



AGE-FRIENDLY CHULA VISTA

Evaluation Report
October 2023

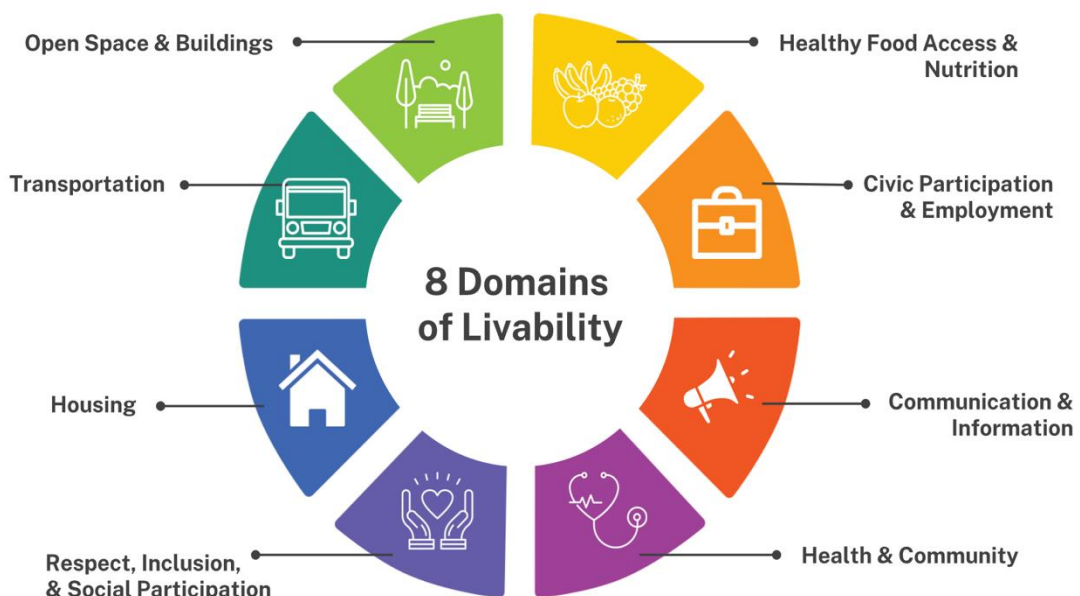


Executive Summary

In 2016, Chula Vista was the first municipality in Southern California to join [AARP's Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities](#). As an early innovator, Chula Vista is a sought-after mentor and is often asked to share insights and lessons learned with others in the region. To consolidate gains within Chula Vista resulting from successful and sustained implementation, Chula Vista undertook a systematic review and evaluation of its age-friendly efforts.

The City of Chula Vista in San Diego County, California, recently completed the five-year Age Friendly Chula Vista Action Plan that lays out activities and services for implementing various domains of livability. This evaluation report reviews and reflects on the progress and community impact made through the duration of the city initiative. SDSU Social Policy Institute was contracted to complete the community engagement process, data analysis, and evaluation with generous funding through Del Mar Healthcare, Inc.

Eight (8) domains of livability (Open Space & Buildings; Transportation; Housing; Respect, Inclusion, & Social Participation; Healthy Food Access & Nutrition; Civic Participation & Employment; Communication & Information; Health & Community) were identified as priority areas for the city and significant progress has been made towards achieving the Vision and Goals that were laid out for each domain.



The global pandemic was a major concern during the implementation of the Age-Friendly Chula Vista Action Plan. The City of Chula Vista took proactive measures and implemented innovative strategies to address the challenges posed by the pandemic. This spirit of innovation and adaptability was also seen in developing a phone line dedicated for senior information and automated messaging, new transportation service for older adult and disabled residents, expanding programs and services, upgrading the Norman Park Senior Center, launching a playlist for Age-Friendly activities on City of Chula Vista's YouTube channel, and increasing access to food resources.

A robust community engagement and review process was completed to evaluate the Age-Friendly Chula Vista initiative, which included three (3) specific steps to gain community feedback:

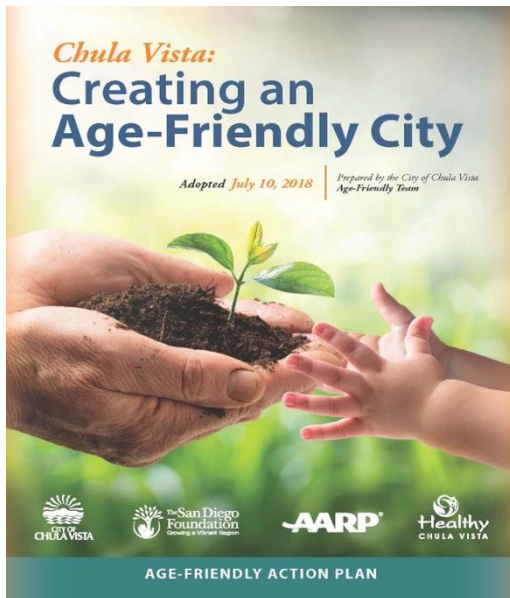
- 1) Listening Sessions with the Chula Vista Commission on Aging
- 2) Community Survey
- 3) Community Cafés

Taken together, key themes that surfaced from the community feedback are noted as: needing clear pathways towards supportive services and targeted information, increased community building opportunities, safety concerns, and a desire for expanded services to fill gaps in the city.

A variety of diverse recommendations were made for future planning in response to stakeholder feedback and identified priorities. Housing remains a significant issue and the development of additional low-income housing options and concerns for the unhoused are actively being addressed. Residents desire clear communication and promotion of available resources and services; development of an Age-Friendly Business District which will increase employment and tailored customer service; replication and expansion of successful services and programs throughout the entire city; and restructuring of an the Aging Task Force for future implementation and oversight.



Background: Vision and Goals



The Age-Friendly Chula Vista Action Plan (Action Plan) was adopted by the City Council in July 2018 and city staff along with community partners began implementation immediately.

The [Action Plan](#) encompassed eight (8) domains of livability with a vision statement and specific goals.

- **Open Space & Buildings**- Vision: A city with high-quality buildings and public outdoor spaces that provide safe routes for walking, physical activity, social interaction, and recreation in an equitable way throughout the city.
 - Goal: Increase park usage and community ownership.
- **Transportation**- Vision: A city where everyone has access to safe, environmentally friendly, and sustainable transportation services that are affordable and provide a full range of mobility options to connect residents to critical services, cultural opportunities, and each other.
 - Goal: Use educational tools to promote increased alternative transportation use and obtain community feedback to guide future planning efforts.
 - Goal: Develop ways to move people between events and key amenities.
- **Housing**- Vision: A city that provides affordable, accessible, and supportive housing that fosters healthy and livable neighborhoods for people throughout the age spectrum.
 - Goal: Provide resources and education to promote “Aging in Place”
 - Goal: Increase alternative housing options.
- **Respect, Inclusion, & Social Participation**- Vision: A city that offers opportunities for residents to be included in activities in a meaningful and respectful way, by offering accessible, affordable, and intergenerational activities.
 - Goal: Develop culturally- and age-appropriate programming throughout the city.
 - Goal: Build neighborhood resilience and connectivity.

- **Healthy Food Access & Nutrition-** Vision: A city where everyone has equitable access to and knowledge about healthy and nutritious foods.
 - Goal: Increase healthy food access.
 - Goal: Promote locally grown food consumption and increase knowledge about nutrition.

- **Civic Participation & Employment-** Vision: A city that encourages and empowers residents to work and volunteer for as long as they like and take an active role in their community.
 - Goal: Promote two-way engaged communication between residents and the city.
 - Goal: Promote and increase use of City based communication tools.

- **Communications & Information-** Vision: A city that enables residents to gain the information they want and need in a variety of formats that provides accessibility for all.
 - Goal: Maintain consistent, widespread, and centralized distribution of information in a culturally appropriate way.
 - Goal: Create a wide repository of content and outlets for information for older adults.

- **Health & Community-** Vision: A city that promotes a thriving, healthy community by promoting healthy behavior and access to resources and services throughout the age spectrum.
 - Goal: Address inequity in emergency services in South Bay through education and preventive care, chronic disease management, centralized resources, and patient centered care and advocacy.
 - Goal: Develop behavioral health and dementia-friendly practices and awareness throughout South Bay.



Accomplishments

The Action Plan was guided by the joint Age-Friendly Task Force comprised of the Commission on Aging and Healthy Chula Vista Advisory Commission. The following report section will explore what actions were completed, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-2023, lessons learned, community feedback, and recommended next steps going forward.

The Action Plan was designed as a roadmap to guide future activities and to remain focused on the vision and overall goals per domain. It is recognized that the Action Plan is a living document which is intended to react to the current climate, priorities, and health of the community. The development of a global pandemic in March 2020 required the City of Chula Vista to pivot and adjust the plan to best serve the immediate needs of residents.

COVID-19 Response

In response to COVID-19, the city staff took proactive measures and implemented innovative strategies to address the challenges posed by the pandemic. Their approach prioritized providing the public with timely and accurate information while also establishing an extensive testing and vaccination infrastructure. The City's COVID-19 response operation comprised several key components, including:

- A dedicated call center that handled vaccination and testing inquiries
- The City established multiple community testing sites to ensure widespread access to testing services
- To address the needs of underserved communities and populations, the Chula Vista Fire Department led [*Operation Immunity*](#), a targeted vaccination campaign. This initiative specifically aimed to reach older adults, senior living facilities, and homebound individuals, providing equitable access to ensure these vulnerable groups were served.

By adopting such forward-thinking efforts, the city staff demonstrated its commitment to effectively combatting the pandemic and safeguarding the health of its residents. Building off the success and impact, Chula Vista Fire Department launched flu vaccinations in October 2022 and will be establishing a community flu vaccination for the annual flu season.

Open Spaces and Buildings

Efforts were concentrated on increasing residents’ sense of safety and ownership of the outdoor spaces. To accomplish this, community clean-up events were hosted in conjunction with the school district, relationships were bridged with law enforcement by offering increased “Tacos with a Cop” and “Coffee with a Cop” community events, and the City was successful in launching an outdoor dining campaign during the pandemic that allowed businesses in the City’s historic commercial corridor to access funds to construct outdoor curb and sidewalk cafés through parklets. In addition the Third Avenue Village District (“TAVA”) worked with San Diego based company [Aira](#) to provide a free [pilot program for the visually impaired](#) in the historic business district.

“As we become an aging population, having impaired vision is sometimes part of the aging process and we want to make sure everyone can live their life to the fullest.”

**-Former Mayor
Mary Salas**

Transportation

Increasing the community’s access to public transit was realized by developing a transit video tutorial to archive and the city co-hosted a transit training with MTS complete with field trip to practice the skills gained. The city also secured funding to pilot the “[CV Community Shuttle](#)” in the northwest region of the city. The shuttle is offered free of charge to older adults 55+ and is door-to-door on an “on demand” basis through an app or call center. Over 10,000 rides have been provided with an increase every month.



Housing

As part of an effort to support safely aging-in-place, fall prevention training was offered to residents. The city is creating pre-approved ADU plans with options for accessible units for homeowners to streamline the building process to expand the housing market in Chula Vista. In addition, the city began researching and planning for the development of additional low-income Senior Housing. Construction on two senior projects will begin in 2024 to provide over 100 affordable units in the Third Avenue area and additional affordable units are scattered throughout the City. In addition the City relaunched the Community Housing Improvement Program after the pandemic which provides low to no interest loans for health and safety related home improvements and assisted older adults in mobile homes and single-family homes.

Respect, Inclusion & Social Participation

Creating a community where all feel welcome and included in activities requires a significant commitment. Access to activities started with the creation of a “CV Senior Connect” phone line where residents can self-select participation to learn about city offerings through an automated option.

The [library](#) began offering new programs such as “Games to You” and “ArmChair Travel” to explore the world from the comfort of your own community. The [Norman Park Senior Center](#) offers a wide range of programming, with a few new programming options, such as Estate Planning, Tax Preparation, and Elder Law appointments. The Senior Center also completed significant facility enhancements to include outdoor workout equipment, a new AC system, renovated ADA restrooms, new paint, furniture, and indoor pickleball/bocce ball courts!



To bring generations together in a fun environment, a Toolkit for mini-intergenerational games was developed. High Tech High Chula Vista students also participated in intergenerational programming at Norman Park Senior Center to provide technology training and worked with St. Paul’s Plaza senior living community to hold a [‘Senior’ Prom](#). Lastly, the city began creating a dynamic “This is Chula” promotional campaign around respect, economic power, adventure, vibrancy, and celebration of all people living and thriving in Chula Vista.

Healthy Food Access & Nutrition

Supporting residents’ access to healthy food was a unique focus for the city. In response, the city and community partners:

- Developed a food resource and delivery help line during the pandemic to provide access to food for the community
- Provided identification of food recovery organizations and services to increase the recovery of edible food, enable collaboration between organizations, and improve the edible food recovery process through education of businesses
- Identified food recovery organizations that allowed the city to direct potential funding from Republic Services and mini grants to these organizations
- Provides public education on [home composting](#) to encourage soil amendments to grow healthy food at home and in community gardens
- Three (3) community gardens have been incorporated into park planning efforts and will be constructed by 2025
- San Ysidro Health created a food pantry in their new Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) facility

Civic Participation & Employment

Encouraging and empowering residents to participate in city planning took the form of making community input more accessible by creating a web-based portal for community input in city plans and initiatives. The city also launched simultaneous Spanish translations for all City Council meetings and a City Clerk Ambassador program where staff assists people interested in participating in person at City Council meetings (speaker slips, answer questions, help find items on the agenda, etc.) During FY 22/23 684 speakers provided input to the City Council.

Communication & Information

As mentioned previously, the “[CV Senior Connect](#)” phone line was created to communicate with older adult residents in a comfortable and accessible way. In addition, a [Digital Equity Plan](#) 2020 was developed to help bridge the digital divide to support the ability for all to access new and emerging technology advancements. A [YouTube Channel](#) was created by the city as a [Healthy & Age-Friendly video](#) repository for informational videos specifically designed for older adults.



Health & Community

Chula Vista has made an effort to promote and support a healthy community by hosting multiple Senior Expos (in 2019 and 2022), creating a series of “Know & Think” informational flyers, and also offering Senior Health Coaching through community information broker partner, 2-1-1.



What Did We Learn?

(Winter 2023)

The comprehensive review and evaluation process of the Age-Friendly Chula Vista initiative included three (3) specific engagement steps to gain community feedback:

- 1) Listening Sessions with the Chula Vista Commission on Aging
- 2) Community Survey
- 3) Community Cafés

The data received was analyzed to determine impact and shaped the recommendations or next steps. Two listening sessions were held in conjunction with the Chula Vista Commission on Aging's open community meetings on November 16, 2022, and December 14, 2022. The sessions were focused on understanding the Commission's position on what they believe the strengths of Chula Vista are; identifying the top three (3) domain priorities; reflecting on each domain's goals and outstanding needs; and gaining input on the survey questions for the older adult community. The Health, Wellness, and Aging Commission (formerly Commission on Aging and Healthy Chula Vista Advisory Commission), along with community and staff input, confirmed the three priority domains to focus resources on are: Transportation; Housing; and Respect, Inclusion, and Social Participation.

A comprehensive community survey was designed and conducted December 28, 2022-February 2, 2023. It was offered both on-line and paper copies were available in English and Spanish. Distribution of the survey had a multi-pronged approach; with utilization of the City's standard communication channels via the city website, press release, Norman Park Senior Center newsletter, social media, city hall, library, and e-blasts to community organizations serving older adults. In addition, AARP and the County of San Diego sent a targeted e-blast to the Chula Vista contacts resulting in a convenience sample. A total of 260 responses were recorded and after cleaning the dataset for non-Chula Vista residents, there were 239 surveys available for analysis.

The survey explored respondents' positions on the various domains of livability, priorities for the city, voting behaviors, and satisfaction with living in Chula Vista. An interesting point is that 9 out of 10 respondents reported *not being familiar* with the Healthy & Age-Friendly Chula Vista initiative. While actions are being taken to enhance the community, they are not being clearly branded as such. Overall, residents' satisfaction with the City of Chula Vista declined. In 2016, 60% stated their opinion of Chula Vista was "Excellent/ Very Good" while 61% of respondents reported as "Adequate" in 2023.

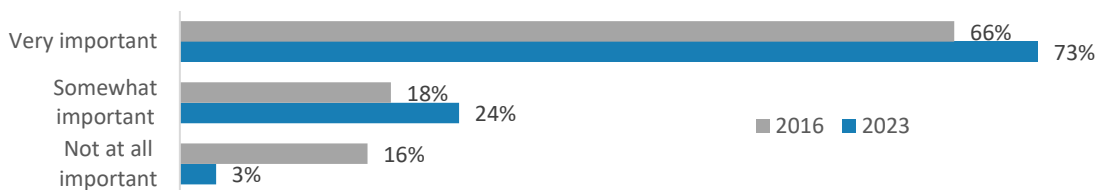
A detailed survey analysis can be found on the City's website at: www.chulavistaca.gov/agefriendly.

Demographics of Survey Respondents:

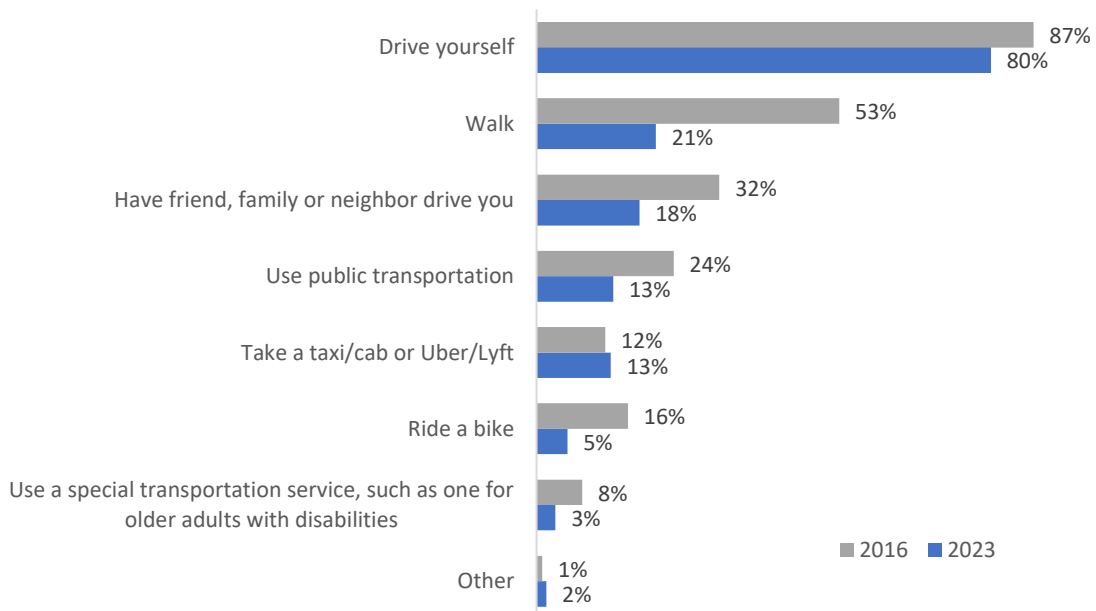
- 64% 60-79 Years Old
- 64% Female
- 35% Male
- 44% White / 38% Hispanic
- 73% Own home
- 40% 91910 Zip Code
- 27% 91911 Zip Code
- 61% Long-time residents (21+ years)

A few additional key data point comparisons between the 2016 baseline survey and 2023 community survey are as follows:

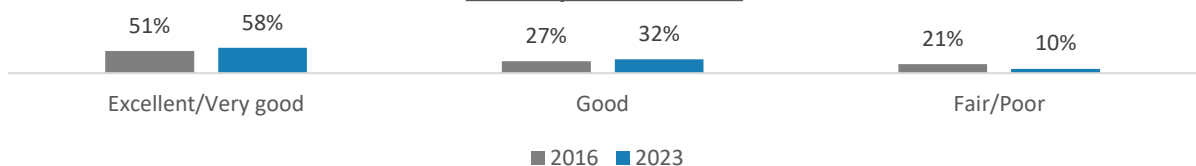
Most said it is very important to stay in their community as they age



Modes of Transportation: 2016 vs. 2023



Respondents viewed their health in better condition in 2023 as compared to 2016



In an effort to gain valuable feedback through in-person and virtual discussions, a series of five (5) Community Cafés were hosted in all regions of Chula Vista, in both English and Spanish, with a total of 140 people participated. The original eight domains were discussed along with a ninth topic “Future Needs.” A detailed analysis of the Community Cafés can be found on the city web page: www.chulavistaca.gov/agefriendly

Community Cafés

Location	Number of Participants
1. Civic Center Library (English) March 1, 2023, 10:00-11:30am	22
2. Lauderbach Park Community Room (Spanish) March 2, 2023, 10:00-11:30am	64
3. Bonita-Sunnyside Library (English) March 3, 2023, 10:00-11:30am	22
4. Otay Ranch Mall - The Hub (English) March 6, 2023, 10:00-11:30am	18
5. Virtual Community Cafe (English) March 8, 2023, 5:30-7:00pm	14

While the conversations were exploratory and unique to each location, community feedback was primarily focused on a few key themes. Participants want **clear pathways and targeted information** available on a variety of subjects, including transportation options, home repairs and modifications, volunteerism, available activities/ programming, and an awareness of resource brokers such as 2-1-1 and Aging & Independence Services (AIS). **Community-building opportunities** were high priorities for culturally specific gatherings, intergenerational programs, and the development of community gardens. **Safety** remains a significant concern for older adults pointing to parks, restrooms, sidewalks, requesting increased lighting, benches, and shade. Lastly, residents noted that there are **several service gaps** in various regions of Chula Vista. Most of the programs and services are geared towards the residents residing in the northwestern part of Chula Vista due to the location of the Norman Park Senior Center (the only facility of this nature in the city). Participants residing in the newer, planned communities requested that **access and activities be expanded and duplicated throughout the city.**



March 2, 2023: Community Café in Spanish-hosted in collaboration with South Bay Community Services.

What's Next?

Recommendations

The staff perspective, existing city plans, and community feedback produced rich information which provided guidance for the recommendations below for future actions and priorities.

Open Space & Buildings

The design and function of parks is identified as a high priority to create and expand programming opportunities, social gathering spaces, and increased sense of safety. Specifically, the intention is to **identify parks where intergenerational engagement opportunities and community celebrations can flourish.**

Norman Park Senior Center outdoor Norman Park Senior Center outdoor exercise equipment would be a great addition to local parks.



Transportation

Ensuring that residents are aware of and know how to access various transportation options is an important element to successfully moving about the city. Identifying and promoting transit resources along with continuing public transit education is a recommended on-going activity. Exploration of **expanding the currently operating CV Shuttle** would benefit other residents of Chula Vista and build upon the lessons learned with the launch of the energy efficient, on-demand transportation service.

Housing

Chula Vista, like the rest of San Diego County, has experienced a significant increase in unhoused older adults. **Expanding housing options with a focus on affordability, empowerment, and support services** will make a significant impact on those with housing challenges. Notably, in May 2023 the city opened an emergency bridge shelter to provide up to 65 unhoused individuals at a time with temporary shelter and wrap around services on their way to permanent housing and self-sufficiency. The shelter was designed with individual [Pallet](#) shelters, which provide an ideal environment for increasing an individual's sense of safety, security, and privacy, which are important features for older adults. The clear need for additional housing for older adults has resulted in the future planned development of two low-income apartment buildings scheduled to break-ground within the next year.

Respect, Inclusion & Social Participation

The city has expanded the leadership's focus to include a [Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion](#) (JEDI) effort to lift up and shore up city practices and services to create a more inclusive and equitable community, culture, and workplace.

The City of Chula Vista has developed an Action Plan with specific strategies and recommendations. Implementing these actions will have a significant impact on the life of the city. The development of an **Age-Friendly Business District complete with a toolkit highlighting recommendations** for businesses customer service relationships, employment of older adults, and business best practices will enhance the retail function within the city.

Health Food Access & Nutrition

While significant enhancements have been made to expanding access to healthy food, residents continue to report concerns about running out of food before they have money to buy more. **Promoting options and creating welcoming environments for healthy nutrition**, such as food distributions, education, and the donation-based lunch at the Norman Park Senior Center can increase access. Developing new and expanding current community gardens creates an opportunity for residents of all ages to learn about growing and enjoying healthy produce.



Civic Participation & Employment

Residents clearly indicated they would like **more opportunities to volunteer in the community** to share their talents and time. While various opportunities do exist, individuals do not know where to find them or don't feel they do not meet their needs. Therefore, the recommendation has two prongs: **expand offerings and clearly promote opportunities**.

For those entering or re-entering the workforce, internships are also a great way to explore employment opportunities. The Age-Friendly Business District can support these efforts by creating and nurturing employment opportunities for older adults. It is also recommended that the Health, Wellness, and Aging Commission develop an Aging Task Force to engage and increase livability for older adults.

Communication & Information

The enhanced **ability and knowledge to access information and resources** is a key recommendation and a concern that was heard many times during exploratory conversations. Develop a **culturally inclusive comprehensive marketing strategy to promote and identify where services can be accessed**.

The strategy should include a variety of modes of delivery from electronic/internet to print and home delivery. Messages need to be received multiple times to "stick" and people do not offer inquire about resources until they are in immediate need. The CV Senior Connect phone line is currently operational, yet a limited number of residents use it and the information provided is primarily targeted to the Norman Park Senior Center. The use of this platform can be expanded significantly. Explore the possibility of a Central Information Hub for older adults, either as a stand-alone physical location, embedded in another facility, or perhaps a kiosk or mobile application.

In addition, during fiscal year 2024 the City will implement the web-based portal for community input and should focus efforts with a 'lens of age' to ensure participation of older adults is maximized. Overall, regularly scheduled communication and community initiative updates from the city will increase awareness and confidence of residents.

Health & Community

The overall health and framework of support for residents is an important part of a thriving community. Recognizing that mild cognitive impairment and rates of Alzheimer's Disease are significantly rising, the Age-Friendly Business District initiative is recommended to **expand community training to include a dementia-training element**.

[Dementia Friends USA](#) has a turn-key training that can seamlessly be incorporated. Understanding that social supports and systems requires a network of providers; expanding collaboration opportunities with community partner organizations, resulting in dynamic synergies and positive outcomes, will enhance resident satisfaction and wellbeing.

Conclusion

The City of Chula Vista is applauded for leading public health policy changes through the [Healthy Chula Vista Initiative](#) and the Age-Friendly movement in San Diego County, California, and the Nation. Significant community enhancements and priorities have been realized over the past five (5) years with varying degrees of impact within each domain of livability.

The pandemic created an unexpected societal challenge that the city leadership responded and adjusted to in real time—while staying focused on the health and safety of all residents. It is recommended to **continue to be flexible and adaptable to community needs and changes in the environment.**

Going forward, the Age-Friendly Chula Vista effort can look to combine efforts with the Healthy Chula Vista Initiative to maximize implementation and refine established Goals and Action Steps reflective of feedback from community stakeholders.

Continue to **strengthen support and increase reach by building a foundation of partnerships.** Expanding the best practices developed throughout the city and exploring the recommendations for future action steps will serve the community well.



August 2017: First Intergenerational Resident Leadership Academy