



Senior Services Division

Senior Services Division - Progress Report on Goals December 2022

In November 2019, ASAC created the following mission for the Senior Services Division (SSD) and identified goals and priority strategies through the 2019-2021 biennium, which ends June 30, 2021. The mission, goals and strategies were formally adopted by ASAC on 12/10/18 and approved by Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (APRC) on 1/28/19. In January 2021, ASAC agreed that the same goals continue to be the priority, but strategies may evolve.

Mission: The Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission Senior Services Division enhances the lives of seniors by promoting healthy aging, well-being, dignity and independence. We empower older adults as valued, contributing members of the community and together advocate for the diverse needs of seniors and their families throughout Ashland.

Goals	Initial Strategies Prioritized by ASAC	Progress August 2018-December 2020	Progress January 2021-December 2022
<p>1. Build partnerships with the many local and regional organizations that serve seniors to foster collaboration and create a stronger safety net.</p>	<p>Build relationships with community organizations & City departments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with leaders or key staff from over 30 local organizations and businesses. • Established strong mutual referrals with other agencies • Recruited event co-sponsors and business sponsors • Participated in regional emergency planning efforts • Collaborative relations with City departments and key commissions including Utility Billing, Planning, Public Works, Police, and Fire • Collaborated with partners to increase resources for seniors. (eg: Ashland Fire & Rescue Home Safety Program 2018 and Air Purifier Distributions 2020, Rebuilding Together Rogue Valley Smoke Busters 2019, RVTD’s Ashland Connector 2019, Senior Volunteer Fair 2020, Adopt-a-Neighbor Ashland 2020-21). • Relationships already established allowed Senior Services Division to play key emergency response role linking seniors to resources during the COVID-19 crisis and the Alameda Fire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued relationships with established partners through many changes of staff at partner agencies. • Expanded sponsorships to include financial sponsors for ongoing programs (weekly movie, three game groups, Young at Art) as well as all major events. • Expanded collaboration with Jackson County Library System for reciprocal marketing of programs and enhanced programming at Ashland Senior Center (see Goal #6). • Expanded collaboration with AARP Oregon, which awarded us an Age-Friendly Communities grant to build an Outdoor Activity Space (see Goal #5). Resumed hosting the AARP Smart Driver course in person at Ashland Senior Center. • Recruited Rogue Valley Manor as annual education sponsor for 2023. • Established Mike Hersh Memorial Food Pantry as a joint project with Ashland Emergency Food Bank.
<p>2. Identify and reach frail or vulnerable seniors who may be isolated and connect them to services that could help them maintain independence and well-being.</p>	<p>Explore Gatekeeper program and other models. If chosen as the best model, pursue funding and initiate program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gatekeeper program strategy was deferred first due to other goals, then due to the COVID-19 pandemic. • During the pandemic, redirected focus to helping seniors access needed resources, reducing social isolation, and vaccine access. • Created or collaborated on new initiatives for those most vulnerable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COVID-19 Senior Resources webpage (<i>continued on next page</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gatekeeper program concept abandoned due to lack of capacity at regional services to manage additional referrals. • Evolution of programs for most vulnerable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COVID-19 specific Senior Resources webpage and Adopt a Neighbor Ashland ended. ○ Ashland Senior Phone Buddy modified to permanent program with trained volunteers calling isolated seniors

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adopt A Neighbor Ashland for help with shopping and errands (adoptneighbor.org) ○ Senior Phone Buddy peer program to reduce social isolation ○ Access to COVID-19 vaccines when seniors were first eligible but there were few sources in Ashland ○ Outreach calls to check in with patrons and offer resources above or other referrals as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outreach calls continued quarterly for most vulnerable seniors ● Collaborated with City departments and commissions on solutions for extreme heat and smoke. Identified local and state resources for adding cooling to homes of low-income seniors.
<p>3. Raise community awareness of senior needs, available resources, wide range of seniors/families served, and special Ashland Senior Services Division initiatives.</p>	<p>Develop social marketing plan. Rebrand and message about larger role in community via website, materials, publicity.</p>	<p>Creative new events and aggressive publicity sent the message that SSD and Ashland Senior Center is now serving a wide range of ages and interests, from new retirees to vulnerable elders to friends and family members seeking information and support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many public awareness successes, resulting in increased participation in events, activities & services. Education programs moved from just a handful of participants to a peak of 75, and specials events peaked at 150 for the Senior Volunteer Fair. ● Large events drew positive press coverage. Featured in local media nearly 20 times pre-pandemic, 10 times during pandemic. ● Diversified publicity channels (Ashland City Source newsletter, OLLI, YMCA, Facebook, emails to partners) ● Created a modified APRC logo for the Division. ● Created Senior Services Division flyer for outreach. ● Developed template PowerPoint for the Senior Services Division adaptable to different presentation needs. ● Refined the monthly <i>Senior News</i> to be more readable and useful. Increased circulation to 600 patrons (400 mail, 200 email) and another 100 professional partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Senior News</i>: Further increased distribution to 885, now 385 via mail and 500 via email. ● Public Outreach: Made presentations for APRC, OLLI, and Ashland Kiwanis. Connected with new patrons at OLLI Open House. ● Website: Redesigned Senior Services Division web content and moved from an old external site to the City of Ashland website at ashland.or.us/senior, so that it is integrated with APRC and City pages. (URL ashlandseniorservices.org now redirects to the new site.) The change also allows for more efficient updates and prepares the Division for the City's planned website redesign (which has been delayed 2 years). ● Brochure: Completed a long-standing objective to create a tri-fold brochure for the Division. View here. ● Publicity for new Outdoor Activity Space also made link to the larger all-age-friendly initiative and the Livable Ashland Alliance. The opening celebration drew many partners as well as seniors who had never engaged with Ashland Senior Center before.
<p>4. Advocate for the needs of Ashland seniors and provide input to the City of Ashland and other entities (such as regional partnerships) regarding policies that affect seniors.</p>	<p>Advocate for needs of seniors and their families in community planning: Advocate for Age-Friendly Communities, other initiatives for livable communities for all ages. Attend City commissions or public meetings,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ASAC members advocated for senior needs with many commissions, boards, etc. ● Succeeded in getting City of Ashland to join AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. Leaders Bellegia and Theis formed initial steering committee. ● Superintendent Glatt represented the needs of seniors on RVTD's State Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Advisory Committee 2019-2022. The Ashland Connector on-demand van service pilot funded by STIFAC was a great success (now on hold pending enough drivers). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participate in Livable Ashland Alliance, now an independent community group to pursue all-age friendly livability improvements. ASAC members continue to provide leadership and have presented a progress report to AARP, Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission, and Ashland City Council. ● ASAC members have advocated with elected officials regarding budget for senior programs and consideration of senior needs in master plans and ordinances. ● Advocated with local agencies to ensure senior access to vaccines.

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	provide public comment on senior needs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We continue to advocate with RVTD to resume Ashland Connector van service as a top priority as soon as they have enough drivers.
<p>5. Evaluate/maintain/improve/add facilities to ensure sufficient, safe, accessible venues for programs and activities.</p>	<p>Engage with pool planning to link Senior Center and other senior needs</p>	<p>Pool planning process finished with improvements to benefit seniors in place, but budget issues have delayed progress.</p> <p>In addition, there were many facility repairs and improvements at Ashland Senior Center to ensure a safe and accessible venue. Improvements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replaced rotting deck at the Hunter Park side of Ashland Senior Center and repoured adjacent walkway to drain properly. Added bike parking in front of the Center to encourage healthy transportation options and highlight the diversity of Senior Center users. Painted interior of Ashland Senior Center. Installed acoustic panels in the Dining Room to cancel noise reverberation and make the room more enjoyable for all users, especially the many seniors with hearing loss. Installed new bulletin boards and redesigned displays to highlight the rich opportunities offered by Senior Services Division. Created separate community boards to feature relevant community events and resources. 	<p>Continued facility improvements at Ashland Senior Center</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replaced patchwork of peeling hard flooring with continuous vinyl planking to reduce tripping hazards and update appearance of the dated Senior Center. With the help of a grant from AARP Oregon, created a new outdoor activity space with a safe, level floor surface for outdoor classes and events. The new space will ensure that social connections can continue even when gathering indoors is unsafe. Replaced and added chairs, tables and program supplies to better meet current programming needs and reduce risk of staff injury from moving previous heavy furniture. Installed hand sanitizer stations throughout. Upgraded two additional sinks with soap and paper towels to encourage frequent handwashing. Installed acoustic panels in the Activity Room in December 2022 to make to make hearing easier in this second room, especially for events and workshops when multiple people are speaking at once.
<p>6. Expand programs: Provide recreation, education, and health promotion programs. Raise awareness of and diversify programs to serve a wider range of senior ages and needs.</p>	<p>Expand & refine education programming Expand education programming at Senior Center and other venues, include more for active seniors (eg: Prepare for Care curriculum), and partner with OLLI and others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added significant new programming to appeal to a wide range of ages and abilities, including new recreation activities and a free monthly lecture series with pro-bono instructors from our partner agencies. Added senior programs at the Grove. Learned how to effectively promote activities to new seniors not previously engaged with Ashland Senior Center. Success evidenced by increased participation numbers. By recruiting co-sponsors and business donations, offered more senior opportunities without budget impact. Two new events, a cookout co-sponsored by Ashland Police Department and Ashland Asante Hospital and a Senior Volunteer Fair co-sponsored by Community Volunteer Network, were both packed to capacity. Created volunteer job descriptions. Recruited and trained a team of office and event volunteers to help with expanded programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resumed in-person activities, classes and education events starting March 2022. Activity participation has now reached numbers close to pre-pandemic rates. Resumed large events in 2022: Ice Cream Social, Opening Celebration for Outdoor Activity Space, Firefighters Thanksgiving, and Holiday Party. Added digital education with Jackson County Library System, now featuring a monthly Technology Basics class with rotating topics. Resumed one-on-one computer tutoring with two tech-savvy senior volunteers. Added a Senior Walking Group that moves each season to a new park and neighborhood and provides a new opportunity for seniors to exercise and socialize outdoors.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During pandemic peak, transitioned to activities outdoors or on Zoom, education via Zoom, drive-through events, and phone outreach to maintain social connections with isolated seniors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will resume Seniors Celebrating Creativity art exhibit as of January 2023.
<p>7. Expand services: Provide older adults and their families with information and referrals to services, benefits, and support.</p>	<p><i>No priority strategy chosen.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support services provided by staff, volunteers, and partner agencies had grown from 300 to 450 visits per month before the pandemic, thanks to public awareness work described previously. Partner services Repair SO and Foot Clinic relocated to other settings, while other services such as computer and device tutoring were expanded with excellent new volunteers. During the pandemic, continued to answer phone and email throughout, while most other agencies went to voicemail only. Helped seniors connect to needed services that were otherwise difficult to access. Added new services for vulnerable seniors (see Goal #2). Helped over 600 seniors to access COVID-19 vaccines during the initial shortage. Directly coordinated two drive-through clinics which served over 100 Ashland seniors for first and second doses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented a client database customized by the City of Ashland IT Department, modernizing and unifying our tracking systems and allowing us to now collect and track emergency contact information for participants. Added the Mike Hersh Memorial Food Pantry as a joint project with Ashland Emergency Food Bank. (See Goal #1) Reinvigorated our Free Library of books, DVDs, jigsaw puzzles and magazines and our ongoing Free Table of resources donated by community members. Acquired free COVID-19 test kits, COVID-19 masks, and smoke masks from partners or donors and distributed to seniors. Added free Advance Directives Assistance by ASAC member Debra Johnson. After budget cuts resulted in loss of Office Assistant, changed hours to be closed Fridays by moving rather than cutting programs. Recruited and trained volunteers to expanded reception role to maintain excellent customer service despite reduced staff.

Service Statistics from Inception of Senior Services Division

Activity and events visits were originally much higher than service contacts, but that reversed during the pandemic. We continue to maintain a high level of services as more activities are added. Our partner RVCOG Food & Friends continued to provide senior meals throughout the pandemic for home delivery or pick-up. Meals served dropped from about 1300/month pre-pandemic to about 1100/month.

