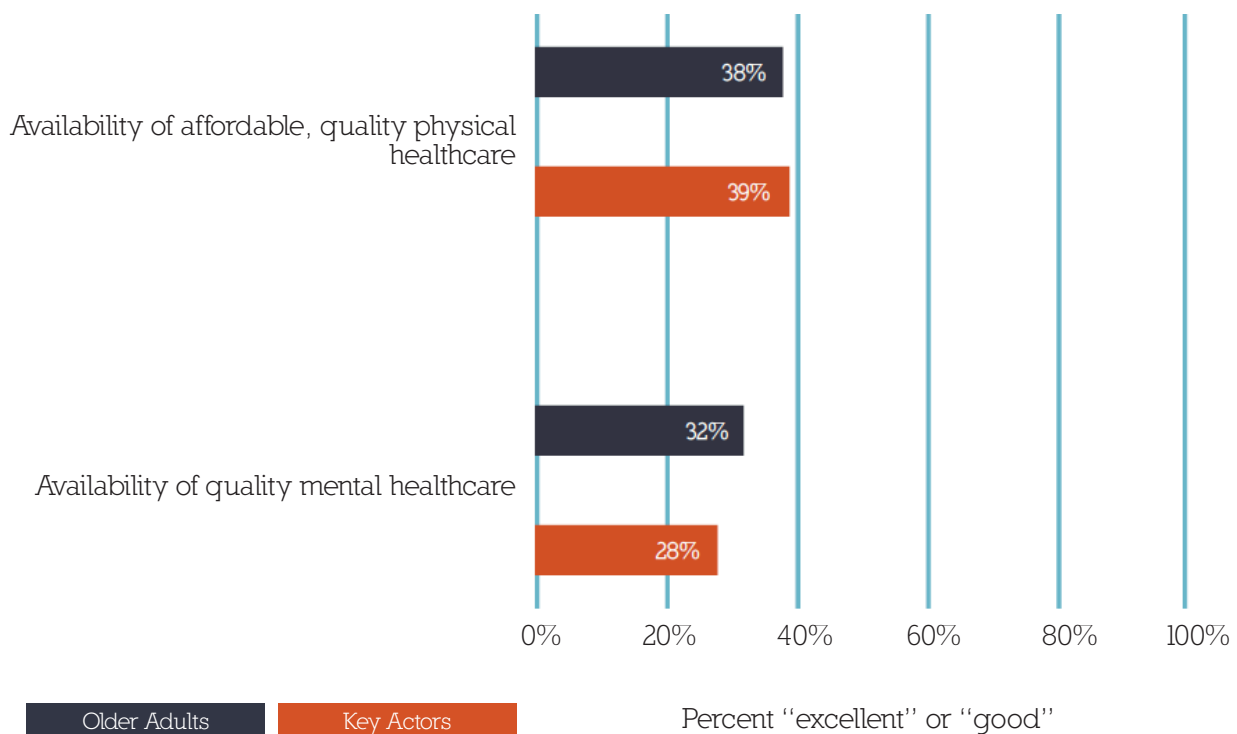


Figure 5: Quality rankings by older adults and key actors of affordable, quality mental and physical healthcare in the RRR.

Source: Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, Rural Resort Region Gaps Analysis of Services for an Aging Population (January 2011).

Social & Community Engagement

While 86 percent of both older adults and key actors in the RRR rate volunteer opportunities in the region as good or excellent, only 39 percent of older adults can easily find information about which services or opportunities are available to them. There is also a shortage of opportunities for older adults to enroll in skill-building or personal enrichment classes in the region (Figure 6).

In Eagle County specifically, older adults want more opportunities for social connection, education, and intellectual stimulation. As one individual said, “It would be fun to have something more intellectually stimulating, like maybe a writing class or someone to come in and give lectures on a topic of interest.”

Another stated, “We need more speakers on senior issues and updates on health, laws, changes in the world, etcetera.”

Quality of Social & Community Engagement Opportunities in the RRR

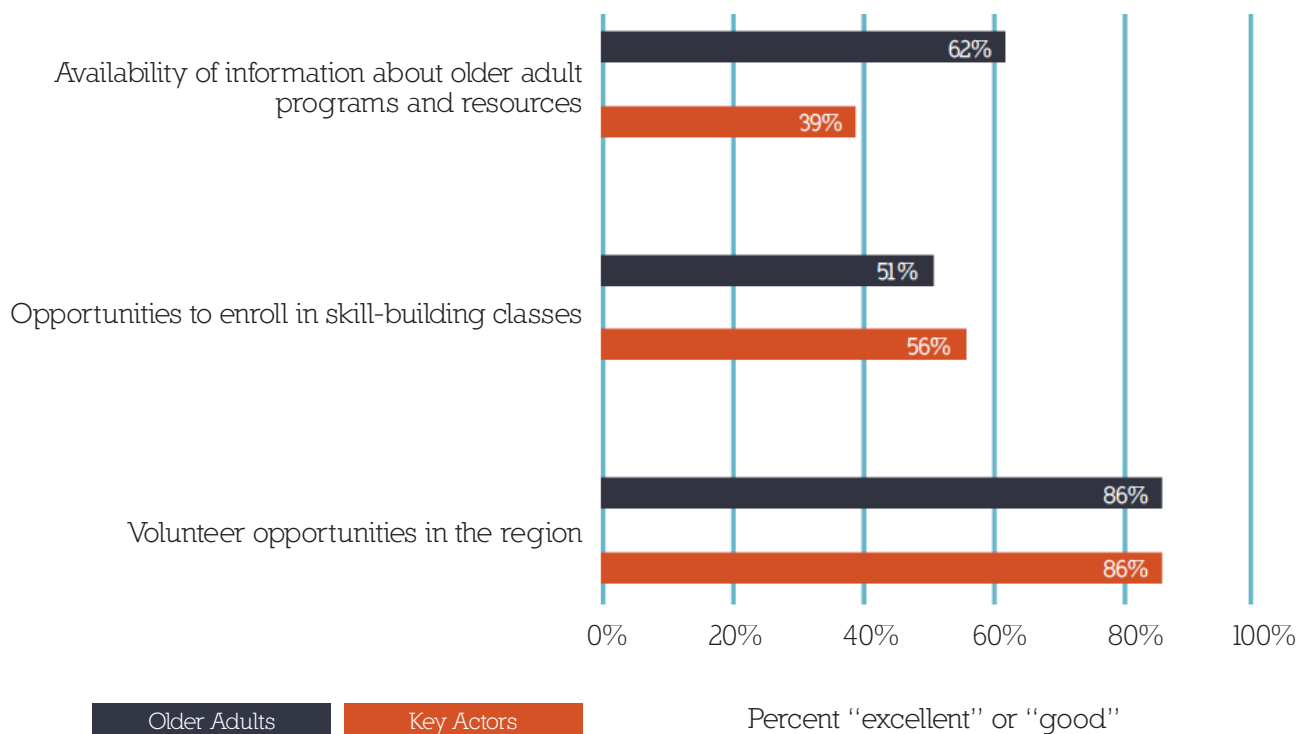


Figure 6: Quality rankings by older adults and key actors of social & community engagement opportunities in the RRR.

Source: Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, Rural Resort Region Gaps Analysis of Services for an Aging Population (January 2011).

Transportation

Transportation in the RRR is a challenge to older adults, particularly to those who don't own or have access to a car, or are unable to drive (Figure 7).

Eagle County older adults overwhelmingly agreed that transportation is a hurdle to aging in place. When asked what three things would make the community a better place to live for older adults, one individual said, "transportation would be 1, 2, and 3!"

Others talked about how a lack of transportation options prohibits them both from completing common errands and from participating in social activities. One individual commented, "Going shopping [is challenging] if one cannot drive. The bus steps are too high, so I seldom use the bus."

"It would be nice to have more senior buses/transportation to Denver, Vail, or Grand Junction for special outings like cultural events or for shopping, even to Battle Mountain High School for plays," said another.

Quality of Transportation Opportunities in the RRR

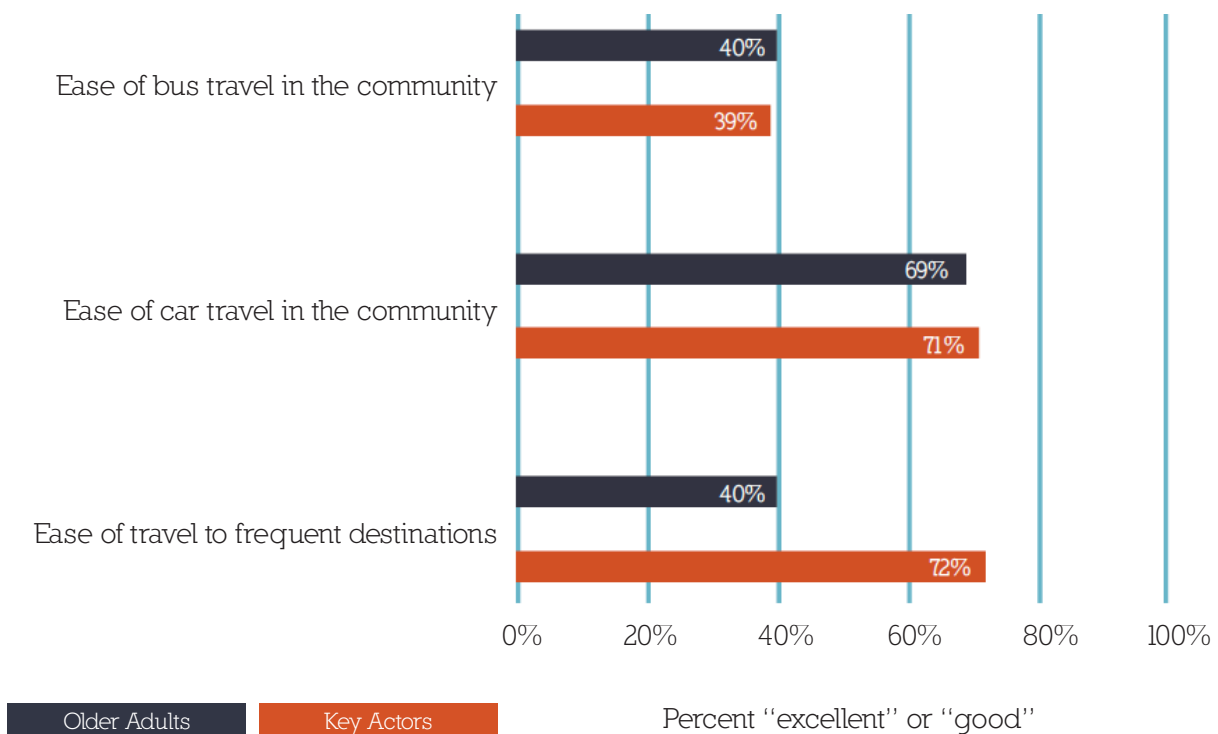


Figure 7: Quality rankings by older adults and key actors of transportation opportunities in the RRR.

Source: Northwest Colorado Council of Governments, Rural Resort Region Gaps Analysis of Services for an Aging Population (January 2011).

Background of the Aging Well Initiative

Overview of the Initiative Timeline

In 2013, ECPH, in cooperation with the County's Department of Environmental Health, led community organizations and citizens through the process of developing the 2017 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP summarizes the community's top health priorities, with Independently Aging in Place identified for targeted resources and community focus through 2017.

In 2015, following the CHIP Action Plan which calls for the initiation of a five-year plan for aging in place, ECPH began gathering data through community surveys, focus groups, interviews, and meetings. The Aging Well Steering Committee was formed during this time, composed of community representatives with a keen insight into senior life, needs, and resources in Eagle County. This committee was charged with identifying and prioritizing goals and objectives for the Initiative.

For the action phase of the Initiative, the ECPH Core Team identified and recruited members for an Advisory Council and four Action Teams to help provide direction and carry out action plans, respectively, for the Initiative's prioritized goals. Members of the Steering Committee were invited to join an Action Team of their preference. (*See Appendix C: Timeline of the Aging Well Initiative.*)

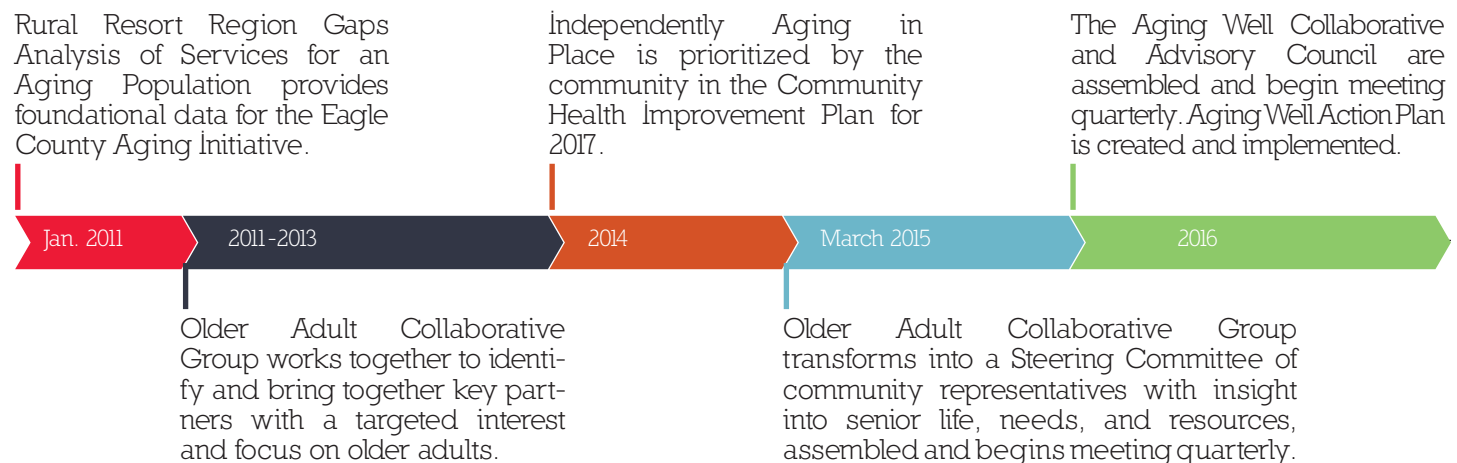


Figure 8: Eagle County Aging Well Initiative Timeline

Goal Prioritization Process

ECPH worked with the Steering Committee over the course of several months to select prioritized goals and objectives for the Aging Well Strategic Plan and to map out action items for each pillar. The ECPH Core Team began the process by selecting topic areas, or potential goals, based on community survey findings, interviews, benchmarks, and senior agency collaborations. These topic areas included (in no particular order):

- Transportation
- Home Services (i.e., maintenance, repairs, and home health)
- Social & Community Engagement
- Affordable, Safe, Quality Housing
- Employment
- Connection to Resources
- Healthcare: Medical Specialists, Dental, and Mental
- Preventive Health
- Community Design (i.e., new developments are designed with older adult safety and comfort in mind, and include elements such as accessible sidewalks, adequate lighting, and pedestrian-friendly walkways.)

The prioritized goals--Housing, Specialty Healthcare, Connection to Resources, and Social & Community Engagement--were selected for the Aging Well Initiative Action Plan from the topic areas using the criteria shown in Figure 9. *(See Appendix D: Goal Prioritization Criteria.)*



Figure 9: Criteria for goal prioritization

Outcomes of the Initiative

The fastest growth in population in Eagle County during this decade will be among residents older than 60, making it imperative that the community is prepared with systems which allow older adults to age in place. This growth in the older adult population will bring opportunities and challenges to the community, and the work being done through the Aging Well Initiative is only the beginning of what will have to be an ongoing process. Meeting the needs of the large numbers of older adults in Eagle County will require continued effort from all sectors of the community, as no single agency is currently equipped to do so alone.

The model of partnership (Figure 10) that has guided the Aging Well Initiative is demonstrative of the type of community-wide partnerships required to create an environment that supports healthy aging. Not only will community organizations need to collaborate to increase the civic engagement and quality of life of older adults, but governments at all levels—municipal, county, state, and federal—and the private sector will need to plan and work together to keep older adults among the active participants and leaders in community decision-making.

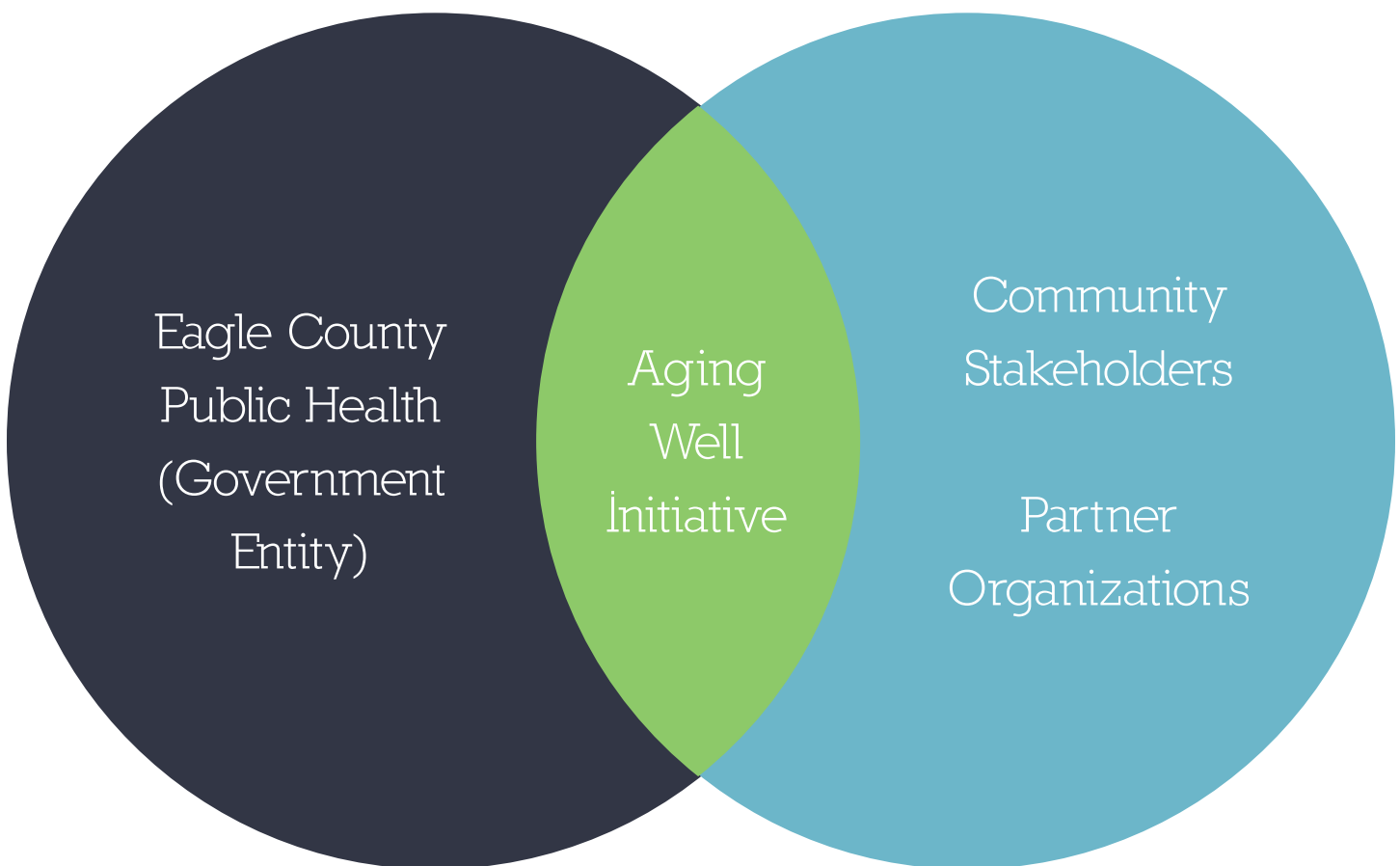


Figure 10: Aging Well Initiative Model

Prioritized Goals & Objectives of the Aging Well Initiative

During the Action Phase of the Aging Well Initiative, the Advisory Committee meets quarterly, providing guidance for the Initiative's strategic direction and oversight of Action Team efforts. The Action Teams meet monthly, and will continue to do so until all of the goal objectives are accomplished or otherwise accounted for. While the Action Plan and Implementation Guide focus on the priority goals of Housing, Specialty Healthcare, Connection to Resources, and Social & Community Engagement, other goals, such as Transportation, Employment, and Community Design, will be phased in after the first round of priority goals have been met.

Housing - Action Plan

Goal: Older adults have ample options for safe, high-quality, and accessible independent housing.

Objectives:

This goal focuses on 1) increasing independent housing options, 2) finding ways to make it possible for older adults to age in their own home, and 3) enabling older adults to afford homes on a fixed income that are centrally located in relation to services, such as public transportation and grocery stores.

Implementation:

The implementation guide for this goal considers intergenerational housing options, development of new properties, and public-private partnerships.

The Current State - By the numbers

16%

Only 16 percent of Eagle County older adults think the availability of affordable, quality housing is good or excellent.

54%

54 percent of older adults in the region do not own their housing free and clear.

Why it's a priority

Older adults living in Eagle County face numerous challenges when it comes to housing, including: a lack of affordable housing, a lack of variety in housing equipped to serve older adults, and a lack of assisted living options. Currently, affordable housing opportunities in Eagle County are becoming less prevalent and, in some cases, are being pushed farther and farther away from community hubs and services.

Additionally, many of the options for affordable housing do not address older adult needs or align with universal design or visitability standards.

Information gathered from: Northwest Colorado Council of Governments. 2011. Rural Resort Region Gap Analysis of Services for an Aging Population. Boulder, CO: National Research Center, Inc.

Eagle County Public Health Aging Well Initiative Key Informant Interviews

Hispanidad. 2015. Eagle County Public Health Hispanic Senior Research Summary of Findings. Eagle, CO.

²Housing is considered affordable if a family spends no more than 30 percent of its gross income on housing costs such as rent and utilities or a mortgage, taxes, and utilities. Eagle County uses Area Median Income (AMI) to calculate the dollar amount considered affordable for rental and purchase rates.

Specialty Healthcare - Action Plan

Goal: Healthcare providers and key specialists serve, educate, and advocate for aging adults, and consider the unique needs of the aging population within their services.

Objectives:

This goal focuses on empowering individuals to become advocates for their own healthcare, while also educating healthcare providers on how to best serve the older adult population.

Implementation:

The current strategy is focused on increasing access to information and tools that help older adults better communicate their unique needs to healthcare professionals. Work is also being done to educate healthcare providers about steps they can take to assist older adults in getting access to the services they need.

The Current State - By the numbers

42%

42 percent of older adults in the region have had a problem in the last year finding affordable health insurance.

30%

30 percent of older adults in the region have struggled to get the healthcare they need.

Why it's a priority

A repeated theme in the gaps analysis data for the Initiative was the lack of adequate access to health specialists. Mental health services, home health assistance, and dental care were specifically identified as needs for a number of older residents in the region. The cost of health insurance and a lack of knowledge about Medicaid and Medicare were also identified as regional gaps.

Information gathered from: Northwest Colorado Council of Governments. 2011. Rural Resort Region Gap Analysis of Services for an Aging Population. Boulder, CO: National Research Center, Inc.

Eagle County Public Health Aging Well Initiative Key Informant Interviews

Hispanidad. 2015. Eagle County Public Health Hispanic Senior Research Summary of Findings. Eagle, CO.

Connection to Resources - Action Plan

Goal: Older adults know about and use the programs and services they need and desire.

Objectives:

This goal focuses on creating and informing older adults about a user-friendly central hub where they can find up-to-date, relevant information about programs and services offered in Eagle County.

Implementation:

The current strategy is focused on creating a website which lists contact information for and the general services provided by four key community organizations which provide programs and services for older adults. Providing residents with information about available programs and resources will require ongoing collaboration.

The Current State - By the numbers

70%

70 percent of Eagle County older adults had a problem in the last year knowing what services were available to them.

39%

39 percent of older adults in the region think the availability of information about older adult programs and resources is good or excellent.

Why it's a priority

Currently, there is no central, well-known hub with up-to-date, easily-accessible information about programs and services—including those fulfilling critical needs—for older adults in Eagle County. Additionally, current marketing methods are ineffective at reaching Eagle County older adults with this information.

Social & Community Engagement - Action Plan

Goal: Older adults enjoy and benefit from an array of relevant and accessible educational, cultural, and social opportunities that consider their unique needs and interests.

Objectives:

This goal focuses on increasing awareness among older adults about inclusive educational, cultural, and social opportunities in Eagle County. The goal also focuses on educating program and event planners about how to better accommodate older adults.

Implementation:

The current strategy is focused on delivering information about social & community events to older adults, and encouraging program and event planners to consider older adult sensory challenges and accessibility barriers when planning events.

The Current State - By the numbers

32%

32 percent of older adults in the region have had a problem finding interesting recreational or cultural events to attend in the last year.

36%

36 percent of older adults in the region can easily find information about which programs, services, or opportunities are available to them.

Why it's a priority

Creating opportunities for Social & Community engagement among older adults—and increasing communication about existing opportunities—will benefit not only the individuals engaging in these opportunities, but will also benefit the community as a whole. By taking steps to accommodate older adults, community groups will help increase the quality of life for these individuals and benefit themselves from the skills, talents, and experiences of older adults.

Information gathered from: Northwest Colorado Council of Governments. 2011. Rural Resort Region Gap Analysis of Services for an Aging Population. Boulder, CO: National Research Center, Inc.

Eagle County Public Health Aging Well Initiative Key Informant Interviews

Hispanidad. 2015. Eagle County Public Health Hispanic Senior Research Summary of Findings. Eagle, CO.

Aging Well Initiative Implementation Guide

This section contains a detailed implementation guide—including objectives, action steps, and expected outcomes—for each of the Aging Well Initiative prioritized goals. The guide includes progress to date as well as necessary next steps to achieve each goal. Additional strategies and/or action steps may be added later as Action Teams make progress toward the goals and objectives.

Asset Interviews

Each Action Team contacted community partners and organizations who have potential programs and/or resources which help address goal objectives. Action Team members met with these partners to learn more about their programs and invited additional community partners to be involved with an Action Team where appropriate. A list of asset organizations is available in *Appendix E: Priority Areas Asset Organizations*.



Goal: Housing

Older adults have ample options for safe, high-quality, and accessible independent housing.

Objective 1:

Community housing needs and desires are researched and possible solutions are identified, taking into consideration the free market and community and developer incentives.

Strategies

Gather and collect information about the current status of and future plans for housing from Eagle County town governments.

Action Steps

Receive housing status presentations from local government representatives, including the towns of Avon, Eagle, Gypsum, Minturn, and Vail, Eagle County, the Edwards Metro District, and Arrowhead.

Expected Outcomes

The information provides an overview of the current status and future opportunities, providing a baseline for discussions about possible housing solutions.

Objective 2:

There is a system to categorize and identify the availability of affordable housing that is senior-specific.

Strategies

Produce a comprehensive inventory of affordable housing options for older adults in Eagle County, including information on rental and purchase options, pricing, accessibility, and location.

Action Steps

Conduct the inventory of current options using the Eagle County GIS Department mapping tool.
Conduct site visits to a selection of affordable housing options to evaluate accessibility.

Expected Outcomes

Older adults and their family members in Eagle County and nationwide will have a place to start when looking to downsize or re-evaluate their housing situation.

Objective 3:
Government agencies allocate and plan for affordable housing options.

Strategies

Track Eagle County Housing Department's initiatives, progress, and plans.

Action Steps

Attend housing-related meetings to advocate for housing that meets affordability and accessibility standards for older adults.

Expected Outcomes

Community members will have an avenue to be educated and informed about plans, initiatives and progress of the Eagle County Housing Department.

Future Objectives:

Housing incorporates new and ground-breaking technologies that support a high quality of life while aging in place.

Developers consider universal and smaller home design principles in both remodeling projects and new housing construction.

Goal: Specialty Healthcare

Healthcare providers and key specialists serve, educate, and advocate for aging adults, and consider the unique needs of the aging population within their services.

Objective:

Older adults have an increased understanding of their own health and are empowered to be advocates for their medical care and needs. There is an increase in access to behavioral health and holistic care services for older adults and a reduced stigma surrounding behavioral health services, resulting in an increase in their use amongst older adults.

Strategies

Develop a “Red File” binder/folder system for older adults, which details their medical history, medications, emergency contact information, and summaries from doctor appointments.

Create marketing materials with messaging about Medicare, Caregiver Support, and Advanced Directives.

Action Steps

Create a Personal Healthcare Record for older adults to fill out and take with them to medical appointments.

Introduce the Personal Healthcare Record to the Minturn Seniors group for feedback and a trial period.

Create a Tips and Tricks infographic which speaks to different people of different ages groups.

Expected Outcomes

Older adults have more mindful and more meaningful interactions with their healthcare providers.

The infographic increases health literacy amongst older adults.

Future Objectives:

Healthcare providers have an increased awareness of accommodations for older adults (i.e., paperwork, appointment lengths, and/or sensory barriers).

There is an increase in the number of providers who accept Medicare/Medicaid.

There are increased opportunities for accessible dental, vision, and audiology care.

Goal: Connection to Resources

Older adults know about and use the programs and services they need and desire.

Objective 1: There is a central hub with up-to-date, accessible information about programs and services for older adults in Eagle County.

Strategies

Develop a central hub which points to four key resource organizations, including Eagle County Public Health-Healthy Aging, the Alpine Area Agency on Aging (AAAA), Western Colorado 2-1-1, and Eagle County libraries (Eagle Valley Library District and the Town of Vail Public Library).

Action Steps

Design a graphic to depict the four central resource organizations.

Create a centralized, user-friendly website with the URL AgingWellEagleCounty.org, which lists basic, important information about the four resource organizations.

Expected Outcomes

The graphic makes it easier for Eagle County older adults to know who to contact and/or where to go to receive the information, programs, and services they need.

The website acts as an accessible central starting point for Eagle County older adults looking for information about which services and programs are available to them.

Objective 2: Older adults are aware of the central hub.

Strategies

Launch a marketing campaign targeted at Eagle County older adults to direct traffic to AgingWellEagleCounty.org.

Action Steps

Research and implement the best practices for marketing to older adults.

Create flyers and/or brochures for distribution which feature the key resource organizations graphic as well as the [Aging Well](http://AgingWellEagleCounty.org) website URL.

Distribute materials to libraries, churches, and other community gathering places. Place advertisements in local newspapers and senior newsletters, and on local radio stations.

Expected Outcomes

More Eagle County older adults gain a broader understanding about which services and programs are available to them and where they can go to access those services and programs.

Future Objectives: Older adults are using the programs and services they need.

Goal: Social & Community Engagement

Older adults enjoy and benefit from an array of relevant and accessible educational, cultural, and social opportunities that consider their unique needs and interests.

Objective 1: Older adults are aware of inclusive educational, cultural, and social opportunities.

Strategies

Partner with the Connection to Resources Action Team on ways to access local Social & Community Engagement resources.

Maximize exposure in existing calendars and publications.

Action Steps

Work together on distribution and awareness of the website Agingwelleaglecounty.org.

Modify the Vail Daily Senior Calendar to include more information on Social & Community Engagement resources and events.

Update the Eagle County Healthy Aging Times to include more information on Social & Community Engagement resources.

Expected Outcomes

There is an increased awareness among older adults about the educational, cultural, and social opportunities available to them.

Objective 2: Community event planners take into consideration the interests, accessibility needs (including transportation), sensory challenges, and language barriers of older adults when planning community gatherings.

Strategies

Educate program and event planners about challenges which may prevent older adults from engaging and provide them with tools to overcome those challenges.

Action Steps

Research tips for overcoming challenges for older adults with regard to: transportation, marketing, physical access, sensory challenges, and technology.

Create two Tips & Tricks infographics: Marketing & Website and Accessibility & Sensory Challenge Considerations.

Send infographics to community assets and include infographics in Vail Valley Partnership (VVP) newsletters.

Expected Outcomes

Program and event planners make adjustments to overcome challenges which prevent older adults from engaging. There is an increase in older adult participation in programs and events.

Objective 3: There is a language-appropriate central location for “pull” information (phone, online, in person) and a variety of ways to access “push” information (radio, print, emails, newsletters) relevant to older adults.

Strategies

Long-term: partner with the Connection to Resources Action Team to expand the Aging Well website to include a Social & Community Engagement resource section.

Short-term: utilize existing public events calendars as hubs of information (Vail Daily Senior Calendar and Vail Valley Partnership Community Events Calendar).

Action Steps

Partner with the Connection to Resources Action Team on their resource website marketing.

Modify the Vail Daily Senior Calendar and Healthy Aging Times to include more information on Social & Community Engagement resources.

In the Marketing & Website Tips and Tricks infographic, instruct asset organizations as to where they should update their Social & Community Engagement information.

Expected Outcomes

Older adult awareness of and participation in programs and events increases and maintains higher levels of participation.

Future Objectives:

There are opportunities for younger and older generations to interact and share knowledge, experiences, and mutual respect.

Appendix

Appendix A: Healthcare Costs and Savings

According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Report (2003), “The increased number of persons aged 65 years will potentially lead to increased health-care costs...In addition, between 2000-2020, public financing of long-term care is projected to increase 20%-21% in the United States. However, these increases will be less if public health interventions decrease disability among older persons, helping them to live independently.”



Slips, trips, and falls from steps or stairs are by far the leading cause of hospitalizations nationwide.

ⁱⁱⁱ Adults ages 55 and older are more prone to becoming victims of falls, and the resulting injuries can diminish their ability to lead active, independent lives.ⁱⁱⁱ 40 percent of all hospitalizations in Eagle County involve adults over the age of 55.ⁱⁱⁱ Falls and falls-related injuries have enormous personal and economic consequences to individuals, society, and the state healthcare system.

In Colorado, the average length of stay for older adults hospitalized due to falling is 4.7 days, amounting to an

average hospital charge of \$15,073.^{ix} Annual hospitalization charges for fall-related injuries in Colorado total more than \$132 million.^{ix} Fall-related injuries can also lead to decreased functional independence. Of the older adults who were injured and hospitalized due to a fall in a home, only 27 percent were discharged to a home after their hospitalization.^{ix}

Older adults who are supported by their community in remaining independent are likely to experience an improved quality of life, have fewer hospital visits, and have lower rates of disability. It is, therefore, in the community's best interest to support aging in place so that older adults are able to live independently for as long as they wish to do so.

Appendix B: Focus Groups, Key Informant Interviews, and Community Engagement

Key Informant Interviews

Eagle County Public Health (ECPH) used a variety of methods to collect community input throughout the planning process. Focus groups, key informant interviews, and community convening sessions were used to assess the current state of aging in Eagle County, to determine goals, and to guide the Aging Well Strategic Plan.

Key informant interviews of 26 Eagle County older adults—aged 60 and older—were conducted by ECPH staff over the course of one month. Participants had diverse income and physical ability levels and were from various areas throughout the County, including Avon, Eagle, Edwards, Gypsum, McCoy, Red Cliff, and Wolcott. Interviews were conducted one-on-one, and over the phone, with results recorded using a standardized answer template. Session topics included General Lifestyle Assessment, Staying Healthy, and Role of the family. Session questions are listed below.

Session Topic 1: General Lifestyle Assessment

1. What do you think are the biggest challenges for older adults living in rural Eagle County?
2. If you could have three things that would make your community a better place for you to live, what would they be?
3. Can you think of any activities or services that are missing in your community that you need, or might need in the future?

Session Topic 2: Staying Healthy

1. Describe the actions you take to stay healthy.
2. What do you do for exercise?
3. What kinds of foods do you typically eat at home?
4. Where do you get your groceries?
5. What types of social activities do you participate in?

Session Topic 3: Role of the Family

1. Are you taking care of your daily living and health needs or do you have someone who helps you?
2. If you need assistance, who is primarily helping you?
3. Do you ever care for children of family members or friends?

Focus Groups

ECPH also partnered with Hispanidad, a division of Colorado-based advertising and marketing agency Heinrich Marketing, Inc. Hispanidad's expertise in strategic planning and consumer research was utilized to conduct interviews with primarily Spanish speaking Latino/Hispanic seniors, living in Eagle County. This research was conducted in early 2015, with small focus groups used as the primary method of analysis. Recruitment for the focus groups was conducted by ECPH staff. These groups were conducted in Spanish with a total of nine participants. Of the nine participants, five were women, four were men, and all were of Mexican origin (Jalisco, Guanajuato, Chihuahua, Puebla, and Zacatecas states). The average number of years living in Eagle County was 15.88. Hispanidad provided research design, implementation, analysis, and reporting services associated with the focus groups.

Community Engagement

Following a goal prioritization process conducted by the Steering Committee, ECPH held a Community Convening event with the objectives of educating the community on the Aging Well Initiative and collecting community input for the Aging Well Strategic Plan. The invitation to attend was shared via advertisements in local media outlets, as well as by personal invitations from the Steering Committee and the ECPH Core Team. Approximately 80 people attended the event.

The event included small group input sessions, during which participants were asked to complete a handout to determine the following for each prioritized goal of the initiative: 1) the importance of the goal in helping the participant or a loved one/friend age in place and 2) why it is, or is not, important. The handout also asked participants to:

- rank their top three aging in place goals in order of importance,
- to suggest an action item which might help the community attain the participant's number one goal, and
- to list any additional goals which the participant thought had been overlooked during the prioritization process.

Participants were invited to share their top goals with their group and engage in discussion about those prioritized goals. ECPH staff collected a list of prioritized goals from each group; synthesized and ranked them and presented the results to the full group at the conclusion of the event. Participants were also given the opportunity to complete an anonymous feedback form during the session.

Appendix C: Timeline of the Aging Well Initiative

- January 2011:** Northwest Colorado Council of Governments completes the Rural Resort Region Gaps Analysis of Services for an Aging Population, which provides foundational data for the Eagle County Aging Well Initiative.
- 2011-2013:** The Older Adult Collaborative Group works together to identify and bring together key partners with a targeted interest in and focus on older adults. Key accomplishments: informed and educated partners about current services and programs, partnered on initiatives, referred older adults to partner programs, and built relationships with partners and community members.
- 2014:** Independently Aging in Place is prioritized through 2017 by the community in the Eagle County Community Health Improvement Plan.
- Early 2015:** Eagle County Public Health conducts focus groups and key informant interviews to gather data about the current state of aging well in Eagle County.
- March 2015:** The Older Adult Collaborative Group transforms into a Steering Committee of community representatives with insight into senior life, needs, and resources, and begins meeting quarterly. Key accomplishments: created objectives for each goal area, prioritized goals with larger community input, and mobilized community organizations and members for the Aging Well Initiative Advisory Council and Action Teams.
- Late 2015-Early 2017:** The Advisory Council and four Action Teams are assembled. The Aging Well Quarterly Collaborative—which includes all Advisory Council and Action Team members—begins meeting quarterly to discuss Action Team updates and progress. The Advisory Council meets separately from the Action Teams in the week following the full Collaborative meetings to discuss Action Team progress, provide feedback, and to address overarching themes and goals.

Appendix D: Goal Prioritization Criteria

| Population Impact | Impact on Health Disparities | Political Will/Community Support | Systemic Approach | Foundational to Achievement of Other Goals |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| The likelihood that the goal will benefit a large enough group of citizens to impact health indicators at the population level. | The likelihood that the goal will impact a person who is a member of a vulnerable population (as grouped by race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, and geographic location). | The extent to which there is momentum, support, and readiness to take action by stakeholders where the goal may be implemented. | The likelihood that a well-implemented goal will consider that in order to optimize the whole, the relationship among the parts must be improved. The focus is on a few key coordinated changes sustained over time which will produce large systems change rather than aggressively tackling many independent initiatives separately. | The goal meaningfully addresses multiple areas of need and/or is it foundational for a number of other efforts to be successful. |

Appendix E: Priority Areas Asset Organizations

- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Alpine Area Agency on Aging
- American Red Cross
- Augustana Care
- Avon Recreation Center
- Bravo! Vail
- Can Do MS
- Caring 4 You Homecare
- Catholic Charities
- Colorado Legal Services
- Colorado Mountain College
- Colorado Mountain Medical
- Colorado State University Extension
- Comfort Dental
- Community Gardens
- Connect for Health Colorado
- Doctors on Call
- Eagle County Child, Family & Adult Services
- Eagle County Economic Services
- Eagle County Housing Department
- Eagle County Paramedic Services
- Eagle County Public Health & Environment
- Eagle County Veterans Services
- Eagle County Workforce Center
- Eagle River Fire District
- Eagle River Presbyterian Church
- Eagle United Methodist Church
- Eagle Valley Community Fund
- Eagle Valley Family Assistance Fund
- Eagle Valley Family Practice
- Eagle Valley Library District
- Eagle Valley Senior Life
- East West Resorts
- ECO Transit
- Edwards Interfaith Chapel
- Habitat for Humanity
- Holy Cross Energy
- Homecare and Hospice of the Valley
- Image Dental
- Mind Springs Health
- Mountain Family Health Center
- Mountain Temp Services
- Northwest Colorado Councils of Govt. (NWCCOG)
- Rocky Mountain Audiology
- Samaritan Counseling Center
- SHIP Medicare Counseling and Fraud Prevention
- Starting Hearts
- Swift Eagle
- The Literacy Project
- Town of Avon
- Town of Eagle
- Town of Gypsum
- Town of Vail
- Vail Breast Cancer Awareness Group
- Vail Club 50
- Vail International Dance Festival
- Vail Jazz Festival
- Vail Pastor's Network
- Vail Public Library
- Vail Recreation District
- Vail Resorts
- Vail Symposium
- Vail Valley Cares/Thrift Shops
- Vail Valley Charitable Fund
- Vail Valley Foundation
- Vail Valley Medical Center
- Vail Valley Salvation Army
- Valley View Hospital
- Visiting Angels
- Western Colorado 211
- Western Eagle County Metropolitan Recreation District (WECMRD)

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Appendix G: References

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