



Clark County

# AGING READINESS PLAN

JULY 2023



**DUDEK**

VolleyBAG

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To the many residents, neighborhood associations, service providers, non-governmental agencies, business associations, consultants and governmental staff who participated in this planning effort. Thank you for your participation and for helping us to advance the quality of living for aging adults in Clark County.

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# Executive Summary and Introduction





# Executive Summary

This Aging Readiness Plan, or ARP, lays the groundwork to help Clark County and its residents prepare for expected demographic changes in the county, including an increase in the population percentage over 60 years old. Based on projections, by 2035, over 25% of the population of Clark County will be 60 or better.<sup>1</sup> As a larger portion of the population in the future will be older adults, there will be a smaller ratio of caregivers to care receivers and more people who have elderly parents and young kids to take care of concurrently. This significant demographic change will have many impacts on the county and therefore should be planned for accordingly. This ARP builds on the county's original ARP developed in 2012 that included the following topics: healthy communities, housing, mobility, supportive services, and civic engagement. This ARP update expands on the topics previously outlined in the 2012 ARP to also include an emergency preparedness chapter, which explains various ways older adults could be affected by potential natural and human-caused hazard events. As hazard events are exacerbated by the effects of climate change, it is of utmost importance to consider how the most vulnerable populations within Clark County, such as older adults, can prepare for these events. Additionally, caregiver and support resources are now addressed across chapters instead of in a separate supportive services chapter.

To inform the issues and recommendations of the ARP, the county's Commission on Aging and the project team utilized a multi-pronged outreach approach. This approach included a community and jurisdictional survey; "fireside chats" and focus groups with local experts, agency professionals, and interested individuals; and community workshops. Special care was taken to make workshops accessible, as they were hosted in two locations in the county, as well as virtually. Feedback from each step of the engagement process was incorporated into the ARP. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Livability Index provided important background statistics compared to the national landscape. This data is used throughout the ARP to outline key issues and serve as measurable indicators for each goal that Clark County and each city can review as AARP updates the Index.

Recommendations within this ARP focus on addressing missing or lacking public infrastructure, support for social services, and zoning and planning standards that encourage age-friendly communities older adults can thrive in. The updated ARP also addresses changes between 2012 and 2023, including a more diverse population of older adults as the Baby Boom Generation reaches retirement age, changes in health care, changes in the caregiving and support labor markets, and the lasting impact of the COVID-19

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<sup>1</sup> "Projections of the Population by Age and Sex for Growth Management," 2022 GMA Projections Washington State Office of Financial Management, accessed July 25, 2023, <https://ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/population-demographics/population-forecasts-and-projections/growth-management-act-county-projections/growth-management-act-population-projections-counties-2020-2050>



pandemic. Goals and strategies within the ARP update are comprehensive to support an age-friendly Clark County. These strategies often address where people live, how they get around, and how they connect with their community, healthcare and support services. Strategies were developed to suit the needs of both urban and rural places, to support the county, cities, and town in creating a custom approach to aging.

## PLAN ORGANIZATION:

**Executive Summary and Introduction:** This chapter outlines the purpose and organization of the ARP.

**Chapter 1, Public Engagement:** This chapter summarizes how public and partner agency feedback was gathered, as well as the results of those engagement efforts.

**Chapter 2, Healthy Communities:** This chapter describes the current opportunities in Clark County for older adults to access healthy food, parks and recreation, and goods and services. Based on research findings, and public engagement, five Healthy Community goals were created, each with a summary of community needs as defined by the public and agency partners and multiple specific strategies for Clark County, partner agencies, and local governments to implement.

**Chapter 3, Housing:** This chapter provides strategies that address the various housing needs of older adults in Clark County. It reviews housing types that are geared towards the needs of older adults, like accessory dwelling units and shared housing while also explaining ways that this demographic can better access these housing options. Strategies within this chapter focus on aging-in place and community to improve the quality of life of older adults within the County. Three housing goals were created based on research findings and public engagement, each with supporting strategies for Clark County, partner agencies, and local governments to implement.

**Chapter 4, Mobility:** This chapter includes strategies based on the transportation and mobility needs of older adults. It explains ways that older adults tend to travel and areas that could use improvement such as public transit, walkability, ADA accessibility, and others. Based on research findings, and public engagement, four Mobility goals were created, each with supporting strategies for Clark County, partner agencies, and local governments to implement.

**Chapter 5, Civic Involvement:** This chapter includes strategies based on increasing older adults' civic involvement within the county. It reviews ways that older adults can engage with their communities like working, volunteering, attending community events, participating in local government, or advocacy work. Through research findings and community engagement, three Civic Involvement goals were created, each supported by specific strategies for Clark County, partner agencies, and local governments to implement.

**Chapter 6, Emergency Preparedness:** This chapter provides strategies that outline how older adults could be affected by natural and human-caused hazards and other ways the county can improve the health and safety of this demographic. It explains ways older adults could be impacted by communicable diseases, wildfires, flooding, extreme heat events, and geologic and seismic hazards, and ways to prepare older adults for these hazards. Three Emergency Preparedness goals were created, including supporting strategies for each, that can be implemented by Clark County, partner agencies, and local governments.

# Introduction

The ARP serves as a template for Clark County to prepare for changes and increase the quality of life for older adults. The ARP was originally developed and adopted in 2012, and included the work of more than two dozen local residents. Alongside adoption of the ARP, the Clark County Commission on Aging was established. This volunteer commission is tasked with addressing the special needs of the aging population while also assisting with implementation of the 2012 ARP.

With this 2023 update, the Clark County Commission on Aging will continue to use the ARP to promote interjurisdictional and interagency changes that support the lives of older adults through advocacy, education, and awareness. Annual reports are produced by the commission to provide community updates and additional strategies.

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## AGING IN PLACE

*The term Aging-in-place is used throughout the plan. Aging-in-place allows older adults to continue to live in their established homes and communities safely, independently, and comfortably. Aging-in-place helps older adults stay engaged with their communities and provides them with a comfortable living situation where they have support from their established neighbors and fellow community members.*

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## CONNECTION TO COUNTY PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION:

The 2023 updated ARP expands to include a emergency preparedness chapter that specifically addresses how the aging population could be impacted by natural and human-caused hazard events. This updated ARP will serve as a tool for the many cities and towns within Clark County as they individually prepare their communities to support the aging population. In addition, this ARP will improve interjurisdictional coordination to address issues that span across jurisdictional boundaries. Clark County will use this ARP to address large scale issues that impact all older adults within the county. Elements covered in the ARP such as housing and transportation are also covered in the local Comprehensive Growth Management Plans. These plans will be used in unison to address certain elements of the built environment, using the ARP to address the specific needs of the aging population.

The Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington, also known as AAADSW, is an agency tasked with enhancing the lives of older adults and people with disabilities within the five Southwest Washington counties, including Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Skamania and Wahkiakum. The AAADSW's purpose is to promote the independence, dignity, and well-being of people with disabilities and those over the age of 60. Using a coordinated system of home and community-based services, AAADSW can ensure the needs of these populations are being met. AAADSW was a crucial partner in the development of Clark County's ARP and will work together with the county using their own plan to achieve shared goals.

The AAADSW 2020–2023 Area Plan addresses the needs of older adults and people with disabilities by assessing current multi-county resources to determine what is lacking. This plan serves as a template for funding priorities, planning, and program development that support older adults and people with disabilities. Similarly, the ARP identifies gaps in support services, programs, and city and county codes that could be improved upon to better address the needs of older adults. These two plans will work in unison to reach shared goals for the targeted populations. The ARP goes more in depth on topics of housing, transportation, and emergency preparedness, but both plans share overarching goals and themes. The AAADSW Area Plan has a larger scope as it includes five counties throughout Southwest Washington, while the ARP has more specific policies that are focused on actions Clark County governments can take to support Clark County residents.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

To ensure that public input was considered in the ARP update, multiple community engagement workshops, surveys, and other conversations were held at various stages in the planning process. Data was compiled from a community member survey, local government survey, mostly Commission On Aging meetings that included service providers, focus group meetings with stakeholders, and public workshops. The Clark County Commission on Aging was involved in developing the outreach process with the planning team, understanding that an effective and all-encompassing community outreach strategy was crucial to fully understanding the specific desires and needs of Clark County’s older adults. Additional details and findings from the engagement efforts are included in Chapter 2, Public Engagement.

## DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected from many sources to better understand the status of the aging population within Clark County. This data covers transportation, housing, health statistics, natural and human-caused hazards, and other metrics that further the understanding of the aging population and their needs. The majority of the data came from AARP and documents published by AAADSW. Localized datasets and planning documents were included where applicable from local or regional agencies, such as Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency, Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council, and the various cities and towns in Clark County. Federal and state agencies were also cited including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Washington Department of Natural Resources, and more.



## STRATEGY SCORE DESCRIPTION

Policies in this plan were scored based on their original progress of implementation in Clark County or one or more cities in the county before this plan was drafted. A score of one indicates that this strategy was not originally feasible, it failed, or identified partners were not interested. A score of two indicates that this strategy originally hit a roadblock, it was not started, no partners were identified, or there was a hiccup in updating applicable codes and ordinances. Strategies with a score of three are either in progress, planning is underway in one jurisdiction in the county, or a partner has been identified but no progress in implementation has been made. A score of four indicates that there is at least one complete planning effort in the county, the effort is implemented but not yet successful, the strategy was implemented but needs to be updated, or a partner program was discontinued after implementation and a need still exists. A score of five indicates that there are three or more successful examples of code or ordinance implementation in the county, a partner program was successful and either complete or still on-going, or there are multiple successful plans in the county. Lastly, all new strategies that have not previously existed in the county were scored “New.”

# 1 Public Engagement



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

This chapter details engagement strategies and input received from community members and interested parties as part of the 2022–2023 update to the 2012 Aging Readiness Plan, or ARP. It discusses both general priorities and specific recommendations for the ARP update based on data collected from a community member survey, local government survey, “fireside chats” with service providers, focus group meetings with interested parties, and public workshops.

## METHODS

The first phase of outreach involved hosting six virtual focus group meetings via Zoom. Each of the six meetings addressed a specific topic from the ARP and involved the Commission on Aging and other key interested parties from government agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations serving the aging community.

Each meeting began with a short PowerPoint presentation about the ARP update project and the ways in which input gathered during the meeting would help shape effective strategies to address the needs of the community. The remainder of the meeting was conducted using Google Jamboard, a virtual whiteboard, where scribes took notes in real time while participants responded to the following brainstorming question: What makes a community age-friendly? Initial responses to the question were collected in a word cloud and then transferred to individual slides, at which point participants were asked to consider potential solutions or ways of achieving goals, as well as hurdles to the proposed solutions. The results of each focus group are presented in the Focus Group Feedback section later in this chapter.

The second phase of outreach, the strategy workshops, occurred at public workshops held in person at the Clark County Public Service Center in Downtown Vancouver and Battle Ground City Hall Council Chambers, as well as online via Zoom. The meeting began with a short presentation about the ARP update project, a summary of strategies that might help address issues in the six different ARP policy areas, and the ways in which community member feedback would be used to evaluate and prioritize the strategies.

Then, in-person attendees used sticky notes to write down their opinions and ideas regarding 18 strategies displayed on posters throughout the room. They were asked to place their sticky notes directly onto the boards while considering who, where, when, and why the strategy would be effective or ineffective. They provided responses on any of the boards of interest to them. Virtual attendees were asked to provide feedback in a similar way. The same 18 strategies were displayed on Google Jamboard slides and virtual sticky notes were added to the boards by scribes as attendees provided their ideas verbally or via the Chat function. Participants were also invited to suggest additional strategies that they did not see on a poster. Results are presented in Appendix B.



The third phase of outreach was a prioritization workshop held both in person at the Clark County Public Service Center in Downtown Vancouver and online via Zoom. The meeting began with a short presentation about the ARP update project, a summary of the goals and strategies included in the 2023 ARP update, and how community members could vote on their priority strategies. Each community member was given five votes per ARP chapter to distribute amongst its strategies. In the virtual meeting, it was difficult to review each chapter's strategies in whole before voting; therefore, participants provided up to five votes per chapter but commonly less than five. The number of votes each strategy had contributed to how it was prioritized when creating this plan.

## FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

The results from each of the six focus group meetings are summarized below. One important finding in all focus groups was that most aging issues and solutions are interconnected. For example, improving transportation will not only help older adults get around but will also enable them to live healthier lives by making it easier to access healthcare services and participate in community activities.



*Image description: Community members participate in a workshop*

On the other hand, neglecting certain issues will have repercussions in other areas. For example, not addressing the affordable housing crisis will make it more difficult for the aging community to afford or access other resources, such as high-quality foods and healthcare. This common finding suggests that strategies should involve multiple actors and address multiple issues simultaneously to be effective. Responses from these brainstorming sessions were framed as goals and participants were asked to identify potential solutions and hurdles that might make implementing these solutions difficult.

### **Community Engagement Focus Group**

At this focus group meeting, participants were asked to share ideas and discuss the ways in which they believe the updated ARP should promote community engagement among older adults. This activity began with the following brainstorming question: What makes a community age-friendly? While there were a wide variety of responses, they generally focused on accessibility, resource availability, and social equity. For example, several participants discussed the need for more accessible public spaces, social events, and transportation that are conducive to social activity for older adults. Others brought up the unique barriers that aging communities of color face, such as language barriers, the need for more culturally and age-appropriate programs, and social opportunities. Lastly, many participants made connections to other aspects of the ARP such as affordable and adequate housing, access to healthcare, and support services—emphasizing the influence these basic necessities have on an individual’s ability to socialize.

Responses from this brainstorming session were then framed as goals and participants were asked to identify potential solutions and hurdles that might make implementing these solutions difficult.

### **Supportive Services Focus Group**

At this focus group meeting, participants were asked to share ideas and discuss the ways in which they believe the updated ARP should support older adults requiring specialized care and services. This activity began with a brainstorming question: What makes a community age-friendly? While there were a wide variety of responses, they generally focused on resource accessibility, opportunities for aging in place, and supporting caregivers themselves. For example, several participants discussed the need to make resources easier to navigate and aid older adults having trouble accessing supportive resources. Others brought up the need for more in-home caregivers and other service providers like home maintenance and food delivery services who make it possible for older adults to remain in their homes. This led to a conversation about the need for more qualified geriatric caregivers and housing to support them.

Responses from this brainstorming session were then framed as goals and participants were asked to identify potential solutions and hurdles that might make implementing these solutions difficult.

## **Transportation Focus Group**

At this focus group meeting, participants were asked to share ideas and discuss the ways in which they believe the updated ARP should improve transportation quality and access among older adults. This activity began with a brainstorming question: What makes a community age-friendly? While there were a wide variety of responses, they generally focused on accessibility, safety, and reliability. For example, several participants discussed the need for universal design of public transit and sidewalks so that older adults with physical disabilities or dementia can navigate and use them with ease. Others brought up the need for safety and security improvements such as crime prevention and improved street lighting. Lastly, many participants pointed out the need for age-specific transportation to destinations such as healthcare facilities, community spaces, and rural areas.

Responses from this brainstorming session were then framed as goals and participants were asked to identify potential solutions and hurdles that might make implementing these solutions difficult.

## **Emergency Management Focus Group**

At this focus group meeting, participants were asked to share ideas and discuss the ways in which they believe the updated ARP should improve emergency management practices and ensure the safety of older adults during emergencies. This activity began with a brainstorming question: What makes a community age-friendly? While there were a wide variety of responses, they generally focused on accessibility, communication, and resource availability during emergency events. For example, they discussed the need for emergency facilities that are designed for older adults, emergency transportation that serves older adults including those with special needs, and emergency alerts that use age-friendly types of communication. Once again, participants also made connections to other aspects of the ARP such as adequate housing, access to healthcare, and transportation that is resilient in the face of disasters.

Responses from this brainstorming session were then framed as goals and participants were asked to identify potential solutions and hurdles that might make implementing these solutions difficult.

## **Housing Focus Group**

At this focus group meeting, participants were asked to share ideas and discuss the ways in which they believe the updated ARP should promote more affordable and age-appropriate housing options for older adults. This activity began with a brainstorming question: What makes a community age-friendly? While there were a wide variety of responses, they generally focused on housing affordability and adequacy, accessibility, and livable communities. For example, they discussed the clear need for more affordable housing units and programs, as well as rent control. Other participants emphasized the need for



universal design standards and diverse housing options that allow older adults and people with disabilities to live in homes that meet their specific needs. Additionally, many mentioned the need for housing that is located near support resources, transit, and community spaces—emphasizing the interconnectedness of housing and other aspects of the ARP.

Responses from this brainstorming session were then framed as goals and participants were asked to identify potential solutions and hurdles that might make implementing these solutions difficult.

## **Healthy Communities Focus Group**

At this focus group meeting, participants were asked to share ideas and discuss the ways in which they believe the ARP update should support physical and mental wellness in the aging community. This activity began with a brainstorming question: What makes a community age-friendly? While there were a wide variety of responses, they generally focused on holistic wellness, community-based support, and larger issues within the United States healthcare system. Specifically, they discussed the need for easy access to healthy foods, safe physical activity, and social/recreational activities to support physical and mental health simultaneously. Other participants discussed the importance of community support and community-based organizations in addressing healthcare needs, which led to a discussion about the limitations of Medicare and the affordability crisis.

Responses from this brainstorming session were then framed as goals and participants were asked to identify potential solutions and hurdles that might make implementing these solutions difficult.

# **STRATEGY WORKSHOP FEEDBACK**

This section summarizes the feedback received from both virtual and in-person attendees of the first and second public workshops on each of the 18 strategies presented. Two in-person meetings were held, one in Vancouver and one in Battle Ground. A guided virtual session was held concurrently with the Vancouver meeting and participants could add comments on their own time through the Clark County website. All feedback was received between January and March 2023.

## **Transportation Strategies**

Participants felt that transportation strategies should focus on three main areas: better coordinating and expanding existing transit services and improving walkability. They emphasized the need to focus on providing more transit services to rural areas and for people with low-income; and making pedestrian infrastructure more accessible for those with physical and cognitive disabilities (see strategies M-1.1; M-1.2; M-3.1; M-3.3; M-4.2). Participants also voiced concern about the lack of bus stop infrastructure such as; benches, shelters, and restrooms that support the comfort of all transit riders, especially older adults and people with a disability (see strategy M-1.1). There were multiple comments addressing the

lack of Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, compliance, including curb cuts and continuous sidewalks that are necessary for safe and accessible travel (see strategies M-2.2; M-3.1; M-3.3; M-4.2). In Battle Ground, 20th Avenue, which borders assisted living facilities, was highlighted as an area of particular need. Having safe, continuous, and ADA-accessible sidewalks between neighborhoods and amenities will improve the walkability, rollability, and safety for residents. Lastly, participants cited the sidewalk on Highway 99 as an example as a step in the right direction, but emphasized the need for more pedestrian infrastructure in general and improved network connectivity.

## Healthy Communities Strategies

In terms of public spaces and parks, participants felt that there should be a greater focus on universal and intergenerational design so that people of any age and ability can enjoy them safely (see strategies HC-2.2; HC-2.4). They also discussed the importance of including these spaces within new housing developments (see strategy HC-2.1). Overall, they emphasized the value of public spaces in promoting physical activity and preventing social isolation (see strategies HC-2.2; HC-2.3; HC-2.4).

Similarly, participants highlighted the importance of volunteer opportunities for older adults because they provide important contributions to the community and enrich the lives of the volunteers themselves. Specifically, they discussed the need for more intergenerational volunteer opportunities, such as mentorship programs, and a more centralized way to advertise and learn about volunteer opportunities (see strategies CI-2.1; CI-2.2; CI-3.1; CI-3.2).

Lastly, participants talked about the importance of producing and consuming local foods and distributing them to older adults. They want programs that focus on households with low incomes and located in rural areas who may have more difficulty accessing affordable healthy foods, as well as expanded food and meal delivery services (see strategies HC-1.1; HC-1.2; HC-1.3).

## Housing Strategies

Overall, participants wanted to see more affordable and intergenerational housing opportunities that would help address the specific needs of the aging community, as well as those experiencing houselessness. For many, this means communities that include a variety of housing types (e.g., apartments, single-family homes, assisted living) to create more diverse communities. This includes expanding access to accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, which are important housing opportunities for older adults that provide them with the opportunity to live with family or have other caregivers on site while also maintaining independence (see strategies H-1.1; H-1.2; H-1.3; H-1.6). Participants wanted to prioritize housing affordability controls and removing barriers to mixed-use and affordable housing development (see strategies H-3.1; H-3.2; H-3.3; H-3.4; H-3.5). Additionally, participants suggested educating realtors on the specific housing requirements that support aging home buyers (see strategy

H-1.4). Lastly, participants emphasized the promotion of new housing developments that support the needs of the aging community, such as zero step entries and restrooms on the ground floor (see strategies H-2.1; H-2.2; H-2.3; H-2.4; H-2.5; H-2.6; H-2.7; H-2.8; H-2.9).

## **Supportive Services Strategies**

When it comes to supportive services and caregiving, participants wanted to see more collaboration between existing service providers. For example, many emphasized the need for better coordination between transportation, healthcare, meal providers, and assisted living facilities. Many find that the lack of collaboration between all these providers leads to confusion and inefficiency. This includes improving government and community organization partnerships so that they are better equipped to collaborate on improving supportive services and strategies (see strategies HC-4.1; HC-4.2; HC-4.5; HC-5.1; HC-5.2; CI-1.1; CI-1.2; CI-3.1; EP-1.3; EP-2.3; EP-3.3; M-1.2; M-2.3). They acknowledged the effectiveness of the Bridgeview Resource Center, which currently connects local organizations and agency partners. Participants also voiced that access to amenities and services, such as pharmacies and convenience stores could be improved if they were located in or near assisted living facilities.

In terms of expanding services and outreach, participants found that there should be a focus on adding more mobile services, centralizing information, and providing culturally competent communication. They pointed out that services that come to peoples' homes or to places where people already gather make it more convenient to access services and that providing information about services in a more central location, such as a website, and in multiple languages could make them more accessible (see strategies EP-2.6; EP-2.7; EP-3.1; EP-3.2; HC-4.2; HC-4.3).

## **Emergency Preparedness Strategies**

Participants discussed the need for targeted support for residents in the rural areas of north county and those with disabilities during hazard events. They pointed out the importance of neighbor-to-neighbor communication and assistance during such events, which can and has helped many older adults. They also discussed the need for better communication from emergency management agencies because many find existing alerts confusing and they are inaccessible to some (e.g., text alerts may not be accessible to those who are blind) (see strategies EP-1.3; EP-2.1; EP-2.2; EP-2.3; EP-3.3). In addition, participants supported the development of neighborhood-based volunteer corps that are specifically designed to help people who have a disability and are older during a crisis. Lastly, many discussed the risks of not having access to healthcare during emergencies and found that more mobile healthcare providers could help alleviate these risks before and during emergencies (see strategies EP-1.3; EP-2.1; EP-2.2; EP-2.3; EP-2.4; EP-2.5; EP-2.6; EP-2.7; EP-3.1; EP-3.2; EP-3.3).

## Civic Involvement Strategies

Community engagement strategy discussions focused on volunteerism, neighborhood-based programs and events, and creating job opportunities for older adults who want to remain in the workforce. Many found that some of the best engagement opportunities can be created by promoting volunteer opportunities and intergenerational and culturally inclusive events at parks, libraries, and other public spaces (see strategies CI-2.1; CI-2.2; CI-3; HC-2.2; HC-2.4). Others discussed the possibility of creating partnerships with businesses and public facilities to provide job opportunities to older adults (see strategies CI-3.1; CI-3.2). Lastly, participants emphasized the need to continue offering virtual engagement opportunities even after the COVID-19 pandemic because they provide safe opportunities for those with medical concerns and those who are geographically isolated (see strategy CI-3.1).

# PRIORITIZATION WORKSHOP

This section summarizes the feedback received from both virtual and in-person attendees of the April prioritization workshop. Each community member was given five votes per ARP section and could distribute those votes as they wished (e.g., all on one strategy or divided between several). They were also given the opportunity to make additional comments. The number of votes each strategy had contributed to how it was prioritized when creating this plan.

## Healthy Communities Strategies

To make the communities of Clark County healthier, participants voiced that the county should improve access to healthy food options by prioritizing fresh and local foods at places like farmers’ markets and by developing grocery stores in food deserts. Other than food choices, participants wanted to make parks, green spaces, and community gathering spaces safer and more accessible. They wanted to set clear park standards, including universal design standards that are age friendly and have increased vegetation.

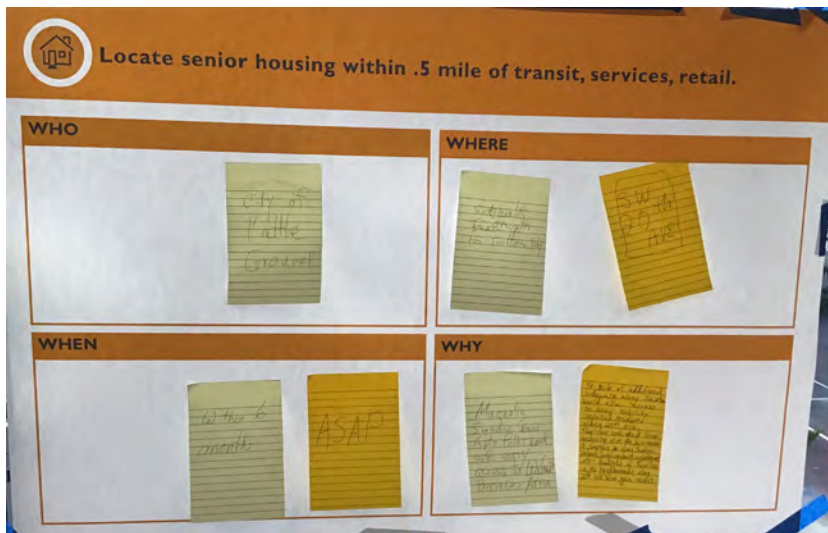


Image description: Strategy workshop board with feedback on sticky notes



Participants stated that Clark County should promote age-friendly business practices and initiatives to better support older adults. They also supported the development of additional healthcare resources like better utilization of the R.U.O.K. and CARES programs, development of a geriatric mobile outreach program, and improved coordination between Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington, or AAADSW, and older adults. Lastly, participants wanted to better support the caregivers who many older adults rely on to comfortably live life. They voiced that the county should find ways to raise awareness of available services for caregivers and support workforce development for caregivers.

## **Housing Strategies**

Participants supported a variety of housing strategies that would provide older adults in Clark County with expanded housing options that meet their specific needs. First, they wanted to improve housing for multigenerational families to allow older adults to stay in family homes and not be forced to live in assisted living facilities. To achieve this, many participants backed allowing cohousing in single-family residential zones and expanding shared housing programs for older adults. Participants wanted to better support older adults who choose to age in place by expanding minor home repair programs, developing a list of age friendly housing modifications, and promoting visitable housing and universal design standards. In addition to creating housing stock that meets the needs of older adults, housing affordability was also brought up as significant problem in Clark County. To make housing more affordable, participants supported the implementation of the nonprofit/land trust affordable housing model, development of density bonuses for new housing within a quarter mile of transit, and better coordination between affordable housing agencies.

## **Transportation Strategies**

Participants supported the idea of retrofitting transit stops with the needs of older people and those with disabilities in mind. They wished for transit infrastructure to be more comfortable, with things like seats and shade cover. They also voiced that public transit should become more specialized to meet the needs of people with disabilities, who often experience a lack of mobility. Expanding on transit systems, participants wanted to increase infrastructure to promote alternative transportation modes in places that are not well served by existing transit lines. Better coordination of interagency resources would allow for the development of safe walking and rolling connections and increased use of neighborhood electric vehicles like scooters and bikes. Additionally, participants supported the promotion of land use and design standards that encourage walking, rolling, and transit use. Specifically, they wanted to require accessible entrances to public buildings, expand the network of complete streets, and strengthen mobility standards in new developments.

## **Civic Involvement Strategies**

Participants thought that improving older adults' involvement within their communities should be prioritized. They wanted additional support for neighborhood associations and other volunteer groups that reach out and engage with older adults. To do this, they wanted the county to team up with AAADSW and other partner agencies to share best practices for reaching older adults. Additionally, they wanted local governments to connect to American Association of Retired Persons, or AARP, resources that will allow for expanded capacities. Participants also supported the development of cross-cultural and intergenerational community events to involve older adults within their communities. They thought this could be carried out by connecting older adults with youth and school organizations or by expanding volunteer opportunities that support residents that choose to age in place. Lastly, participants voiced that engagement opportunities for older adults should be available in person and online. For this to be successful, participants noted that broadband access would need to be expanded to more rural parts of Clark County. They also thought that the county should work with local colleges to expand re-careering, skills building, and recreational courses for older adults.

## **Emergency Preparedness Strategies**

To prepare for emergency situations in Clark County, participants supported mitigation measures to minimize the potential impacts of hazard events before they occur. To do this, they thought the county should work with Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency, or CRESA, to develop hazard mitigation and emergency preparedness planning efforts. In addition, another way that participants thought the county could prepare for potential hazard events was through education and improved communication channels. Specifically, they voiced that neighborhood associations should again work with CRESA to develop local programs and educate community members about hazard preparedness. Participants supported preparing essential facilities like community centers for hazards with supplies, such as refrigerators and generators. Additionally, they heavily supported the idea of providing essential services like healthcare during hazard events. To do this, they thought the county should provide an emergency evacuation shuttle service, distribute emergency preparedness resources, and improve access to healthcare during hazards.

# 2 Healthy Communities

Living Healthier and Longer  
in our Communities







How an area grows and evolves has a large impact on how people travel, conduct their social lives, choose food options, access parks and open space, and engage in physical activity within that area. Places with access to affordable and appropriate housing, healthy food, safe streets, parks, and walkable neighborhoods support better community health and healthy aging.

The prevalence of various land uses within a community can either encourage healthy behaviors or become a barrier. Examples include the following:

- Safe, accessible, highly connected sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and trails can support an active lifestyle
- Homes in close proximity to businesses and transit centers can promote mobility via public transportation and walking
- Appropriately locating land uses, such as residential, commercial, public institutions, and industrial, can mitigate adverse impacts to human health while promoting business development
- Access to recreation, including parks, open space, and other public facilities, can encourage healthy lifestyles and community gathering
- Safe streets that account for all forms of transportation, including people walking, rolling, and biking, can reduce injuries and fatalities resulting from collisions



*Image description: Man and woman sitting on a bench in a park.*



# SOCIAL ISOLATION AND OLDER ADULTS

Seniors may experience social isolation for several reasons at varied times in their lives. When friends or family members move or pass away, many people are left feeling alone without people to support them. Retiring moves people away from their work environment, including the people who they once interacted with on a daily basis. Others may continue to work to meet basic living needs but find they lack time, energy, or resources to socialize outside of their obligations. Having limited mobility, either due to the loss of driving privileges or a physical impairment, can also contribute to social isolation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Clark County's older adult population experienced greater degrees of isolation compared to the general population due to their disproportional vulnerability to the virus. Social isolation is associated with various mental and physical health ailments, including increased risk of heart disease and stroke, poorer general well-being and health, type 2 diabetes, and the common cold, as well as increased risk of depression, poorer cognitive function, and dementia.<sup>1 2</sup>

To cope with social isolation, many older adults choose to keep pets as companions. Pets have been shown to lower blood pressure, reduce depression and loneliness, increase mobility and independence, and ease anxiety in older adults.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, pets can add additional medical and housing costs, and, at times, can limit housing options. Community resources via the Humane Society for Southwest Washington are available for pet owners, including supplemental pet food, veterinary assistance, emergency boarding, rehoming programs, and more. Aside from pets, other housing options such as shared housing, cohousing, or living in an accessory dwelling unit, or ADU, can help to bring older adults closer to family or community members and therefore help mitigate social isolation; more information is detailed in Chapter 3, Housing.

## HEALTH EFFECTS OF ISOLATION

*The health effects of prolonged social isolation on mortality are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day<sup>1</sup>*

- 1 Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015. Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-analytic Review. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25910392/>
- 2 Holt-Lunstad, J. 2020. "Social Isolation and Health." June 21, 2020. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20200622.253235/full/>.
- 3 Clark County Commission on Aging. 2019. *Commission on Aging Annual Report 2019*. <https://indd.adobe.com/view/82d46b3c-f1c3-41f0-8187-7626a9cbd02e>.



In addition, alternative transportation modes allow older adults to enjoy life even when their mobility is limited; more information can be found in Chapter 4, Mobility. Joining community programs and other forms of civic involvement help older adults get out of the house and contribute to their community; additional information can be found in Chapter 5, Civic Involvement.

## ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Older adults who are active, eat healthy foods, and have strong social support networks are more likely to remain healthy, live independently, and incur fewer healthcare costs. Communities that encourage more physical activity can promote positive health outcomes, through use of public transit and lower use of private automobiles, safer streets, and better access to health resources.<sup>4</sup>

### Healthy Food Choices

A healthy community provides an affordable and abundant selection of healthy eating options through conveniently located fresh produce markets, grocery stores, farmers' markets, community gardens, or **community supported agriculture**, which sell fresh, locally grown produce. Access to these sources of healthy food options can help residents make healthier food choices and ultimately promote good health.

### Parks Open Space and Recreation

Access to parks and open space serves important community functions and can promote healthy behaviors. Parks and open space provide opportunities for physical activity, which can reduce incidence rates of obesity and other chronic conditions and help address social isolation. Additionally, living within a short walking distance of a park with a safe connecting route has been associated with lower levels of anxiety and

#### SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

*Social Determinants of Health are community conditions that impact how residents, work, live and play. Examples include health and social services, food options, education, jobs, transportation, parks, housing and others.*

#### COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

*Community supported agriculture is a way communities or individuals can participate directly in food production. Members or shareholders pledge to cover the anticipated costs of farm operations and wages or salary of the farmers.*

<sup>4</sup> Iravani, H., and V. Rao. 2019. "The Effects of New Urbanism on Public Health." *Journal of Urban Design* 25(2): 218–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2018.1554997>.





depression.<sup>5</sup> When appropriately designed for all ages and abilities, parks can also be places for gathering and for community events. Parks can be used for a variety of community programs such as exercise classes, volunteer and mentor opportunities, special events, and others. In addition to physical and psychological health and social functions, green spaces can also provide environmental benefits, such as stormwater retention, reduced heat island effect, and wildlife habitat, among others.<sup>6</sup>

## Complete Neighborhoods

The task force for the original 2012 Aging Readiness Plan, or ARP, identified several characteristics of “complete neighborhoods,” which can promote healthy communities, such as a variety of transportation options; healthy food access; a mix of housing types, stores, and businesses; and access to parks and open spaces. These characteristics were reaffirmed as part of the ARP update in the Mobility Focus Group and strategy workshops (see Chapter 1, Public Engagement).

Furthermore, communities in which resources like grocery stores, pharmacies, health clinics, and other daily goods and services are in comfortable distance by foot, bike, or mobility-assistive device (e.g., manually powered wheelchair or electric wheelchair) can encourage more active lifestyles and greater opportunities for interactions between community members. This includes convenient access to locations where people can gather, such as parks, community facilities, libraries, and coffee shops. Neighborhoods with these features can promote physical activity, reduce dependence on private vehicles for transportation, and even improve public safety by increasing community presence in public spaces.

## Outcomes of Living in a Healthy Community

Each of the above elements of healthy communities are important for promoting healthy aging among Clark County residents. By providing these necessary resources, older adults can be empowered to be more involved in civic and social life, make healthier food choices, and engage in physical activity.

Healthy aging can also reduce healthcare costs. Investment in **community-based disease intervention** programs can lead to improved physical activity and nutrition among community members.

### COMMUNITY-BASED DISEASE INTERVENTION

*Community-based disease intervention programs are public health initiatives designed to prevent, control, and manage the spread of diseases within a specific community or population. These programs prioritize the involvement and participation of community members, recognizing that they play a crucial role in promoting health and well-being.*

5 Sturm, R., and D. Cohen. 2014. “Proximity to Urban Parks and Mental Health.” *Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics* 17(1): 19–24. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24864118/>.

6 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2022. “Benefits of Green Infrastructure.” <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/benefits-green-infrastructure>.



# ASSESSING CLARK COUNTY COMMUNITIES

Many neighborhoods are not designed with aging residents in mind. Homes are located far from goods and services, creating an overdependence on personal automobiles. Many communities lack the compact, mixed development needed to enable residents to walk, bike, or roll to goods and services, and public transportation systems lack connectivity. To support residents who choose to age in place, communities in Clark County should follow the components of a 15-minute neighborhood where residents can access all necessary amenities easily and safely without a car. Some necessary amenities include multiple transportation options, restaurants and grocery stores, healthcare facilities, safe streets and sidewalks, and opportunities for social engagement like parks, community centers, and libraries. The common low-density residential neighborhood does not provide access to healthcare providers, grocery stores, and local businesses by means other than personal automobiles.

## Community Engagement

As part of community engagement (see Chapter 1, Outreach Summary), the Healthy Communities Focus Group explored and discussed characteristics of a healthy community, focusing on holistic wellness, community-based support, and larger healthcare system issues. Goals the focus group identified included supporting community-based organizations that help older adults access healthcare services, healthy foods, and social programs; fostering community spaces and programs to be safer and more accessible to those with physical or cognitive disabilities; and focusing on broader issues affecting health, such as housing and transportation. These broader issues included ensuring there are residential areas good for walking or **rolling** and close to parks, transit, and healthy food choices, among others, to increase physical activity and reduce local pollution that could exacerbate chronic health conditions.

### ROLLING

*Rolling refers to any mode of personal transportation that involves wheels like bikes and wheelchairs.*



## Healthy Community Indicators

Clark County's status on various indicators of healthy communities was assessed using the American Association of Retired Persons, or AARP, Livability Index and other metrics. Results are summarized according to the following subsections: healthy foods and parks, open space, and recreation.

### HEALTHY FOODS

The presence of a neighborhood grocery store or supermarket can encourage higher fruit and vegetable consumption, which supports dietary needs and helps reduce the prevalence of detrimental conditions such as weight gain and obesity. In Clark County, 32.3% of adults are obese, on par with the U.S. 2022 median. Markets offering fresh produce are particularly important in areas poorly served by full-service supermarkets. Residents in the southwest of the county have better access to grocery stores than those in north or southeast (see Figure 2-1). Studies show that residents of neighborhoods with numerous fast-food restaurants and few grocery stores have higher rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.<sup>7</sup>

On the AARP Livability Index, Clark County scored above the U.S. median for access to grocery stores and farmers' markets, with 0.7 stores and markets per half mile, measured at the neighborhood scale. Three farmers' markets accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, and EBT cards and the SNAP Market Match program provides SNAP recipients with up to \$40 per day of Market Match currency to be used for fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets. This program makes locally grown foods more accessible and affordable to SNAP-qualifying residents.

### PARKS, OPEN SPACES, AND RECREATION

Convenient access to parks, open spaces, and quality recreational facilities and programs greatly increases the likelihood of physical activity. Regular physical activity can provide social and emotional

#### GOAL HC-1

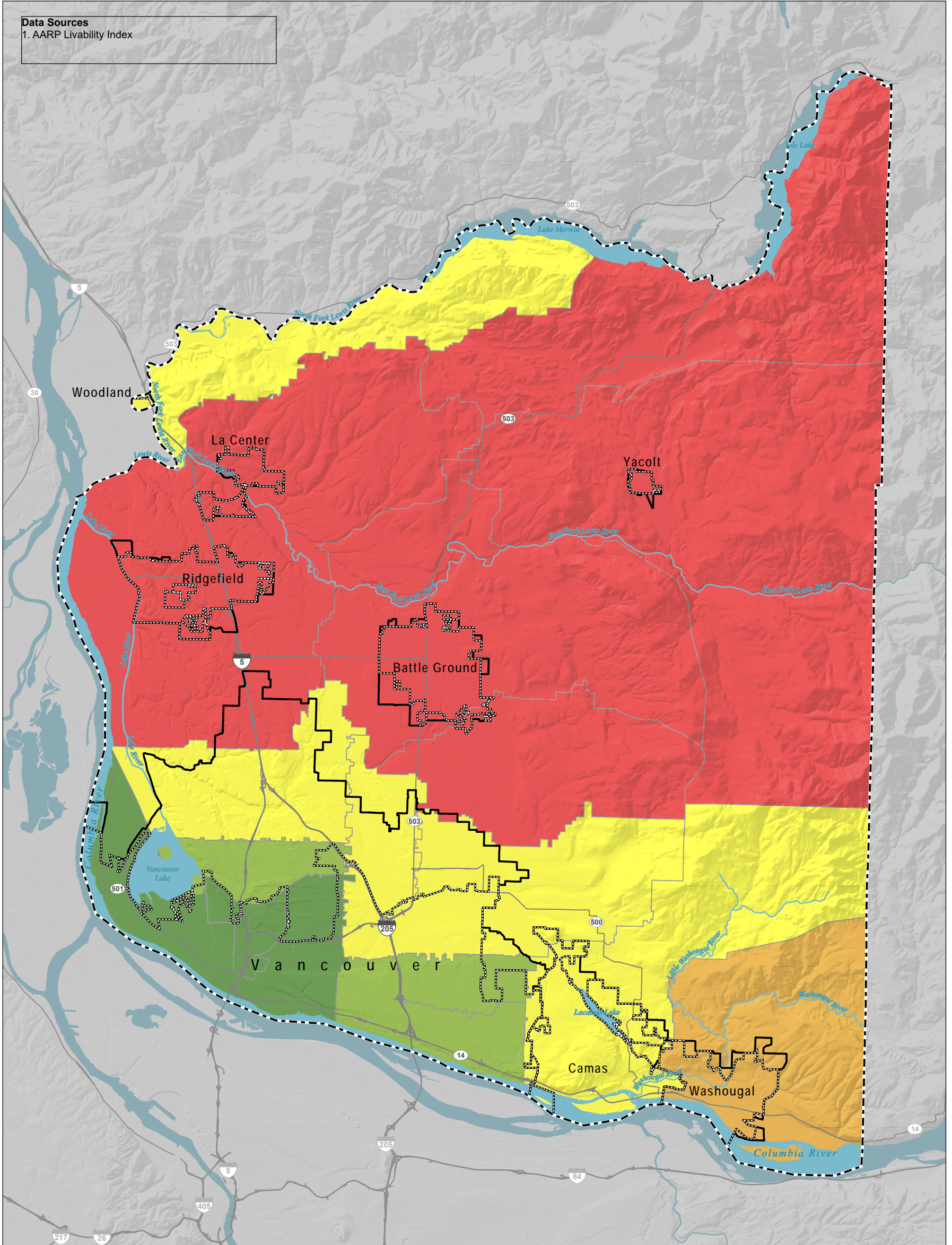
*Improve access to healthy food.*

#### GOAL HC-2

*Create safe and accessible parks, greenspaces, and community gathering spaces.*

7 Kanchi, R., P. Lopez, and P. Rummo. 2021. "Longitudinal Analysis of Neighborhood Food Environment and Diabetes Risk in the Veterans Administration Diabetes Risk Cohort." *Jama Network*. October 29, 2021. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2785598#related-tab>.





**FIGURE 2-1**  
**Number of Grocery Stores or Farmers Markets within 0.5 Miles**  
 Aging Readiness Plan 2023

**KEY**

Number of Grocery Stores within .5 miles <sup>1</sup>

- 0-0.15
- 0.15-0.3
- 0.3-0.9
- 0.9-1.1
- 1.1+

**All Other Features**

- Incorporated Area
- County Boundary
- Urban Growth Area

**NOTE:** Information shown on this map was collected from several sources. Clark County accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies that may be present.

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benefits by reducing depression and anxiety, improving mood, and enhancing a person's ability to perform daily tasks throughout their life.

On the AARP Livability Index, Clark County scores above the U.S. median on access to parks, scoring 1.8 parks per half mile (measured at the neighborhood scale). Thus, many residents have a park within walking distance of their home. However, parks are not evenly distributed throughout the county (see Figure 2-2).

The Clark County Parks and Lands Division and the various city parks departments manage a variety of parks throughout Clark County. Recreation programs are offered by many of the cities within Clark County. For instance, there are first Saturday events offered by the City of Ridgefield where a different outdoor recreation event is held on the first Saturday of every month, like Big Paddle, a community water event on Lake River in early June. There are also programs tailored specifically for older adults. For example, the City of Vancouver offers a variety of programs for residents 50 and older, including fitness programs at Firstenburg and Marshall community centers, weekly afternoon dances, and the Forever Young Hikers Program, among others.

## HEALTH CARE SUPPORT SERVICES

Supportive services are critical to the health, independence, and productivity not only of their direct clients but also to the friends and family members who provide informal care. Community-based health resources reduce the strain on family members providing care.

According to the most recent AARP Caregiving in the United States report (2020), 21.3% of the adult population provides care to someone who is ill or disabled. Most of the care recipients are 50 and older and most of the caregivers are family members or friends representing many different age groups. This is a significant increase since 2015 when 18.2% of the adult population provided care to one or more people. This upward trend is expected to continue into

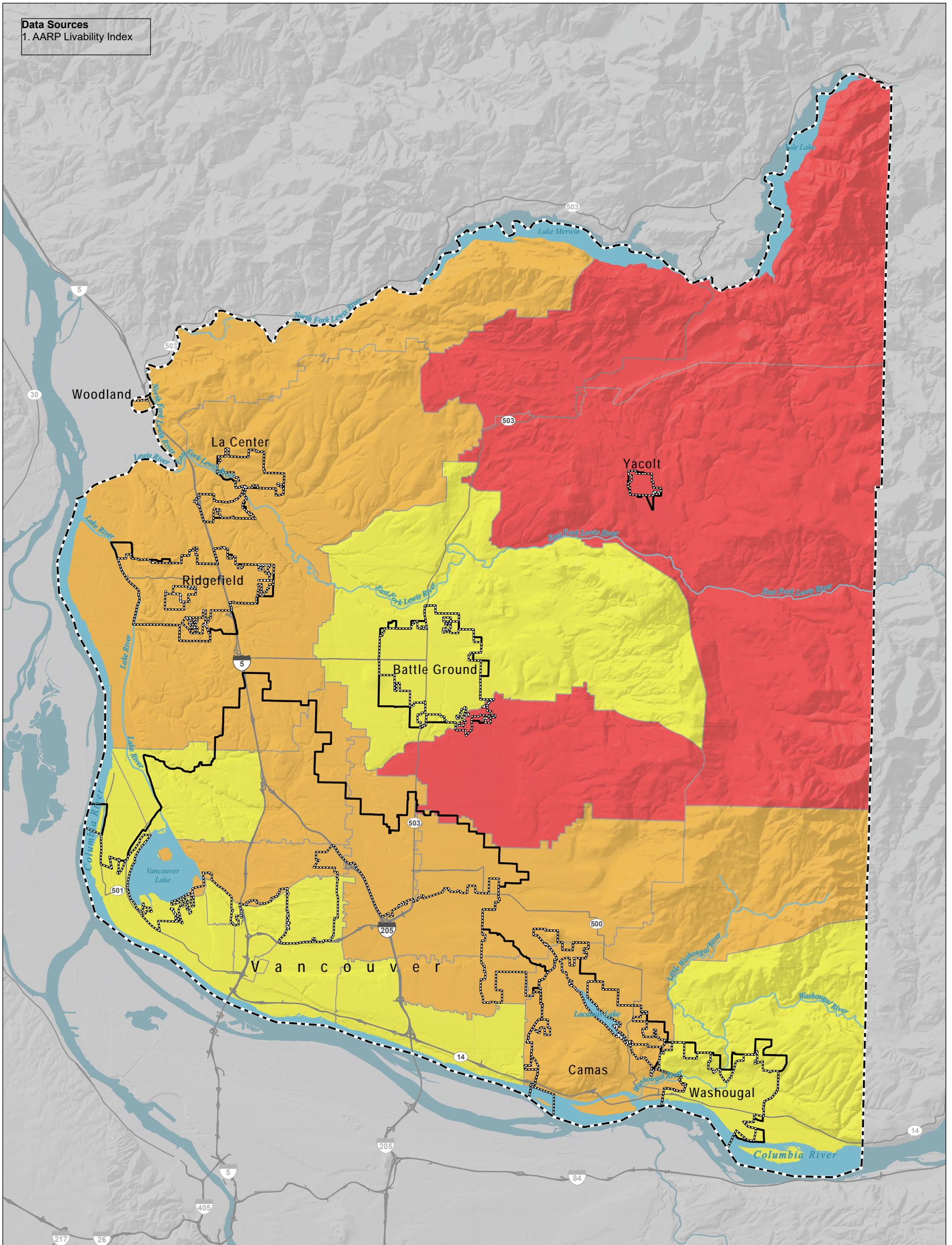
### GOAL HC-3

*Create a welcoming and age-friendly built environment.*

### GOAL HC-4

*Develop local and community-based healthcare resources.*





**FIGURE 2.2**

**Access to Parks**  
Aging Readiness Plan 2023

**KEY**

Number of Parks within 0.5 Miles <sup>1</sup>

- 0-1
- 1-2
- 2-4

**All Other Features**

- Incorporated Area
- County Boundary
- Urban Growth Area



*NOTE: This figure may underestimate the amount of publicly accessible parkland in Ridgefield, as the City has pursued additional parkland by increasing privately owned publicly accessible parks, trails, and open space.*



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the early 2030s and can be attributed to the aging of the large Baby Boom generation and shortages of healthcare workers and professional care providers. This is the case in Clark County as well, where there has been an 11.1% increase in the population of people 60 and over in just the last 3 years and where there are nearly 51,000 people providing care to an older family member.<sup>8</sup>

## Services, Support, and Information for Caregivers

While many supportive services designed for caregivers are in place (see the Existing Programs and Resources section in this chapter), the AARP Caregiving report found that 1 in 4 caregivers found it difficult to find affordable services and/or information in their community. Moreover, 20% of caregivers report never receiving help or information that would help them with caregiving.<sup>9</sup> This may be due in part to decentralized information or resources that are difficult to access. The report also found that the most requested information and training from caregivers was related to keeping their recipients safe at home, managing their own stress, completing their recipients' paperwork and/or confirming eligibility for certain benefits, and activities they can participate in with their recipients.

Based on these findings, there is a clear need for more supportive services for caregivers who are providing invaluable services to their loved ones and, in turn, to their communities.

## EXISTING PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

Many agencies and organizations in Clark County provide a range of supportive services to the older population. These services include fitness and nutrition programs, in-home care, housing referral programs, adult day care, family caregiver support programs, and travel training programs for riding transit, among others. Still, it can be difficult and challenging for people to find out what resources are available to them or their family member.

While a major goal of this ARP is to develop policies and programs that improve support services, it is important to consider the work that is already being done. The Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington, or AAADSW, administers or otherwise supports over 35 programs that make it easier for older adults to age in place. These programs are aimed at improving access to quality nutrition, exercise programs, transportation, healthcare, home maintenance, mental health services, and many other resources for both older adults and their caregivers. These programs include but are not limited to the following:

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8 AAADSW (Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington). 2021. *2020-2023 Area Plan Update*. [https://www.helpingelders.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2020-2023AP\\_2-Year-Update\\_AAADSW\\_Website.pdf](https://www.helpingelders.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2020-2023AP_2-Year-Update_AAADSW_Website.pdf).

9 National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP Public Policy Institute. 2020. "2020 Report: Caregiving in the U.S." Accessed June 5, 2023. <https://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/full-report-caregiving-in-the-united-states-01-21.pdf>.



- Medicaid Case Management is the largest program offered with over 4,400 recipients. People using Medicaid in-home services are assigned a case manager who ensures they have access to the most appropriate caregiver and supportive services. This allows them to remain safely in the setting of their choice while providing ongoing monitoring of their individualized situations. The Health Home Care Coordination Program is intended either for individuals on Medicaid or those that are dually eligible for Medicare who have a chronic condition that is challenging to manage. This program provides frequent in-person visits to work on short-term and long-term health goals. The results are better coordination of services, improved management of behaviors impacting their chronic conditions, and improved health outcomes. Medicaid Alternative Care and Tailored Support for Older Adults are programs that help coordinate and provide individualized services that prevent or delay the need to enter Medicaid-funded long-term care facilities.
- Enhance Fitness, Staying Active and Independent for Life, Strong Women, and Walking with Ease are all exercise and/or physical therapy programs designed for older adults, including those with limited mobility. They provide opportunities for health-promoting physical activity and social engagement.
- Congregate Nutrition Services, Home Delivered Meals, and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program are all programs that provide healthy and affordable food to older adults. The programs are focused on providing high-quality foods to underserved populations, as well as opportunities for social engagement.
- Bridge Transitional Care Services, the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, and Advanced Care Planning program provide information and assistance to those transitioning into or out of long-term care and planning for end-of-life services.
- TCARE, STAR-C, Powerful Tools for Caregivers, Family Caregiver Support Program, and the State Family Caregiver Program are all focused on supporting non-professional caregivers in a variety of ways. They provide training, direct assistance, and resources to ensure that caregivers can successfully care for their loved ones while maintaining their own health and happiness.
- The HOME Program provides minor home modifications so that those with mobility concerns can get around their homes and use home amenities safely and independently.
- The Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives focuses on combatting depression and other mental health concerns among aging adults.





## VISION AND STRATEGY

This section explains how to promote healthy communities in Clark County. It includes goals for Clark County and how they were generated from community feedback, as well as specific strategies for each goal to meet the vision. Each strategy includes a description, score, interested parties, key terms, and resources. Scores are based on the progress made on a specific strategy to this point throughout the county. Interested parties include all likely involved implementing parties, such as potential lead agencies, partners, and organizations that may offer resources. Some strategies also include case studies from around Clark County.

# How to Read a Strategy

The following text explains the anatomy of each strategy and how Clark County and cities and towns within the county could implement the ARP.

## Title- This explains the intent of the strategy

**Score:** For existing strategies included in the original 2012 plan, this explains how well the strategy has been implemented in the past decade. See detailed 'Strategy Score Description' on page 5.

**Case Study:** An important example of this strategy implemented well locally.

**Data:** Which data was used to score the strategy

**Measure Description:** This explains the precise action that the county, cities, or partner agencies need to take to implement

**Type:** This explains the type of government or agency action this strategy is. Strategies of the same type are scored consistently.

**Interested Parties:** Government, Agency, or Non-profit implementors

**Key Terms:** Important definitions that should be used consistently

**Resources:** County documents and nation-wide examples

**Priority:** Each goal has one priority strategy. Priority strategies should be implemented first because they were identified by the community and/or lays the groundwork for supporting strategies.

## Goal 1: Improve access to healthy food



**What We Heard:** Community members thought it was important to increase healthy and affordable food options in underserved and rural areas. Additionally, in the strategy workshops, participants highlighted increasing access to local food and supporting regional farms

**AARP LI Measure:** Access to Grocery Stores and Farmers' Markets

# Strategy HC-1.1: Expand access to fresh and local food

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [City of Savannah Mobile Farmers Market Ordinance](#); [Clark County Grown](#)

**Case Study:** The **Gorge Grown Farmers Market** is a great example of how farmers' markets can mobilize to reach more people. Mobile farmers' markets provide local fruits, vegetables, and other goods to smaller communities that may not be large enough to host a permanent farmers' market.

**Data:** Existing and new fresh food pick ups

**Measure Description:** Identify locations that would benefit from a fresh local food pick-up supported by mobile farmers' markets and community supported agriculture. These locations should have public transportation access and be Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, accessible. These locations should serve communities without easy access to a grocery store.

**Type:** Advocacy

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County Public Health; Clark County farmers; Clark County farmers' markets

**Key Terms:** Community supported agriculture: members or share-holders pledge to cover the anticipated costs of farm operations and wages or salary of the farmers. In return, they receive shares in the farm's harvest throughout the growing season.

Mobile farmers' market: consolidated farmers' market that can be transported in a van or other large vehicle to areas that are difficult to serve with a farmers' market.

**Priority**

# Strategy HC-1.2: Improve access to farmers' markets

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** [Clark County Public Health Farmers Markets](#)

**Case Study:** Examples can be taken from the Salmon Creek farmers' market where they offer customers a variety of local vendors and products at multiple locations. Salmon Creek farmers' market focuses on improving accessibility by honoring SNAP benefits and the WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs. These programs provide monetary assistance for vulnerable populations to purchase healthier food options.

**Data:** Existing and new farmers' markets

**Measure Description:** Evaluate the accessibility of existing farmers' markets and work with market managers to make markets equitable and age friendly. This could include expanding transportation options, ensuring that the use of government food benefits is easy, and encouraging year round markets.

**Type:** Advocacy

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County Public Health; Clark County farmers; Clark County farmers' markets

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy HC-1.3: Prioritize grocery store development in food deserts

Score: ●●○○○

Resources: 'Accessory Commercial Units' for a 15-Minute City

Case Study: None

Data: City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Allow accessory commercial uses that provide fresh produce to be located by-right on corner lots in residential-only neighborhoods.

**Type:** Ordinances and codes

**Stakeholders:** Clark County cities; Clark County Public Health; Clark County farmers; Clark County farmers' markets; Clark County Community Planning

**Key Terms:** Food desert is a community where more than 500 people live more than a half-mile from a healthy food establishment



## Goal 2: Create safe and accessible parks, greenspaces, and community gathering spaces



**What We Heard:** Community members felt that it was important to create park spaces designed for everyone to ensure accessibility for those with physical and cognitive disabilities and intergenerational use. They also thought that community spaces and green spaces should be included within new housing developments.

**AARP LI Measure:** Access to Parks

### Strategy HC-2.1: Set clear park standards for new parks and private development to meet National Recreation and Park Association standards

**Score:** ●●●○○

**Resources:** [Park Metrics National Recreation and Park Association](#); [The Role of Parks in Aging in Place National Recreation and Park Association](#)

**Case Study:** Ridgefield's Development Code requires all Planned Unit Developments to set aside 25% for common open space; parks, trails, etc.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Create park standards that include acres of park/miles of trails per person, park provisions, and trail links in large new development. These standards should meet or exceed those of the National Recreation and Park Association.

**Type:** Planning

**Stakeholders:** Clark County cities; Clark County Parks and Lands; Clark County Public Health

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy HC-2.2: Add universal design standards into all park plans

Score: ●●●●○

**Resources:** [What is universal design;](#)  
[Universal Design: Parks and Plazas](#)  
[American Society of Landscape Architects](#)

**Case Study:** Examples can be drawn from the [Ridgefield Flipbook](#). This document shows innovative designs for new play equipment, ornamental and community gardens, dog and fitness parks, hiking and biking trails, and other park/recreation area layouts. Another example is from the recently upgraded Esther Short Park in downtown Vancouver that is accessible for people of all abilities.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Universal design standards ensure that the built environment is constructed to meet the diverse needs of all community members by addressing barriers to participation.

**Type:** Planning

**Stakeholders:** Clark County cities; Clark County Parks and Lands

**Key Terms:** Universal design is the design of buildings, products, or environments to make them accessible to people, regardless of age, disability, or other factors.

**Priority**

# Strategy HC-2.3: Increase tree canopy and green infrastructure in urbanized areas

Score: ●●●●○

**Resources:** [Universal Design: Parks and Plazas](#)  
[American Society of Landscape Architects](#)

**Case Study:** Examples can be taken from the Vancouver Urban Forestry Master Plan, in which information is provided about tree permits and regulations, reforestation, and best practices for managing existing trees and vegetation. In addition, the City of Camas has an urban tree ordinance with specific tree preservation language, street tree permits, and park and open space requirements.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Adopt urban forestry, heritage tree plans, and tree ordinances in local jurisdictions where they do not already exist. Establish a tree canopy goal and policies in each local government's comprehensive plan and implement the goal and policies through development regulations. Pursue grants to update or create tree/green infrastructure plans and implement green infrastructure projects.

**Type:** Planning

**Stakeholders:** Clark County cities; Clark County Public Works; Clark County Public Health; Clark County Community Planning; Clark County Community Development

**Key Terms:** Green infrastructure is infrastructure that uses natural systems and materials, such as rain gardens or street trees.

Urbanized areas are areas that are more than 50% paved.

# Strategy HC-2.4: Create an age-friendly checklist for parks and gathering spaces

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** [AARP Livable Communities Toolkit](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Create a checklist for age-friendly parks. This should include places to rest; exercise equipment or programming; Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, compliant paths; highly visible signage; and lighting and safety requirements.

**Type:** Planning

**Stakeholders:** Commission on Aging; Clark County cities; Clark County Public Works, Parks and Lands Division; City and County Parks Boards; Clark County Public Health

**Key Terms:** Universal design is the design of buildings, products, or environments to make them accessible to people, regardless of age, disability, or other factors.

# Goal 3: Create a welcoming and age-friendly built environment



**What We Heard:** Community members felt that it was important to create communities where older adults felt safe and comfortable.

**AARP LI Measure:** Overall Neighborhood Score

## Strategy HC-3.1: Adopt CPTED principles in design of public parks and facilities.

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** CPTED

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Improve the sense of physical safety and security of neighborhoods, especially at night, by adopting Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED, principals.

**Type:** Planning

**Stakeholders:** City and county neighborhood associations; city and county homeowners associations; Clark County Community Planning; Clark County Community Development; Clark County Public Works, Parks and Lands Division

**Key Terms:** CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design): a design approach that aims to reduce crime and increase security in urban environments. This may include elements such as lighting, landscaping, building design, signage, and the layout of streets and public spaces.



# Strategy HC-3.2: Promote age-friendly business practices and initiatives

**Score:** New

**Resources:** Boston Age and Dementia-Free Business Checklist; AARP 10 Tips to Help Businesses with Older Adults

**Case Study:** Examples can be taken from the [Age-Friendly Portland business awards](#), which share best practices of local businesses to provide community education and peer-to-peer collaboration. This award is based on general criteria on how businesses improve the lives and well-being of older adults. Some businesses may be successful in creating multigenerational workplaces while others make changes to their businesses that more generally help older adults. Multnomah County Libraries were selected in the 2018 awards due to their monthly pop-up libraries at senior living facilities and their vast senior volunteer opportunities.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Develop an age-friendly business designation that local businesses can achieve by implementing a set of age-friendly and dementia-friendly practices.

**Type:** Advocacy

**Stakeholders:** Clark County Public Health; HOPE Dementia; AAAD-SW; local business associations

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

# Goal 4: Develop local and community-based healthcare resources



**What We Heard:** Stakeholders voiced that healthcare resources were challenging to reach and that community-based healthcare and coordination of services could provide more convenient and consistent healthcare for older adults.

**AARP LI Measure:** Health care professional shortage, preventable hospitalization rate, patient satisfaction

## Strategy HC-4.1: Utilize the Regional Health Alliance, also known as Southwest Washington Accountable Community of Health, or SWACH

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** Regional Health Alliance

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New patients participating

**Measure Description:** Clark County should utilize the Regional Health Alliance that works to improve the health and well-being of the community through regional coordination. Regional collaboration of community members, caregivers, and healthcare providers can help the greater community tackle the region's larger health issues.

**Type:** Partner Program

**Stakeholders:** SWACH

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy HC-4.2: Develop a Geriatric Mobile Outreach Program

**Score:** New

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** King County's Senior Mobile Medical Outreach Program provides health and social services to seniors where they are located, eliminating the need for seniors to travel elsewhere to receive medical support.

**Data:** New patients participating

**Measure Description:** Clark County should develop a Geriatric Mobile Outreach Program that can provide healthcare assistance to people who are unable to reach a healthcare facility in case of emergency.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Stakeholders:** AAADSW; county neighborhood associations; Commission on Aging; Community in Motion; Cowlitz Indian Tribe

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy HC-4.3: Promote and expand the R.U.O.K. program countywide

**Score:** New

**Resources:** R.U.O.K.

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New people participating

**Measure Description:** Clark County should implement the R.U.O.K. program countywide. This program calls individuals on a daily basis who find it difficult to be in constant contact and may need assistance. If the R.U.O.K. responder does not answer their call after a set number of days, an alert goes out for someone to go check on the well-being of said person.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Stakeholders:** Clark County cities; AAADSW; SWACH; Clark-Cowlitz Fire and Rescue; healthcare providers

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

# Strategy HC-4.4: Educate older adults and caregivers on information and resources provided by the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington, or AAADSW

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Resources distributed

**Measure Description:** Advertise AAADSW resources at relevant public meetings, facilities, and communications.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Stakeholders:** AAADSW; Clark County Commission on Aging; healthcare providers; neighborhood associations; homeowners associations; other community organizations

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy HC-4.5: Educate local fire and rescue departments and health service providers about the SWACH and Clark County Fire and Rescue CARES program

**Score:** New

**Resources:** Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington (MRSC); CARES Program Aims to Improve Availability of Emergency Resources

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New people participating

**Measure Description:** The county should encourage local fire and rescue departments and health service providers to follow SWACH procedures including follow-up visits after hazard events. First responders should also develop a registration of individuals who could benefit from in-person follow up.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Stakeholders:** Clark County cities; AAADSW; SWACH; Clark-Cowlitz Fire and Rescue; healthcare providers

**Key Terms:** None



# Goal 5: Provide resources for caregivers



**What We Heard:** Stakeholders voiced that part-time and family caregivers were an essential resource for older adults aging in place and a buffer against the healthcare worker shortage. Caregivers face unique challenges and often juggle other family commitments, such as young children and full-time jobs. Providing resources to caregivers could encourage them to remain in this role longer and with less personal strain.

**AARP LI Measure:** Health care professional shortage, preventable hospitalization rate, patient satisfaction

## Strategy HC-5.1-Provide educational opportunities to caregivers and older adults about virtual communication with doctors, such as telehealth and instant messages

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** What is Telehealth

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Caregivers reached

**Measure Description:** Educational opportunities to improve healthcare services should be provided to older adults and caregivers. Special attention should be given to informing these groups about virtual healthcare services such as telehealth, due to a generational barrier in technological expertise.

**Type:** Partner Program

**Stakeholders:** Clark County Public Health; healthcare providers; AAADSW

**Key Terms:** Telehealth is remote healthcare services using technology to convey information to patients

## Strategy HC-5.2: Partner with AAADSW and the National Alliance on Mental Illness to find better ways to raise awareness of available services for caregivers

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** National Alliance on Mental Illness

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Resources provided

**Measure Description:** Use the best available resources from AAADSW and the National Alliance on Mental Illness to ensure caregivers have sufficient tools to provide support. Make best practices and all available services easily accessible to caregivers by increasing awareness of said services.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Stakeholders:** Healthcare providers; AAADSW; National Alliance on Mental Illness

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

## Strategy HC-5.3: Support workforce development efforts for caregivers

**Score:** New

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New programs

**Measure Description:** Work with local partners to expand supportive resources and workforce development opportunities for both in-home and institutional caregivers.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Stakeholders:** AAADSW; Workforce Southwest Washington; CREDC; Clark College; WSU Vancouver; in-home care providers; supportive care housing providers

**Key Terms:** None

# 3 Housing

## Housing Options for Our Aging Population







Across the nation, people are working to create good places to live, work, grow up, and grow old. A livable community has been defined by the American Association of Retired Persons, or AARP, as one with a variety of affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features and services, and adequate transportation choices. These elements create an environment in which everyone has the opportunity to live independently and participate in civic and social life as they age.

During the Housing Focus Group meeting, various interested parties evaluated whether there is or will be a variety of housing to meet the needs of our aging population and identified areas for improvement. Conversations were centered around housing affordability, accessibility, and the connections between housing and other aspects of this plan. Generally, participants found that older adults in Clark County need more housing options suited to their personal, financial, and social needs. For more detailed findings from the Housing Focus Group, see Chapter 1, Public Engagement Summary. This chapter discusses current housing options, best practices from around the nation, and recommendations on how to broaden and strengthen housing choices.



*Image description: Man and his grandson walking down a tree-lined street with a soccer ball.*





# AGING IN PLACE AND COMMUNITY

Aging in place means successfully remaining in the same home and/or community as one ages. Often aging in place entails modifying a person's home for their changing physical or mobility needs, to secure support services, or to accommodate alternative ways to continue to engage with the community or work, such as setting up a home office for remote work.

The AARP 2021 Home and Community Preferences Survey indicates that more than 80% of adults 50 years of age or older prefer to remain in their home and/or community as they age. The survey also highlights the benefits of aging in place, including, but not limited to, the following:<sup>1</sup>

- Remaining in the home can be less expensive than moving to a facility, in part because of the support of family caregivers, who provide a majority of long-term care services across the country.
- The Medicaid and Medicare systems cannot support institutional care for all adults who will reach later stages of life in the next 25 to 30 years. Aging in place can provide a safe and viable alternative to institutional care if the home and community can support the needs of older adults.
- Helping older adults age in place can benefit communities by enabling greater civic participation and engagement.

According to AARP, 85% of older adults say if they could no longer live in their home, they would like to remain in their local community. Even when remaining in one's home is not possible, older adults should be supported to stay in the same community. Strong social and family networks, including nearby friends, neighbors, and relatives, as well as familiar goods and services such as healthcare, recreation, and restaurants, contribute to successful aging in place.

To support older adults to remain in their communities, a variety of housing options for an array of income levels is essential.

## GOAL H-1

*Provide a range of housing for multi-generational communities.*

## GOAL H-2

*Provide housing that enables people to age in place*

<sup>1</sup> AARP (American Association of Retired Persons). 2021. *Where We Live, Where We Age: Trends in Home and Community Preferences*. <https://livablecommunities.aarpinternational.org/>.



# HOUSING CHOICES FOR THE AGING POPULATION

Older adults need high-quality housing options suited to their unique needs. This section outlines existing housing options that fall into two main categories: aging in place and moving into supportive care housing.

## Aging-in-Place Housing Options

As discussed previously, most older adults want to stay in their home, or age in place, for as long as possible. Moreover, the shortage of supportive care housing and its high costs make aging in place a better choice for many. However, one's home must be able to adapt to their needs as they age in order to make this a safe and viable option. The following housing models support older adults who want to remain in their current home.

**Universal Design:** According to the National Association of Homebuilders, universal design is “the design of products and environments to be useable by all people without the need for specialized design.”<sup>2</sup> The Clark County Commission on Aging 2016 Annual Report identifies universal design as an “integral component for aging in place” because it ensures that housing remains accessible to its inhabitants as their abilities change with age and to guests who may have different needs. However, most older homes and some newer homes in Clark County have not been built with universal design elements, such as zero-step entrances, wide doorways, and reinforced walls that can support railings. For this reason, many homes must be retrofitted for accessibility. To assist older adults with this, Clark County administers the HOME Accessibility and Emergency Home Repair Program, which provides free minor home modifications that make it possible to age in place. However, according to the 2016 Annual Report and participants who attended focus group meetings, retrofits are generally more expensive than incorporating universal design standards into homes when they are first built. To promote universal design in new homes, the Clark County Commission on Aging created the Universal Green Design Idea Book, which provides guidance and best practices for including universal design features in homes, and distributes copies of the AARP HomeFit Guide, which provides room-by-room tips and suggestions on how to make a home more accessible to older adults and people with disabilities.

**In-Home Care Providers:** Some older adults need regular care or assistance but do not need or want to move into a supportive care facility. These individuals may choose to remain in their current home and receive in-home care from either professional or familial caregivers. However, there is a growing shortage of professional caregivers and many caregivers are under-supported.<sup>3</sup> For more information about caregiving, see Chapter 2, Healthy Communities.

2 National Association of Home Builders. 2023. “What Is Universal Design?” Accessed May 9, 2023. <https://www.nahb.org/other/consumer-resources/what-is-universal-design>.

3 AARP. 2020. *Caregiving in the United States 2020*. <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2020/05/full-report-caregiving-in-the-united-states.doi.10.26419-2Fppi.00103.001.pdf>.



**Accessory Dwelling Units, or ADUs:** ADUs, also called “granny flats,” “mother-in-law apartments,” or “backyard cottages,” are separate, compact spaces—complete with bed, bath, kitchen, and a separate entrance—that provide a second dwelling unit on a single residential parcel or lot. They are adaptable and generally affordable housing opportunities that present an especially great opportunity for aging in place because they can be used by caregivers and family members who provide support for older adults or by older adults themselves.



*Image description: Example of a detached ADU. The ADU has all of the basic amenities one would expect from a home, but is smaller and is located in the backyard of the main home.*

**Shared Housing:** Shared housing involves creating a home-sharing arrangement with someone to promote companionship and housing affordability by splitting housing costs. There are organizations in Clark County trying to get started that could help match older adults with housemates. Shared housing programs typically involve a screening and interview system as part of the match process. These types of programs could benefit older adults looking for help with housing costs, assistance around the home, or simple companionship. Housemates are not necessarily expected to provide any type of care to one another, but many find that having a housemate improves their sense of security and quality of life.

**Cohousing:** Cohousing communities are made up of individual housing units centered around shared common spaces such as large kitchens, dining rooms, or recreational facilities. These communities are intentionally collaborative and social, which fosters mutually beneficial relationships between neighbors. As people age, their neighbors can help keep them engaged and active and even provide care, which can make it easier to age in place.



## Aging in Community Housing Options

**Downsizing:** Many older adults find that their homes are too large or require too much maintenance as they age. For this reason, many choose to move into smaller housing units such as condominiums, apartments, or cottages that may be maintained by a property manager or association.

**Independent Living/Congregate Housing:** Congregate communities offer independent living in private apartments and the opportunity to share activities of daily living with other residents as one chooses. These communities might offer rental or ownership units, but do not generally provide personal care or healthcare. A typical example of this would be an apartment building for people living independently who want common “hospitality” services, such as one or more meals a day or light housekeeping. Social activities might be arranged.

## Supportive Care Housing Options

**Adult Family Homes:** Adult family homes are state-licensed neighborhood homes where staff assumes responsibility for the safety and well-being of adults. They provide a room, meals, laundry, supervision, and varying levels of assistance. Some provide occasional nursing care. Some offer specialized care for people with mental health issues, developmental disabilities, or dementia. The home may have two to six residents.

**Assisted Living:** Assisted living facilities, also referred to as boarding homes, are facilities where staff assumes responsibility for the safety and well-being of the adult. They provide housing, meals, laundry, supervision, and varying levels of assistance. All are licensed by the state and some provide nursing care while others offer specialized care for people with mental health issues, developmental disabilities, or dementia. They can have seven or more residents.

### CHANGES TO RESIDENTIAL PARKING REQUIREMENTS

*As of July 1, 2019, new housing that is designated for older adults or people with disabilities and located within a quarter-mile of a well-served transit stop may not be required to provide a minimum number of parking spaces per RCW 70A.620. This is intended to encourage alternative transportation and transit-oriented development which, as discussed in Chapter 3, Mobility, can be particularly beneficial to older adults.*



*Image descriptions: Woman providing care to older man (left); Women spending time outside in their community (middle); People socializing in a common area (right).*





**Continuing Care Retirement Communities:** These communities provide a continuum of care—from independent living to assisted living, residential care, and skilled nursing services—on one campus. They allow individuals to live in the same retirement community as their needs progress and they typically offer the full selection of amenities associated with retirement living.

**Memory Care or Dementia Care Facilities:** These facilities are specialized for all types of memory and dementia issues. Most are secure and some are connected to larger assisted living units.

**Nursing Home or Skilled Nursing Facilities:** Nursing homes provide 24-hour supervised nursing care, personal care, therapy, nutrition management, organized activities, social services, room, board, and laundry.

**Residential Care Homes and Facilities:** These provide housing and supportive services for people who do not require 24-hour nursing care. Pricing can vary greatly depending on the level of care provided and the size and amenities of each apartment. Accommodations typically are in a home-like setting and range from a shared bedroom with common bathroom to private apartments with a kitchenette and bathroom. Monthly fees vary based on amenities and care services. Many residential care facilities specialize in individuals with Alzheimer’s or dementia.

**Supportive Housing:** Supportive housing provides an array of services that can range from housekeeping to assistance with dressing, bathing, or monitoring chronic health conditions. Tenants’ rent payments are set at an affordable level and some developments employ coordinators to identify and connect residents with available services. The model differs from assisted living facilities, which require residents to pay for all services offered rather than services they use.

## EXISTING SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IN CLARK COUNTY

The following is a summary of existing supportive housing in Clark County:<sup>4</sup>

- 383 adult family homes (licensed)
- 13 assisted living facilities
- More than 30 independent living facilities (14 are known as affordable, either due to subsidies or income restrictions)
- 9 nursing facilities
- 3 dementia care facilities
- 8 enhanced adult residential care facilities

Some facilities provide several levels of service options.

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<sup>4</sup> Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Aging and Long-Term Support Administration. 2023. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/AL TSA/hcs/documents/2022%20LTSS%20Accomplishments%20Report.pdf>



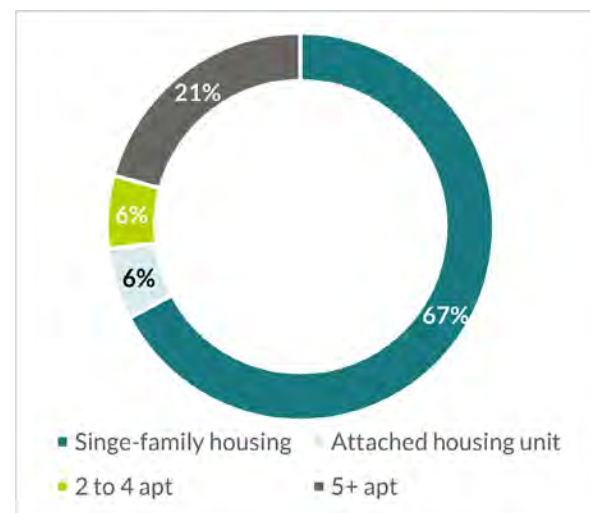
# CLARK COUNTY HOUSING STATISTICS

The growing need among older adults for safe, accessible, affordable housing must be accommodated by constructing a range of housing types at various prices. Currently, Clark County's housing stock is predominantly traditional low-density units (67%), followed by apartments with five or more units (21%) (see **Figure 3-1**, Housing Types). Much of the low-density housing in Clark County is larger than most households need. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, just over 70% of homes in the county have three or more bedrooms, while nearly 60% of households in Clark County are occupied by two or fewer people.<sup>5, 6</sup> Housing that is too large can sometimes lead to higher cost burden and maintenance issues for older adults.

Housing is considered affordable if a household pays less than 30% of their income toward housing costs. A household is considered to have a housing cost burden if they pay more than 30% of their income toward housing, which includes rent or mortgage, utilities, taxes, and/or insurance. In Clark County, renters are more likely to face cost burden than homeowners; half of people renting pay 30% or more of their income towards rent. In contrast, 27% of homeowners with a mortgage are cost burdened.

Homelessness is another major housing issue facing Clark County residents. According to the Council for the Homeless, 1,197 people were experiencing homelessness as of February 24, 2022, in Clark County. This is a 31% increase since the beginning of 2020. Of these 1,197 people, 96 were adults aged 62 or older. This represents a 57% increase in the number of older adults experiencing homelessness over the same period.

**Figure 3-1. Housing Types**



## GOAL H-3

*Support the development of more affordable housing.*

5 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021a. "Selected Housing Characteristics." ACS 1-Year Estimates. Table DP04. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=units+in+structure&g=050XX00US53011>

6 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021b. "Occupancy Characteristics." ACS 1-Year Estimates. Table S2501. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=household+size&g=050XX00US53011>



# HOUSING AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

When older adults retire, their incomes can decrease and/or become fixed, making it difficult to adapt to inflation. Therefore, as the aging population grows, more older households will become cost-burdened. Housing programs aimed to help households that are cost burdened and or low income are summarized below.

**Public Assisted Housing:** The Vancouver Housing Authority administers subsidized public housing, the Housing Choice voucher program, and the majority of low-income housing developments in Clark County; income-qualified older adults may participate in these programs or reside in these locations. There are 14 housing properties dedicated to older adults with low income. They are located throughout the county and provide one-bedroom apartments to qualifying households age 62 and older. While all Vancouver Housing Authority-managed housing units are currently occupied as of the writing of this report, many programs allow applicants to join a wait list. Applicants on the wait list are entered into a lottery whenever a unit becomes available and the selected household is offered the unit.

**Programs for Homeowners:** The following programs are aimed at helping older adults afford their homes and age-in-place improvements:

**Accessibility and Emergency Home Repair Program:** This program is for Clark County owners and tenants who have physical challenges and need their homes modified for accessibility. Projects can include ramps, bathtubs, roll-in showers, doorways, door handles, grab bars, and raised toilets. The minor home repair program is for owners who need emergency health and safety repairs. Projects can include obvious signs of structural, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical deterioration.

**Clark County Housing Rehabilitation Program:** This program is for homeowners with low-to-moderate income in need of minor to major home repairs or to reduce hazard risks. This program is available to all Clark County residents living outside of the City of Vancouver.

**City of Vancouver Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program:** Similar to the Clark County Housing Rehabilitation Program, the City of Vancouver Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program provides minor to major home repairs to homeowners with low-to-moderate income. However, this program is only available to residents of the City of Vancouver.

**Senior Citizen and People with Disabilities Property Tax Exemption:** Eligible criteria for receiving this tax exemption include being at least 61 years old by December 31 of the year the claim is filed



and/or being unable to work because of a disability. In addition, being the owner/buyer or having a Life Estate or Lease for Life interest in the property, living in the home for more than 6 months in the assessment year, and having an annual combined disposable income of no more than 65% of the county median income are also considered eligible criteria. This income limit will increase to 70% of the county median income beginning in August 2023. There is also an option to apply for the exemption for those who do not meet all of these qualifications. On approval, the residence's assessed value will be frozen at the value certified on January 1 of the application year. The taxable value of the qualified residence and home site will not increase, but could decrease, as long as the residence and site qualify for the exemption.<sup>7</sup> **Click here** to check eligibility.

**Senior Citizen and People with Disabilities Property Tax Deferral:** Eligible criteria to access this property tax deferral include being at least 60 years old by December 31 of the application year and/or being unable to work because of a disability, owning the home in full as of the year prior to deferral, living in the home for over 6 months in the assessment year, and having an annual combined disposable income of no more than \$45,000 or 75% of the county median income. On approval, homeowners can defer taxes and special assessments up to 80% of the equity of the land and/or residence, depending on insurance policy requirements. Repayment is required when any of five “triggering events” happens and interest accrues at a rate of 5% each year.<sup>8</sup>

**Weatherization Programs:** Clark Public Utilities, Clark County Community Development, and the City of Vancouver have partnered to administer two home weatherization programs that can help homeowners and renters improve insulation and energy efficiency in their homes. The first is the Weatherization Program, which provides informational resources and loans to homeowners looking to retrofit their homes with new windows, flooring, sealing, and insulation. The Limited-Income Weatherization and Ductless Heat Pump Program provides these retrofits for free to homeowners and renters with low-income. The primary focus of both programs is to install cost-effective measures for energy conservation and address health and safety concerns. This may be especially important for older adults who are vulnerable to extreme heat events (see Chapter 6, Emergency Preparedness).

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7 Washington State Department of Revenue. 2021a. “Property Tax Exemption for Senior Citizens and People with Disabilities.” [https://dor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/PTExemption\\_Senior.pdf](https://dor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/PTExemption_Senior.pdf).

8 Washington State Department of Revenue. 2021b. “Property Tax Deferral for Senior Citizens and People with Disabilities.” [https://dor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/PTDeferral\\_SeniorsDisabilities.pdf?uid=6408b67aacabf](https://dor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/PTDeferral_SeniorsDisabilities.pdf?uid=6408b67aacabf).





## VISION AND STRATEGY

This section explains how to promote affordable and accessible housing in Clark County. It includes goals for Clark County and how they were generated from community feedback, as well as specific strategies for each goal to meet the vision. Each strategy includes a description, score, interested parties, key terms, and resources. Scores are based on the progress made on a specific strategy to this point throughout the county. Interested parties include all likely involved implementing parties, such as potential lead agencies, partners, and organizations that may offer resources. Some strategies also include case studies from around Clark County.



*Image description: Two men drinking coffee in their home*

# How to Read a Strategy

The following text explains the anatomy of each strategy and how Clark County and cities and towns within the county could implement the ARP.

## Title - This explains the intent of the strategy.

**Score:** For existing strategies included in the original 2012 plan, this explains how well the strategy has been implemented in the past decade. See detailed 'Strategy Score Description' on page 5.

**Case Study:** An important example of this strategy implemented well locally.

**Data:** Which data was used to score the strategy.

**Measure Description:** This explains the precise action that the county, cities, or partner agencies need to take to implement

**Type:** This explains the type of government or agency action this strategy is. Strategies of the same type are scored consistently.

**Interested Parties:** Government, Agency, or Non-profit implementors

**Key Terms:** Important definitions that should be used consistently

**Resources:** County documents and nation-wide examples

**Priority:** Each goal has one priority strategy. Priority strategies should be implemented first because they were identified by the community and/or lays the groundwork for supporting strategies.

## Goal H1: Provide a range of housing for multi-generational communities



**What We Heard:** Community members expressed a desire for intergenerational communities. Specifically, they voiced that they wanted diverse housing options within proximity of one another, especially ADUs

**AARP LI Measure:** Availability of Multifamily Housing

# Strategy H-1.1: Allow cohousing in low-density residential zoning districts

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [Cohousing.org](https://cohousing.org)

**Case Study:** [Daybreak Cohousing](#) is a multi-generational community. Residents build connections by sharing meals, celebrating events, participating in workdays, business meetings, and making decisions together

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Amend zoning code to allow cohousing in low-density residential districts.

**Type:** Ordinances and Codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County Community Planning

**Key Terms:** *Cohousing* is an intentional, collaborative neighborhood that combines private homes with shared indoor and outdoor spaces designed to support an active and interdependent community life. Cohousing is not a financial or legal model, but rather a descriptive term that emphasizes the active participation of residents in everything from design to governance.

**Priority**

# Strategy H-1.2: Allow assisted living in low-density residential districts as a conditional use

**Score:** ●●●○○

**Resources:** [Riverside County Zoning Code for Community Care Facilities](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Amend zoning code to allow assisted living with a conditional use permit in low-density residential districts.

**Type:** Ordinances and Codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County Community Planning

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy H-1.3: Expand shared housing program(s) for older adults

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** [Shared Housing Inc;](#)  
[Silvernest;](#) [Home Share Oregon](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Existing Programs

**Measure Description:** Work with non-profits to match and screen older homeowners and potential people to share their home and pay reduced rent to perform household chores and errands.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Clark County non-governmental organizations; Council for the Homeless; Vancouver Housing Authority; Clark County Community Services

**Key Terms:** *Shared housing* is sharing a living space with someone. This space can be in one's current home or in a new home; the housemate is typically not expected to provide caregiving services. This type of housing can promote socialization, safety, and security and decrease housing costs.

# Strategy H-1.4: Coordinate with Clark County Association of Realtors to increase the number of senior real estate specialists

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** [Senior Real Estate Specialists](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Senior Real Estate Specialists and county coordination with Association of Realtors

**Measure Description:** Coordinate with the Clark County Association of Realtors to increase the number of designated Senior Real Estate Specialists in Clark County by providing incentives and education about the benefits and need for more qualified agents.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Clark County Association of Realtors

**Key Terms:** *Senior Real Estate Specialist* is an official certification from the National Association of Realtors that indicates that an agent is qualified to meet the needs of older adult clients looking to sell, buy, relocate, or refinance property. These certified agents are trained to understand the unique housing needs and concerns of older adult homeowners or homebuyers, housing options available to older adults, and opportunities that may be beneficial to older adults such as reverse mortgages.



# Strategy H-1.5: Educate on multigenerational housing and community models during Building Industry Association home shows

Score: ●●●●○

Resources: Clark County BIA

Case Study: None

Data: Home shows

**Measure Description:** Continue to work with the Building Industry Association of Clark County to include examples of universally designed homes in home shows when possible.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Building Industry Association of Clark County

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy H-1.6: Remove barriers to the development of smaller dwellings, including ADUs

Score: ●●●●○

Resources: Washington State Department of Commerce

Case Study: None

Data: City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Review zoning codes in each jurisdiction to identify and remove potential barriers to the development of smaller housing units suited to older adults, including accessory dwelling units, or ADUs.

**Type:** Ordinances and Codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County Community Planning

**Key Terms:** None

# Goal H2: Provide housing that enables people to age in place



**What We Heard:** Stakeholders voiced that older adults often want to stay in their homes, but that they require physical retrofits to do so. Stakeholders also noted that new homes often are not built with accessibility in mind and it can be hard for older adults to relocate in the community to another accessible dwelling.

**AARP LI Measure:** Zero Step Entrances

## Strategy H-2.1: Incorporate universal design into building code

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** Green Design Idea Book

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Use the Clark County Green Design Idea Book to add universal design standards into the local building code.

**Type:** Ordinances and Codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County Community Planning

**Key Terms:** *Universal design* is the design of buildings, products, or environments to make them accessible to people, regardless of age, disability, or other factors.

# Strategy H-2.2: Develop standard drawings of age-friendly housing modifications

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** [Live in Place Designs](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Develop standard drawings detailing construction specifications for age-in-place retrofits for expedited permit application and approval.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County Community Planning; Clark County Community Development

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy H-2.3: Develop standard drawings for ADUs

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** [Seattle ADUniverse Pre-Approved Plans](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Develop standard drawings detailing construction specifications for accessory dwelling units, or ADUs , for expedited permit application and approval.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County Community Planning; Clark County Community Development

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy H-2.4: Promote home weatherization

Score: ●●●●○

Resources: Clark Public Utilities

Case Study: None

Data: Homes weatherized

**Measure Description:** Continue to work with Clark Public Utilities to offer the Home Weatherization and Limited-Income Home Weatherization Programs that provide low-interest loans or fully funded home improvements that improve insulation and energy efficiency.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Clark Public Utilities; Clark County Community Development; Evergreen Habitat For Humanity

**Key Terms:** *Weatherization* is a process focused on improving home insulation and energy efficiency by reducing the need to heat and cool throughout the year.

## Strategy H-2.5: Increase the number of Certified Aging-In-Place Specialists

Score: ●●○○○

Resources: National Association of Home Builders Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist

Case Study: None

Data: Certified Aging-In-Place Specialists

**Measure Description:** Work with the Building Industry Association to promote the Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist certification program among contractors and other building industry professionals serving Clark County. This program teaches the technical, business management, and customer service skills necessary to provide home modifications for older adults.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Building Industry Association

**Key Terms:** None



# Strategy H-2.6: Expand home repair and rehabilitation programs

Score: ●●●●○

Resources: [Clark County Community Services Housing Rehabilitation](#)

Case Study: None

Data: Homes Repaired or Rehabilitated

**Measure Description:** Work with both governmental and non-governmental organizations administering minor home repair and rehabilitation programs to expand and promote these programs among older adult households.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** AAADSW; Clark County

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

# Strategy H-2.7: Continue to educate on universal design standards in new and remodeled housing

Score: ●●●●○

Resources: [Clark County BIA](#)

Case Study: None

Data: Home shows

**Measure Description:** Continue to work with the Building Industry Association of Clark County to include examples of universally designed homes in home shows when possible.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Building Industry Association

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy H-2.8: Continue to distribute informational resources that support aging in place

Score: ●●●●○

Resources: [Green Design Idea Book](#)

Case Study: None

Data: City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Work with Clark County and Clark County cities to continue distributing the Universal Green Design Idea Book; American Association of Retired Persons, or AARP, HomeFit Guide; and information about other aging-in-place resources online and at events throughout the county.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** AAADSW; Commission on Aging

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy H-2.9: Incentivize the development of visitable housing

Score: ●●●●○

Resources: [Visitability.org](#)

**Case Study:** The [Ridgefield 2016 Comprehensive Plan](#) includes the promotion of visitable housing for older adults. This kind of housing includes specifications on the ground floor such as a zero-step entrance and a full bathroom. Visitable housing requirements look to improve accessibility for people with limited levels of mobility.

Data: City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Work with local jurisdictions to create development incentives for visitable housing that is accessible to all potential residents and visitors, regardless of ability.

**Type:** Ordinances and Codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County; Clark County cities

**Key Terms:** *Visitable housing* is designed in such a way that it can be lived in or visited by people who have trouble with steps or who use wheelchairs or walkers.

# Goal H3: Support the development of more affordable housing



**What We Heard:** Stakeholders were concerned about rapidly rising housing costs for lower and middle income households, and voiced a need for controlling housing costs across stakeholders and strategies.

**AARPLI Measure:** Availability of subsidized housing; Availability of multi-family housing; Housing cost burden

## Strategy H-3.1: Promote higher-density and mixed-use development of under-used properties

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Amend the comprehensive plan and zoning designations and/or code to allow for higher densities and mixed uses on under-utilized properties.

**Type:** Ordinances and Codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy H-3.2: Change the zoning code to allow small or moderate-sized multifamily dwellings and small-scale retail and service businesses as permitted uses in low-density residential districts

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** Appendix G of the **Clark County Housing Options Study** and Action Plan offers multiple housing strategy examples from Washington State that explain how different cities chose to allow for multifamily dwellings in low-density residential districts. For example, ADUs were a large component of the City of Olympia's housing strategy while the City of Spokane included other multifamily housing types in their strategy such as townhomes and duplexes.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Amend zoning code to allow for small or moderate-sized multifamily dwellings (up to four units) and neighborhood-focused retail and services within low-density residential zones.

**Type:** Ordinances and Codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy H-3.3: Provide density bonuses for new housing within 0.25 miles of transit, healthcare, and retail

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** The [City of Vancouver Transit Overlay District](#) promotes active transportation modes and the use of public transit by providing incentives to developers committed to transit-oriented development.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Amend zoning code to allow for higher-density and/or mixed uses near major transit corridors.

**Type:** Ordinances and Codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County; Clark County cities

**Key Terms:** Mixed-use is a land use designation that allows residential uses and compatible non-residential uses to be located in the same area or even the same building. This type of land use can promote active transportation and transit use because destinations are located in closer proximity to housing.

**Priority**



## Strategy H-3.4: Expand implementation of the nonprofit/land trust affordable housing model

Score: ●●○○○

Resources: [Grounded Solutions](#)  
[Community Land Trust Guide](#)

Case Study: Evergreen Habitat for Humanity Home Trust focuses on keeping housing permanently affordable in Clark County. They do this by purchasing existing housing and remodeling it with the use of volunteer labor.

Data: City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Support the work of nonprofit organizations that have already established community land trusts in Clark County and identify potential areas for expansion of this model.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Local Non-Profits

**Key Terms:** Community Land Trusts (CLT) are nonprofit organizations governed by a board of CLT residents, community residents and public representatives. In a CLT, residents own their home but lease the land from the governing organization. This creates long-term affordable housing and helps low-income residents create intergenerational wealth.

## Strategy H-3.5: Increase affordable housing program coordination between relevant agencies

Score: New

Resources: [Property Tax Exemption Program](#)

Case Study: None

Data: City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Improve coordination between the Clark County Assessor's Office, Clark County Treasurer's Office, Clark County Community Services, and all other agencies administering affordable housing programs, and create a centralized location with information about these programs.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Clark County Treasurer's Office; Clark County Assessor's Office, Clark County Community Services, housing organizations

**Key Terms:** None

# 4 Mobility

## Transportation and Mobility





The ability to conveniently travel both within and outside of one’s own community is important for everyone in Clark County; however, getting around becomes more difficult for many people as they age due to changing abilities and needs. Many older adults rely on mobile services that come to them. For this reason, a transportation system that supports the movement of goods and services to older adults is also important. This chapter identifies mobility challenges for older adults, as well as ways in which the county will work to address them.

## MOBILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Many Americans are dependent on their cars. According to the 2017 National Household Travel Survey, 87% of Americans drive somewhere in a personal vehicle each day.<sup>1</sup> This dependency on cars is even greater in suburban areas—like those that make up most of Clark County—because suburbs were designed for cars. While car travel is convenient, car dependency contributes to climate change, poses public health and safety concerns, and has caused other travel modes to become neglected. Car dependency is especially problematic for older adults who may lose their ability to drive and, consequently, must depend on others to drive them or turn to these neglected alternatives. In other words, they may lose their independence.

This issue was central in community engagement conversations and a variety of participants emphasized the need to invest in alternatives to driving. Specifically, they discussed the importance of expanding and improving public transit opportunities, improving pedestrian infrastructure so that it is safer and more accessible, and creating more transportation services catered to older adults and those with disabilities. This chapter will build on this discussion, identify ways to prioritize these improvements, and ensure the mobility and independence of older adults for as long as possible.

### SAFETY WHILE DRIVING

*Older adults and driving: While many older adults will turn to alternative transportation, many will continue to drive for as long as they are able to. While older adults are statistically safe drivers, important cognitive and visual skills tend to decline with age, which can make driving more difficult. Therefore, it is important to ensure that older adult drivers are aware of any abilities that may be changing and additional precautions they should take when behind the wheel.<sup>2</sup>*

### GOAL M-1

*Design transit options for people who are older and have a disability.*

### GOAL M-2

*Increase alternative transportation options in areas not well-served by a transit line.*

1 Bureau of Transportation Statistics. 2017. “National Household Travel Survey: Daily Travel Quick Facts.” Accessed June 14, 2023. <https://www.bts.gov/statistical-products/surveys/national-household-travel-survey-daily-travel-quick-facts#:~:text=87%20percent%20of%20daily%20trips%20take%20place%20in,of%20people%20commuting%20to%20work%20use%20personal%20vehicles.>



## Existing Alternatives to Driving

While it is likely that many older adults will continue to drive or be driven to destinations by a caregiver, some will rely on alternative modes to get around. These options include public transit, such as buses and light rail, and active modes, such as walking and **rolling**. Rolling refers to any mode of personal transportation that involves wheels like bikes and wheelchairs. People living in communities with high-quality alternative transportation options can rely less on driving, which can increase independence and opportunities for those who cannot drive or are uncomfortable driving. Moreover, alternative modes tend to have significantly more positive outcomes for personal health, community engagement, and environmental quality. This section assesses the current state of alternative modes in Clark County and helps identify areas for improvement.

The American Association of Retired Persons, or AARP, has developed a Livability Index, a tool that measures the quality of different resources and includes seven transportation metrics that can help measure how easy and safe it is for the aging community to get around:

- Frequency of local transit service
- Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, accessible stations and vehicles
- Walkability
- Congestion
- Household transportation costs
- Speed limits
- Crash rate

Based on all these metrics, the Livability Index calculates an area's transportation score. Countywide, Clark County received a transportation score of 53/100, which is close to the national average of 50. This score tends to be significantly higher in the southernmost urban areas of the county and lower in the northernmost rural areas. Two of the most important metrics for the aging population are transit availability and community walkability, which provide the healthiest, most affordable travel opportunities.

### FREQUENCY OF TRANSIT SERVICE

The AARP Livability Index measures public transit frequency by the number of buses and/or trains per hour in both directions for any stops. On average, there are five buses available each hour at any given transit stop in Clark County. This is significantly higher than the national average. The Vancouver area tends to have significantly higher transit frequencies than the rest of the county, although there are a few corridors and intersections in Battle Ground and communities along the Columbia River that are also relatively well-served. Clark County Public Transportation Benefit Authority, or C-TRAN, focuses its service on high demand routes and in the C-TRAN Public Transportation Benefit Areas. Therefore, the





rural communities furthest north and east have few to no public transit opportunities each hour, making getting around without a car and the ability to drive nearly impossible.

### **ADA-ACCESSIBLE TRANSIT**

In assessing the viability of local public transit service for aging adults, it is also important to consider accessibility. According to the Livability Index, 88.5% of Clark County public transit vehicles, stops, and stations are ADA-accessible, which is higher than the national average of 82.9%. However, this does not consider the accessibility of sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian infrastructure that is usually needed to get to public transit stops.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD WALKABILITY AND DIVERSITY OF DESTINATIONS**

While the AARP Livability Index does not assess the quality of pedestrian infrastructure directly, it does measure the average number of walking trips made each day at the neighborhood level. Because walking behavior is strongly correlated with pedestrian infrastructure quality, this can provide some insight into the walkability of Clark County neighborhoods. The average household in Clark County makes 0.77 walking trips each day, which is just above the national average of 0.73. This number varies considerably throughout the county, with the greatest number of daily walking trips being made in central Vancouver, where the average household makes more than 1 walking trip each day, and the least number of trips being made in the more rural areas of north and east county. This likely indicates that central Vancouver has higher levels of walkability than most other parts of the county, as is often the case in urban centers.

Another important indicator of neighborhood walkability is “diversity of destinations,” which measures the variety of economic activity within a mile. Neighborhoods with a greater variety of stores, restaurants, and other businesses and services in close proximity are more conducive to walking, biking, or taking transit. People living in them may choose to walk to destinations more often than those living in neighborhoods with less activity or that are further away from the activity. The diversity of destinations varies considerably throughout Clark County. Neighborhoods in urban and suburban areas, such as Vancouver and Battle Ground, tend to have higher scores than rural neighborhoods in the northern and eastern areas of the county. However, there is still great variation within cities and not all neighborhoods have a great diversity of destinations. For example, many neighborhoods in eastern and central Vancouver have low scores, while downtown Vancouver and other western neighborhoods tend to score quite high. These neighborhoods, along with central Battle Ground, Ridgefield, and Washougal, have higher destination diversities than most other communities in the county.

### **TRANSPORTATION COSTS**

Another especially important consideration for older adults is the cost of transportation. Because older adults tend to have lower incomes and higher costs in other areas such as healthcare, they are particularly in need of affordable transportation options. Unfortunately, transportation costs are high for nearly every



community in the United States except for core areas of major cities where high-quality public transit is plentiful. This is the case in Clark County as well. Countywide, the average yearly expenditure per household on transportation is \$15,690, slightly higher than the national average of \$15,331.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, downtown Vancouver is the only neighborhood in the county where transportation costs average less than \$12,500 per household each year. AARP notes that high transportation costs in Clark County, and in the United States at large, are due mainly to car dependency.

## PROGRAMS AND INTERVENTIONS

### Complete Streets

As discussed in previous sections, over-investment in vehicle infrastructure and disinvestment in other travel modes has often led to communities that are not safe, convenient, or pleasant to walk or roll in. To combat this, communities throughout the county are working toward more complete streets. AARP defines complete streets as streets that are “designed and operated for safe, comfortable and convenient travel by pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.”<sup>3</sup> They also point out that well-designed streets can extend driving years for older adults by making driving itself safer.

Transforming a conventional street into a more complete street involves one or more of the following interventions:

- Reducing vehicle speeds and narrowing streets. This is usually done by removing vehicle lanes from roads with multiple lanes and installing traffic calming measures like speed bumps, traffic circles, and curb extensions. Narrowing streets reduces the length of crosswalks and therefore minimizes risk to pedestrians.
- Improving sidewalks. This involves fixing uneven pavement, ensuring that sidewalk networks are well connected (i.e., they lead to destinations and do not end abruptly), and ensuring that they include ramps and tactile paving for those with vision and mobility challenges. While the county and cities are aware of the need for widespread sidewalk improvements, funding is extremely limited and areas with existing sidewalks and the greatest demand must be prioritized.
- Improving trails. This involves improving trail surfaces and grade to make the trail accessible to more users, especially those who use wheeled devices to get around. It also involves expanding trails to reach a variety of destinations and improve the connectivity of existing trails. The City of Ridgefield

#### GOAL M-3

*Design communities for safe walking and rolling for a range of users and abilities.*

#### GOAL M-4

*Promote land use patterns and design standards that encourage walking, rolling, and transit use*

2 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2019. Location Affordability Index (version 3.0). <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/location-affordability-index>.

3 AARP Public Policy Institute. “Transportation.” 2023. Accessed May 9, 2023. <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/issues/livable-communities/transportation/>.



has included strategies related to trail improvement and accessibility in its 2020 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.

- Improving crossings and intersections. This is usually done by creating crosswalks that are more visible to drivers using markings, flashing beacons, or physical grading (i.e., a raised crosswalk). It can also involve adding crossing timers and auditory signals that make it safe and easy for those with vision or mobility challenges to cross. Roundabouts have been identified as an especially important intersection treatment by the Washington State Department of Transportation, or WSDOT. WSDOT has created a roundabout design guide with best practices that have already been implemented at certain intersections in Clark County.
- Adding protected bike lanes. Protected bike lanes create a physical barrier between the person riding a bike and car traffic. Protected bike lanes are generally safer and more desirable to cyclists than unprotected bike lanes or shared roads, especially on roads with higher speeds and traffic volumes.
- Improving transit stops. This involves providing shade, seating, and other amenities at the stop, as well as ensuring that there are enough transit stops and routes along the street. Transit stops can become safer by providing lighting and locating all new stops in safe and publicly visible areas.
- Making the space more engaging and pleasant. This often involves beautifying the street with trees and landscaping, providing benches and trash cans, and ensuring the street is engaging (e.g., is lined with destinations and community spaces).

Clark County local governments have been embracing complete streets programs and policies and many of these interventions are already being implemented. In fact, the following local governments have formally adopted complete streets ordinances that are eligible for Transportation Improvement Board Complete Streets/Active Transportation Grants:

- Clark County
- City of Battle Ground
- City of La Center
- City of Camas
- City of Ridgefield
- City of Vancouver

Nonetheless, there is plenty of work to be done. One of the most common issues raised during the outreach components of this Aging Readiness Plan update was unsafe and inaccessible street design. Residents and interested parties discussed the need for more complete streets-related projects in order to create truly viable alternatives to driving in Clark County. For more details regarding the feedback received from residents and interested parties, see Chapter 1, Outreach Summary.



## Micromobility

Micromobility options include golf carts, electric-assist bikes and scooters, and other small electric vehicles. These represent a rapidly expanding alternative to driving and an increasingly important travel mode for older adults in Clark County. In fact, many places have programs and policies aimed at improving and expanding micromobility options.

### MICROMOBILITY

*The Federal Highway Administration broadly defines micromobility as “any small, low-speed, human- or electric-powered transportation device, including bicycles, scooters, electric-assist bicycles, electric scooters (e-scooters), and other small, lightweight, wheeled conveyances.*

Per Revised Code of Washington 46.08.175, any city or county may establish a Golf Cart Zone. As of March 2023, two Golf Cart Zones have been established in Clark County. The first is in the City of Ridgefield, where registered golf carts are allowed to travel on all public streets and rights-of-way in the city at a maximum speed of 25 mph during daytime hours.<sup>4</sup> The second is in Vancouver along Fort Vancouver Way adjacent to Clark College. The same regulations in place in Ridgefield apply in this zone between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., but golf cart travel is prohibited all other times of the day.<sup>5</sup> These zones present a safe, affordable, and efficient way to travel locally for older adults.

Additionally, Clark County and many other local governments within it have included electric and electric-assist bikes and scooters in their active transportation planning efforts. Older adults may benefit from owning these types of vehicles, which can be an efficient and independent way to complete neighborhood and local trips. In certain cities, including Battle Ground and Vancouver, these types of micromobility are available as reservable shared mobility programs.

## Mobility as a Service

Because many older adults need on-demand, specialized transportation, AARP recognizes mobility as a service, or MaaS, as an important model for future transportation investments and policy changes. In short, MaaS is a “comprehensive package of transportation services to replace personal vehicle ownership” that treats transportation as a service to be provided rather than a resource to be acquired.<sup>6</sup> Successful MaaS programs, such as FlexDanmark in Denmark, are demand-responsive and instantly match users with the lowest-cost transportation provider that can get them from their origin to their destination most efficiently. It does this by coordinating services and transferring data between nearly all transportation providers including public, private, fixed-route, variable-route, and specialized services. It also combines individual trips whenever origins and/or destinations align. Overall, this results in a transportation system that is more efficient, convenient, affordable, and inclusive to people who are

4 City of Ridgefield. 2023. “Ridgefield Washington Code of Ordinances.” Accessed June 14, 2023, [https://library.municode.com/wa/ridgefield/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=CO\\_TIT10VETR\\_CH10.18GOCAZO](https://library.municode.com/wa/ridgefield/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CO_TIT10VETR_CH10.18GOCAZO).

5 Vancouver Municipal Code 9.41.010

6 Lynott, J. 2018. Universal Mobility as a Service: A Bold Vision for Harnessing the Opportunity of Disruption. AARP Public Policy Institute. September 2018.





typically not well-served by traditional transportation providers including older adults, people with disabilities, and geographically isolated populations.

While there is no MaaS program of this scale in the United States yet, there are some programs that coordinate transportation providers in similar ways, including Travel Washington.

This program operates as a public-private partnership between the WSDOT and Greyhound and offers intercity bus services that serve rural areas throughout Washington for a flat-rate, subsidized fare.

This program has proven popular and successful, serving over 50,000 people each year<sup>7</sup> and serves as a testament to the potential of MaaS programs to reduce the need to drive and improve transportation options for older adults in Clark County.

## Public Transit and Other Providers

Depending on the destination and one's physical capabilities, alternative transportation choices in Clark County might include buses, shuttles, rideshare services, taxis, or volunteer drivers from non-profit service organizations. Some transportation resources and services available in Clark County are listed below.

- **C-TRAN Fixed Route Service:** C-TRAN provides fixed-route bus service along established urban and suburban routes, express commuter service to Portland, and limited routes that connect with light rail in Portland. All buses are ADA-compliant and equipped with wheelchair lifts. Fixed-route buses have kneeling capability to make boarding easier. Reduced-rate fares are available for individuals with low income, older adults, youth, and people with disabilities. Ridership peaked in 2012 at 6.6 million rides but has recently declined due to COVID-19. It is expected to reach pre-pandemic levels within 2–4 years.
- **The Vine Bus Rapid Transit:** The Vine provides fixed route bus rapid transit service. This creates a faster, more efficient experience for bus riders using bus-only lanes, signals for buses, and other infrastructure improvements. As of January 2023, there is one fully operational route (Fourth Plain), one route under construction (Mill Plain), and one proposed route along Highway 99 that is still in the planning phase.
- **The Current Variable Route Service:** Beginning in 2021, C-TRAN replaced its Connector variable route services with the Current, an on-demand rideshare that provides door-to-door transportation for the same price as a bus fare. It is mainly intended for residents of areas not well-served by C-TRAN fixed-route buses.
- **C-VAN Paratransit Service:** C-VAN paratransit provides ADA-compliant curb-to-curb transportation using small vans within the Vancouver Urban Growth Boundary and within three-quarters of a mile of fixed routes operating outside Vancouver's Urban Growth Boundary. Paratransit service requires users to make reservations but still offers flexibility and personalization in scheduling. C-TRAN uses a functional assessment process to determine eligibility for paratransit services. Unfortunately, the costs of operating this service and using it are relatively high.<sup>8</sup> The County's ADA Taskforce is

<sup>7</sup> Lynott 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council. 2022. "2022 Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for



working with C-TRAN to maintain services and reduce costs, but managing the cost of this service will continue to be a challenge in light of the forecasted growth in demand.

- **Travel Training Programs:** C-TRAN’s Travel Training and Travel Ambassador Programs both provide free, hands-on instruction to help older adults and people with disabilities travel safely and independently on public transit. Topics include the best routes to take to various destinations, hours of service, cost of trips, and how to pay for services. Demonstrations of how to ride public buses are provided.
- **Taxi Service and Rideshare Apps:** In Clark County, riders typically access taxi service by calling a dispatcher to request a ride. Trips can be scheduled in advance or on the spot. Some taxis are wheelchair accessible and meet ADA standards. Fares are charged on a per-mile or per-minute basis on top of a base charge and may be payable through a transportation voucher program. Additionally, according to the Transportation Focus Group, rideshare apps like Uber and Lyft have become more popular and may serve as a viable transportation option to many older adults due to their flexibility and ease of use.
- **Community in Motion, or CiM:** CiM is a nonprofit organization focusing on community transportation. The agency has programs that help provide transportation to older adults, low income households, and people with medical needs and disabilities. Many programs are available 24/7. CiM operates the following programs for older adults and people with disabilities:
  - » **North County Shuttle Service:** A shuttle van service that transports residents of rural north county to Battle Ground, where they can do their errands or connect with C-TRAN fixed-route bus services.
  - » **Reserve-a-Ride:** A program that provides scheduled point-to-point transportation to life-sustaining medical appointments, to older adults, people with disabilities, and those who otherwise cannot access other transportation options in the county.
  - » **Non-Emergency Medical Transportation:** A program that provides non-emergency transportation to Medicaid-covered appointments.
  - » **Volunteers in Motion:** A program that recruits and manages volunteer drivers to transport older adults and people with disabilities in either personal vehicles or ADA-accessible vans provided by the organization.
  - » **Employment Transportation:** A program to help low-income persons with transportation assistance for employment and employment-related activities.
  - » **Trip Resource Center:** A website with details about all transportation options that can help with trip planning.
  - » **Mobility Management:** Mobility Managers provide personalized trip planning services to individuals with mobility challenges. They also help to identify gaps and unmet needs in the overall transportation system.
- **Door-through-Door (Escort) Service:** Private agencies such as Golden Chariot Specialty Transport Service provide drivers or escorts who offer personal assistance by helping passengers through the doors of their homes and destinations, as needed.

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Clark, Skamania and Klickitat Counties.” <https://www.rtc.wa.gov/programs/hstp/docs/HSTP2022-Final-20221101-ADOPTED.pdf>.



- **Senior Transportation Program:** Through contracted transportation providers, the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington offers services to eligible people 60 and older who need transportation to medical and health services, social services, and meal programs or for shopping. The program serves those older adults who do not have a car, cannot drive, cannot afford to drive, cannot use public transportation, or do not have public transportation available. Program participants can donate toward the cost of the rides. Services are paid for with limited money from the federal Older Americans Act and state Senior Citizens Services Act.
- **Volunteer Driver Programs:** Some local faith-based and nonprofit organizations have a network of volunteers who offer flexible transportation for shopping, doctor appointments, recreation, and other activities. One-way, round-trip, and multi-stop rides are usually available. Reservations are needed. These programs can be provided for free, on a donation basis, through membership dues or for a minimal cost.
- **Transportation System Plans, or TSPs:** Many jurisdictions choose to develop TSPs to guide policy and development decisions with regard to transportation, while others rely on the transportation element of their comprehensive plans for this purpose. Clark County and its cities periodically update their TSPs. These plans identify ways to improve the transportation network by integrating pedestrian and bike infrastructure, trails, roads, and transit systems with other elements of each jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans:** Many jurisdictions choose to develop bicycle and pedestrian master plans or active transportation plans to guide the development of active transportation infrastructure, while others include this information in the transportation element of their comprehensive plan. Clark County has a stand-alone Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan that was adopted in 2010 and identifies policies aimed at improving and expanding active transportation in unincorporated areas. Most cities in Clark County have opted to include active transportation policies as part of their respective transportation elements.
- **Veterans Transportation:** Disabled American Veterans provides ADA-accessible transportation to veterans of all ages.
- **Cowlitz Tribal Transportation Service:** This program provides regional transportation services to and from the Vancouver area for members of the Cowlitz Tribe.



*Image descriptions: Woman standing with a bicycle (left); Three women on a paved trail (right)*



While these are all great resources for older adults in need of alternative transportation services, Clark County residents and interested parties have consistently acknowledged the need for more affordable, efficient, safe, and reliable services. This is especially true for individuals who are disabled, households with low income, and residents of more rural areas of Clark County. For more details about the feedback received from the community and interested parties, please refer to Chapter 1, Public Engagement Summary.

## Human Services Transportation Plan

Many transportation providers and programs, including some described in the previous section, support transportation for vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, households with low income, veterans, Native Americans, households in rural areas, and older adults. In order to better coordinate these transportation services, avoid duplicating them, and assess specialized transportation needs, Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat Counties have developed their coordinated joint 2022 Human Services Transportation Plan with the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council. The plan discusses transportation needs of, and resources available to, vulnerable populations. Moreover, only projects and programs included in this plan are eligible to receive grant funding from the WSDOT Consolidated Public Transportation Grant Program. According to the latest plan, many transportation programs intended for vulnerable populations do not have sufficient funding or resources to meet demand. The Human Services Transportation Plan concludes that many of these services must be improved and expanded to improve mobility for older adults and other vulnerable populations.

### STATE OF WASHINGTON ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

*The State of Washington created an Active Transportation Plan in 2021 to address various modes of transportation including walking, biking, public transit and others on a larger state-wide scale.*

### CLARK COUNTY REGIONAL ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

*In 2021, the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council developed a Regional Active Transportation Plan for Clark County that describes the status of walking, bicycling and rolling as well as access to transit in the Clark County region.*





## VISION AND STRATEGY

This section explains how to promote mobility in Clark County. It includes goals for Clark County and how they were generated from community feedback, as well as specific strategies for each goal to meet the vision. Each strategy includes a description, score, interested parties, key terms, and resources. Scores are based on the progress made on a specific strategy to this point throughout the county. Interested parties include all likely involved implementing parties, such as potential lead agencies, partners, and organizations that may offer resources. Some strategies also include case studies from around Clark County.



*Image description: Walking feet on a trail*

# How to Read a Strategy

The following text explains the anatomy of each strategy and how Clark County and cities and towns within the County could implement the ARP.

## Title - This explains the intent of the strategy

**Score:** For existing strategies included in the original 2012 plan, this explains how well the strategy has been implemented in the past decade. See detailed 'Strategy Score Description' on page 5.

**Resources:** County documents and nation-wide examples.

**Case Study:** An important example of this strategy implemented well locally.

**Data:** Which data was used to score the strategy.

**Measure Description:** This explains the precise action that the county, cities, or partner agencies need to take to implement

**Type:** This explains the type of government or agency action this strategy is. Strategies of the same type are scored consistently.

**Interested Parties:** Government, Agency, or Non-profit implementors

**Key Terms:** Important definitions that should be used consistently.

**Priority:** Each goal has one priority strategy. Priority strategies should be implemented first because they were identified by the community and/or lays the groundwork for supporting strategies.

## Goal M1: Design transit options for people who are older and have a disability



**What We Heard:** Community members expressed the desire for increased transit service and infrastructure opportunities. Additionally, as new transit service, programs, and infrastructure are designed, community members want to see that these programs consider people with disabilities, including dementia

**AARP LI Measure:** Frequency of local transit service; ADA-accessible stations and vehicles

# Strategy M-1.1: Improve infrastructure to be more comfortable for older adults and people with disabilities

Score: ●●●●○

Resources: [Toolkit for the Assessment of Bus Stop Accessibility and Safety](#)

Case Study: None

Data: Improvements, Older Adult Ridership

**Measure Description:** Continue to add shelters, benches and seating, lighting, landing pads, and other amenities to transit stops.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** C-TRAN

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

# Strategy M-1.2: Develop or expand transit or transportation solutions to support specialized transportation for people with disabilities

Score: ●●●●○

Resources: [2018 Commission on Aging Annual Report](#); [AARP Mobility As a Service Has 'MaaS' Appeal](#)

Case Study: None

Data: Improvements, Older Adult Ridership

**Measure Description:** Provide new or expanded volunteer driver programs, shuttle programs, and other on-demand transportation solutions like Mobility as a Service (MaaS), neighborhood electric vehicles (NEV), shuttles, existing dial-a-ride services, and Travel Ambassador programs.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** C-TRAN; CiM; Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** MaaS: a package of transportation services to replace personal vehicle ownership that recognizes transportation as a service to be provided rather than a resource to be acquired.

NEVs: battery electric vehicles that are usually built to have a top speed of 25 mph (40 km/h) and have a maximum loaded weight of 3,000 lb (1,400 kg). A golf cart is a NEV.

# Goal M2: Increase alternative transportation options in areas not well-served by transit lines



**What We Heard:** Community members felt that the existing rural transportation programs and providers need more funding and coordination in order to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. They also thought that more transportation options were needed in both suburban and rural areas.

**AARP LI Measure:** None

## Strategy M-2.1: Increase the use of neighborhood electric vehicles, or NEVs

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** The City of Ridgefield has promoted the use of NEVs and golf carts as an environmentally friendly and safe way to travel short distances. Parking, paths, charging stations, and wayfinding information help support the increased usage of NEVs.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Identify potential NEV zones where there are a network of streets that serve residential and commercial development, have posted speed limits at or below 25 mph, and have not been identified as high conflict areas that could accommodate electric-assisted mobility such as scooters, bikes, and carts in addition to current traffic.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County; Regional Transportation Council; Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

**Key Terms:** NEVs are battery electric vehicles that are usually built to have a top speed of 25 mph (40 km/h) and have a maximum loaded weight of 3,000 lb (1,400 kg). A golf cart is a NEV.



# Strategy M-2.2: Increase safe walking and rolling connections

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** [Clark County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#); [Active Transportation Services](#); [Safe Routes to Parks](#)

**Case Study:** [Clark County Ordinance 2020-12-02](#) requires pedestrian accessways when specific criteria are met, including when development has frontage or access to an arterial roadway. In addition, this amendment forces compliance with ADA standards unless topographical constraints prohibit it.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Systematically invest in completing sidewalk and bike lane connections, including Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, improvements particularly to parks, schools, transit stops and major urban destinations, such as retail centers, medical and recreational facilities, and public buildings.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County; Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT); Regional Transportation Council

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

# Strategy M-2.3: Increase interagency coordination of resources

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [Universal Mobility as a Service](#); [Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility](#)

**Case Study:** CiM has services that address components of this strategy in Clark County already and will be a valuable resource to understand the evolving service landscape as this strategy is implemented.

**Data:** Coordination with Interested Parties

**Measure Description:** Improve interagency coordination by developing a centralized ride-scheduling and dispatching system, developing multi-agency driver-training, vehicle-sharing, and vehicle maintenance programs, among other options.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** C-TRAN; CiM; Regional Transportation Council; Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

**Key Terms:** None

# Goal M3: Design communities for safe walking and rolling for a range of users and abilities



**What We Heard:** Community members expressed the importance of being able to safely access, for all users and abilities, destinations like grocery stores, parks, and other important community resources areas.

**AARP LI Measure:** Walk trips; Crash rate (to determine safety)

## Strategy M-3.1: Expand the network of complete streets

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** [Complete Streets \(FHWA\)](#); [Complete Streets \(Bellevue Transportation Commission\)](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Improvement projects

**Measure Description:** Seek diverse and creative approaches to fund programs that establish safe and complete networks for pedestrians and wheelchair, bicycle and scooter users, including grant opportunities.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

## Strategy M-3.2: Shorten block lengths

**Score:** New

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Change road standards in development code to encourage connections within and between neighborhoods, with block lengths no more than 500 feet.

**Type:** Ordinances and codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy M-3.3: Set ambitious Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, goals

**Score:** New

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** ADA Improvements

**Measure Description:** Set ambitious and measurable goal of miles of sidewalks and ADA ramp gaps that will be filled per year.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** None

# Goal M4: Promote land use patterns and design standards that encourage walking, rolling, and transit use



**What We Heard:** Community members would like to see a more integrated community landscape where, for instance, housing is within a short walking distance of parks, retail, etc. Additionally, people want to see more resources in suburban and rural areas while maintaining a small-town feel.

**AARP LI Measure:** Walk trips, diversity of destinations (index)

## Strategy M-4.1: Strengthen mobility standards and infrastructure in new development

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Improvement projects

**Measure Description:** Increase pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in new developments, especially in new development along public transit corridors.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** None



# Strategy M-4.2: Require accessible public buildings located close to the street

**Score:** New

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** The County requires components of this strategy in specific areas like Highway 99 and mixed-use districts, and also includes location and size requirements for landscaping and sidewalks.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Change development code to require commercial, medical, and recreational buildings to have a public entrance close to the street.

**Type:** Ordinances and codes

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

# 5 Civic Involvement

## More to Give Turning Silver into Gold





This chapter discusses involvement in the community and the challenges that older adults face in Clark County and identifies areas for improvement. Community engagement can take many forms, but generally refers to the involvement of individuals in some social aspect of their community. This can mean working, volunteering, attending community events, participating in local government or advocacy, or simply spending time with family, friends, and neighbors.

While being engaged in one's community is, to some extent, a personal choice, external factors heavily influence the degree to which an individual involves themselves in their community. Factors like the type of activity, location, time of day/week, language used, and format used (e.g., in-person interaction, telephone conversation, online) can determine whether a person can participate in an engagement opportunity. This is especially true for some older adults who have unique engagement needs and face unique challenges to staying engaged as they age.

## ENGAGING COMMUNITIES ARE LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Livable communities provide a variety of resources and opportunities that enhance quality of life. Community involvement is an important consideration because a person's relationship with their community and those who live in it has direct impacts on their quality of life. The American Association of Retired Persons, or AARP, Livability Index includes the following metrics for determining how conducive a community is to maintaining social engagement among older adults:

- Opportunity for civic involvement
- Social involvement index
- Cultural, arts, and entertainment institutions
- Broadband cost and speed
- Voting rate

Based on all these metrics, AARP calculates a countywide Engagement Score for Clark County of 66/100, which is significantly higher than the national median score. This score is relatively consistent throughout the county, although urban and suburban areas tend to have slightly higher scores than the more rural areas in north and east county. This indicates that Clark County is home to a relatively well-engaged citizenry. However, it is important to discuss individual metrics and there is still plenty of room for improvement.

### Broadband Costs and Speed

The internet and social media have become some of the most important ways in which people engage with one another. As has been seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, they are sometimes the only way to



safely do so. Ensuring that everyone has access to fast, reliable, and affordable internet at home and in the community is essential to promote engagement.

Countywide, about 93.4% of households have access to high-speed, competitively priced service, which is close to the national average of 93.7%. However, this percentage varies greatly throughout the county. Suburban areas tend to have the greatest access to affordable and dependable services, while urban areas like downtown Vancouver tend to have slightly lower levels of access. The most rural areas of the county have substantially lower levels of access. In fact, only between 30% and 70% of households in some zip codes have dependable and affordable internet access.<sup>1</sup>

## Opportunities for Civic Involvement

Another helpful metric that AARP uses measures opportunities for civic involvement. It is measured as the ratio of civic, social, religious, political, and business organizations in an area per 10,000 residents. In Clark County, there are about 5.4 organizations per 10,000 people, which is significantly higher than the national median of 1.18 organizations per 10,000 people. This indicates that there is a relatively high number of opportunities to become involved with people who share similar interests, values, and passions.

## Social Involvement Index

While the previous metric discussed opportunities for engagement, AARP uses another metric to measure actual participation. Within the larger Livability Index, AARP calculates a Social Involvement Index. This index helps indicate the extent to which individuals participate in community events and organizations or develop relationships with their neighbors. It was developed using responses to the Volunteering and Civic Life supplement to the U.S. Census.

On a scale from 0 to 2.5, Clark County receives a score of 1.11, which is higher than the national median score of 0.96. Unlike most other metrics, Clark County's Social Involvement Index score is above the national median score in nearly every neighborhood in the county. This indicates that Clark County residents are relatively active in their communities and engaged with their neighborhoods.

## Cultural, Arts, and Entertainment Institutions

There is only one engagement metric where Clark County measures significantly lower than the national median: the amount of cultural, arts, and entertainment institutions. This metric is measured as the ratio of performing arts companies, museums, concert venues, sports stadiums, and movie theaters per 10,000 people. Countywide, Clark only has 0.2 institutions per 10,000 people, while the national median ratio is 8.01 institutions per 10,000 people. While this may not necessarily indicate an engagement issue if the

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<sup>1</sup> AARP (American Association of Retired Persons). 2022a. "Broadband Speed and Cost." <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/>.



community does not see it as such, it is important to consider that Clark County residents may have to travel to Portland, Oregon, to access many types of cultural institutions.

## REMAINING IN THE WORKFORCE

While many older adults retire and turn to more recreational and volunteer activities to stay engaged in their communities, some do not have the financial means to retire and must keep working. Others may remain in the workforce by choice. In fact, people ages 65 and older are and will continue to be the fastest growing age group in the workforce until 2024.<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of workers 65 to 74 will grow by 55% and the number of workers over 75 will grow by 86%. While remaining in the workforce can present a good opportunity to stay active and engaged, there are also important challenges to consider.

Many workplace policies and working conditions are not accommodating to the unique needs of older adults. Older adults may need more flexible schedules, time off, and physical accommodations—such as the option to sit while working—than many employers offer.

Ageism in the workplace is a growing issue as more older adults remain in the workforce or return to the workforce. According to an AARP survey of older adults, 61% of older workers have either seen or experienced age discrimination in the workplace; women and people of color are more likely to experience this.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, targeted support and resources are needed to support older adults who decide to remain in the workforce.

For many older adults in Clark County, the main challenges associated with staying engaged have to do with lack of resources rather than lack of opportunities. This was a major takeaway from both the focus group meetings and the public workshop meetings (see Chapter 1, Outreach Summary). In these meetings, residents and interested parties acknowledged that there are many ways to get involved in the

### GOAL CI-1

*Support the efforts of neighborhood associations and other volunteer groups to reach and engage older adults*

2 AARP. 2019. "Who's Working More? People Age 65 and Older." <https://www.aarp.org/work/careers/surging-older-workforce/>.

3 AARP. 2018. "The Value of Experience: Age Discrimination Against Older Workers Persists." [https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys\\_statistics/econ/2018/value-of-experience-age-discrimination-highlights.doi.10.26419-2Fres.00177.002.pdf](https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/econ/2018/value-of-experience-age-discrimination-highlights.doi.10.26419-2Fres.00177.002.pdf).





community but that they are not well-advertised and sometimes do not consider the unique needs of older adults. For example, older adults may not know a community event is taking place because it was not publicized in a way that is easily accessible to them. Moreover, issues in other sectors, such as lack of quality transportation to an event, create challenges to participation. Aside from lack of resources, there are also important public health and equity considerations to be made for older adults, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and systemic inequality, as detailed below.

### **IMPACTS OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a barrier to social engagement for nearly everyone. This is especially true for older adults who are at higher risk of complications from the illness and, thus, need to take extra care when being around others. For this reason, many have avoided engaging with others and have become isolated. According to the Clark County Commission on Aging's 2021 Annual Report, this isolation has led to declines in both physical and mental health for older adults. While conditions have improved due to public health measures and vaccinations, levels of engagement have not returned to pre-pandemic levels and more work must be done to ensure the safety and comfortability of older adults at community events.

### **SOCIAL EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS**

In addition to the barriers facing all older adults, older adults who have low-incomes; are people of color, immigrants, non-English speakers, or part of the LGBTQ community; and have disabilities face systemic barriers to community engagement. As discussed in the Community Engagement Focus Group, diverse older adults sometimes face discrimination in community spaces or cultural and linguistic barriers that prevent them from relating to and communicating with others. In other words, many events are not planned with them in mind and even fewer center on their needs.

#### **GOAL CI-2**

*Support cross-cultural and intergenerational community events.*



Civic involvement efforts should recognize these barriers and partner with relevant community leaders and organizations. Volunteer matching should take into consideration the life experiences, perspectives, and potential biases of volunteers to best support the communities they seek to serve.

## WAYS TO STAY ENGAGED

By 2025, one in four Clark County residents will be 60 or older. The sheer number of people moving into retirement age is transforming American society. This shift in population will have an enormous impact on our socio-economic infrastructure by putting new pressures on social services and healthcare.<sup>4</sup>

### VOLUNTEERING

Based on the feedback received during the outreach components of this Aging Readiness Plan update, older adults are especially interested in volunteering to stay engaged and give back to their communities (see Chapter 1, Outreach Summary). Many older community members indicated that they already volunteer with community organizations, faith-based groups, neighborhood associations, and other organizations or that they would be interested in doing so. However, some also mentioned that it can be difficult to know how or when to volunteer because information is not centralized or communicated in a way that is accessible to older adults. This issue was also discussed in the 2019 Commission on Aging Annual Report, indicating that it has not improved in the last few years.

### COMMUNITY SPACES

Some communities foster more engagement than others due in no small part to their physical design. The 2019 Commission on Aging Annual Report discusses the importance of complete communities that are walkable and have an abundance of parks, recreational spaces, and places to dine and shop, as well as a diversity of housing.

Engaged communities are designed for socializing and do not excessively segregate land uses. By making it convenient and enjoyable to gather and spend time in them, these communities promote engagement. Interested parties who attended the Community Engagement Focus Group meeting echoed the 2019 Annual Report but acknowledged that many land use policies throughout Clark County represent a barrier to creating more complete communities.

### MULTIGENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Community Engagement Focus Group, public workshop, and 2019 Commission on Aging Annual Report all highlighted the importance and need for more multigenerational engagement opportunities. Too often, organized engagement opportunities for older adults do not attract younger generations. This contributes to a disconnection between older adults and younger people who could benefit from

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4 AARP. 2022b. "How Much Longer Will Social Security be Around?" <https://www.aarp.org/retirement/social-security/questions-answers/how-much-longer-will-social-security-be-around.html>.



their mentorship. Many older adults expressed interest in designing neighborhoods, community spaces, and events to be intentionally multigenerational to combat this disconnection and create more meaningful engagement opportunities for everyone.

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As indicated by the 2021 Commission on Aging-administered Community Member Survey, the internet and social media are not the preferred methods of communication or engagement for most older adults in Clark County. However, the COVID-19 pandemic forced many older adults to turn to online engagement opportunities to ensure their health and safety. Although many in-person events have returned, online opportunities will remain important. Therefore, ensuring that older adults have access to resources that enable them to engage online is essential. According to the Community Engagement Focus Group, reliable internet access and programs that provide training opportunities should be prioritized.

It is also important to recognize that not all older adults use the internet due to the cost of a computer and internet access, lack of skills and experience to do so, or personal preference. Although online engagement opportunities work well and will continue to grow more accessible, they should not fully substitute in-person events or traditional marketing, like printed news or mail, for the reasons listed above. Additionally, attention should be paid to digital literacy trainings to provide opportunities for interested individuals to grow their skills, especially as technology and common online interfaces evolve over time.

### GOAL CI-3

*Continue to offer a variety of engagement opportunities in-person and online.*



## VISION AND STRATEGY

This section explains how to promote civic involvement in Clark County. It includes goals for Clark County and how they were generated from community feedback, as well as specific strategies for each goal to meet the vision. Each strategy includes a description, score, interested parties, key terms, and resources. Scores are based on the progress made on a specific strategy to this point throughout the county. Interested parties include all likely involved implementing parties, such as potential lead agencies, partners, and organizations that may offer resources.



*Image descriptions: Two women sitting at a table*

# How to Read a Strategy

The following text explains the anatomy of each strategy and how Clark County and cities and towns within the County could implement the ARP.

## Title - This explains the intent of the strategy

**Score:** For existing strategies included in the original 2012 plan, this explains how well the strategy has been implemented in the past decade. See detailed 'Strategy Score Description' on page 5.

**Case Study:** An important example of this strategy implemented well locally.

**Data:** Which data was used to score the strategy

**Measure Description:** This explains the precise action that the County, cities, or partner agencies need to take to implement

**Type:** This explains the type of government or agency action this strategy is. Strategies of the same type are scored consistently.

**Interested Parties:** Government, Agency, or Non-profit implementors

**Key Terms:** Important definitions that should be used consistently

**Resources:** County documents and nation-wide examples

**Priority:** Each goal has one priority strategy. Priority strategies should be implemented first because they were identified by the community and/or lays the groundwork for supporting strategies.

## Goal CI-1: Support the efforts of neighborhood associations and other volunteer groups to reach and engage older adults



**What We Heard:** Many older adults participate in neighborhood associations and get much of their social interaction from neighbors. Volunteering is important to many older adults and the community at large as it provides a sense of fulfillment, engagement opportunity, and public benefit. Community members voiced a need for centralized information about volunteer opportunities and would like to see more support from the cities and county.

**AARP LI Measure:** Social Involvement (index)



# Strategy CI-1.1: Team with the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities (AAADSW), neighborhood associations, and other partners to share best practices for reaching older adults

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [2021 AARP Livable Communities Workshop: Engaging Older Adults](#); [How to Communicate Effectively With Older Adults Psychology Today](#); [Rules' of Community Engagement Webinar](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Best practices implemented

**Measure Description:** Work with AAADSW and other local partners to ensure local government and non-government organizations understand best practices for communicating with and reaching out to older adults.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** AAADSW; Commission on Aging

**Key Terms:** AAADSW is the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington

**Priority**

# Strategy CI-1.2: Connect with American Association of Retired Persons, or AARP, resources and networks to expand capacity of local governments

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** [AARP Livable Communities Network](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Enrolled jurisdictions

**Measure Description:** Enroll in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly communities, which will open access to funding and technical resources.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** AARP is the American Association of Retired Persons

# Goal CI-2: Support cross-cultural and intergenerational community events



**What We Heard:** Community members want to see more diverse community events and programs that are engaging for people of all ages, cultures, and abilities. In addition, stakeholders were especially interested in mentorship and volunteer opportunities that focus on intergenerational connections.

**AARP LI Measure:** Opportunity for Civic Involvement(index)

## Strategy CI-2.1: Expand volunteer opportunities for all older adults

**Score:** ●●●●○

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New programs and participants

**Measure Description:** Work with partner programs to compile volunteer opportunities in Clark County. In addition, joining these programs as a member or volunteer should be free of charge in as many cases as possible to ensure maximum usage by county residents.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** AAADSW; Commission on Aging; Community Organizations

**Key Terms:** AAADSW is the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington

# Strategy CI-2.2: Connect youth and school organizations with older adults

**Score:** ●●○○○

**Resources:** [Grantmakers in Aging](#); [AARP Experience Corps](#); [Verde Magazine 'Reading Toward the Future.'](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New Programs

**Measure Description:** Connect high schools and youth groups to older adult organizations such as retirement communities to develop a mentorship network. Connect elementary schools to older adult organizations for reading programs.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Schools; retirement communities; older adult and youth organizations

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

# Goal CI-3: Continue to offer a variety of engagement opportunities in-person and online



**What We Heard:** Community members were excited that in-person events are returning, however many are still hesitant to attend and would prefer to have online options. In addition, it can be difficult for those with mobility issues or those who live in rural areas to attend in person events.

**AARP LI Measure:** None

## Strategy CI-3.1: Work with Clark College, Washington State University Vanvouver, and other local colleges and organizations to expand re-careering, skills building and recreational courses for older adults in person and virtually

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [ESD 112](#); [AARP Top-Ranked Colleges for Older Adult Students](#); [AARP Low-Cost Classes for Older Adults](#); [AARP Joins with Nonprofit to Teach Tech to Older Adults](#)

**Case Study:** Clark College offers mature learning courses; the City of Vancouver offers older adults focused classes in dance, ceramics, and others.

**Data:** New programs and participants

**Measure Description:** Develop and expand re-careering courses for older adults that wish to re-enter the work force. These courses should be offered in both remote and in-person settings to ensure people with conflicting schedules and learning types have access to said courses. Develop and expand non-career oriented courses too, such as dance, art and cooking courses, and practical skill-building such as computer and phone technology courses.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Local colleges; Local libraries; Workforce Southwest Washington; Community and recreation centers

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy CI-3.2: Develop best practices for hiring older adults and share with business associations

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [AARP Diversity Hiring for Employers](#); [AARP Tips for Recruiting Experienced Workers](#); [HBR Case for Hiring Older Workers](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Businesses participating

**Measure Description:** Local business associations should understand current best practices for finding and hiring older adults. These best practices should include how to find workers with specific experience that could be utilized in the job force.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** Clark County Business Associations (i.e. Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce); Columbia River Economic Development Council; Workforce Southwest Washington

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy CI-3.3: Expand broadband access in all areas of the county

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [Rural Digital Opportunity Fund](#); [Washington State Department of Commerce Internet for All in Washington](#); [BroadbandUSA](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New service providers, monthly cost of service, new customers

**Measure Description:** Some areas experience lower levels of broadband access and therefore may struggle to contact various services in a time of need.

**Type:** Advocacy

**Interested Parties:** Clark County cities; Clark County

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**



# 6 Emergency Preparedness

## Addressing Major Health and Safety Crises





Emergency preparedness is crucial to maintaining quality of life and especially important for older adults, who are among those most impacted by major health events or hazards. In recent years, the COVID-19 global pandemic touched everyone’s lives and has provided an intimate perspective on how to navigate future events. Research and technology have also evolved, providing deeper insights into hazards and offering potential virtual solutions to some issues that hazards may present.

## Shocks and Stressors

This chapter uses the terms “shocks” and “stressors” to describe the many factors that determine how destructive an emergency event can be. Shocks are sudden or acute events that threaten or impact Clark County’s immediate well-being. These may include hazard events like earthquakes or severe weather such as extreme heat or winter weather. Stressors are daily or chronic challenges that weaken natural, built, or human resources over time. Examples of stressors could include aging infrastructure, inequities in systems like the sidewalk network, or homelessness. Stressors can amplify the effects of shocks when they occur, which especially impacts vulnerable populations who experience more stressors than most. Older adults often experience many stressors such as physical disability, inability to drive, and living alone. It is important to address equity issues when planning for emergencies, as underrepresented communities that have historically faced inequities, such as low income, elderly, people of color, and rural populations, are often disproportionately impacted by hazard events and are therefore more vulnerable. The Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency, or CRESA, and jurisdictions across the county partake in hazard planning efforts to build resilience and overcome shocks and stressors. This Aging Readiness Plan update will build on existing policies and projects and specifically target vulnerabilities that apply to older adults.

### LOCATION OF OLDER ADULTS

*Maps in this chapter show assisted living facilities throughout the county and how they may be effected by hazards. While this data is important, it does not illustrate the total population of older adults, nor older adults living alone at home, who are also uniquely vulnerable in hazard events.*



## Four Phases of Hazard Planning

Hazard events occur in four connected phases; a resilient community experiences these phases in a cycle, building on each event to make a stronger and more equitable community by using recovery as an opportunity to mitigate, prepare, and respond to the next hazard event.<sup>1</sup>

### MITIGATION

Mitigation includes actions taken before a disaster to minimize the impact of a hazard event. This could include planting trees to reduce the impact of extreme heat events.

### PREPARATION

Preparedness includes the development and increase of the capacity of a community to respond to hazards. This could include public education about how to prepare for wildland fires, such as Ready, Set, Go campaigns.

### RESPONSE

Response includes all actions taken as an immediate response to a hazard event. This can include actions that streamline how first responders, such as firefighters and police, reach isolated older adults.

### RECOVERY

Recovery includes restoring community functions and usually corresponds to mitigation. This could include rebuilding community buildings to the most updated fire and flood codes.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security. 2019. "Comprehensive Preparedness Guide: Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans." Last modified June 2019. Accessed May 9, 2023, [https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2019-06/comprehensive\\_preparedness\\_guide\\_developing\\_and\\_maintaining\\_emergency\\_operations\\_plans.pdf](https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2019-06/comprehensive_preparedness_guide_developing_and_maintaining_emergency_operations_plans.pdf).



# NATURAL AND HUMAN-CAUSED HAZARDS

## Communicable Diseases

Communicable diseases are illnesses that spread through direct or indirect contact with an infected person or animal or contaminated surface, food, or other medium (see **Table 6-1**). These diseases can be well known or newly emerging and their “level of disease” can vary from endemic, cluster, outbreak, epidemic, and pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is the largest modern example of a communicable disease causing a global health emergency that has impacted everyone’s lives in some way. Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Clark County’s older adults have been included in this plan’s outreach and strategies.

### COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

*Endemic diseases usually have regular occurrences in a specific location. Cluster diseases are when cases of the disease occur in a specific area like a school, neighborhood, or group housing facility. Outbreaks refer to more cases occurring in an area than is expected over a specific time period. Epidemics and pandemics are similar to outbreaks but over a larger scale, with pandemics occurring over several countries or continents*

**Table 6-1. Examples of Communicable Diseases by Transmission Type**

Type of Transmission		Example Disease
Contact with a Person	Touch	Staphylococcus (Staph Infection)
	Droplets	Influenza or COVID-19
	Sexual Transmission	Gonorrhea or HIV
	Fecal/Oral Transmission	Hepatitis A
Contact with a Contaminated Medium	Air	Tuberculosis or measles
	Surface or Object	Norwalk virus
	Food	Salmonella or E. coli
	Blood	Hepatitis B or HIV
	Water	Cholera
Contact with an Animal	Mosquito Bites	Malaria or Yellow Fever

Note: This table is meant to provide examples and is not comprehensive.

Source: Oregon Health Authority. n.d. “Routes of Transmission.” Accessed February 2023. <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/diseasesconditions/communicabledisease/pages/transmission.aspx>

## FORECAST

It is hard to predict when or where the next pandemic will emerge, but influencing factors include known communicable diseases and transmission vectors. Specifically, climate change is projected to impact the range of certain endemic diseases by expanding the potential range within which certain bacteria, viruses, fungi, or disease-carrying animals can survive. This is associated with higher average temperatures, as well as hazard events such as extreme storms and heat waves. For example, the Washington Department of Health has observed an earlier onset of West Nile virus-carrying mosquitoes in recent years, likely as a result of higher average temperatures. Additionally, in 2015 it was reported that an outbreak of Shigellosis (a bacterial disease spread via contaminated drinking water) occurred in association with an unusually extreme storm.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). 2020. “Preparing for the Health Impacts of Climate Change in the Northwest.”



## STRESSORS

All diseases are different and a person's chance of severe symptoms can vary widely by disease, specific situation, and the state of an individual's health. Weakened immune systems and social isolation are both stressors older adults often face that can deepen the issues related to communicable diseases.

### Weakened Immune Systems

Immune systems can be weakened due to general age, past life choices, social inequities, and several medical conditions. Older adults are commonly at higher risk of disease. A history of smoking or substance abuse can impact a person's immune system and susceptibility. Additionally, social inequities that individuals are exposed to over their lifetime, such as environmental pollution or nutrition, can impact risk.

Some common medical conditions that can impact immune systems include the following:<sup>3</sup>

- Autoimmune diseases
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Heart conditions
- Kidney diseases
- Liver diseases
- Lung diseases
- Obesity
- Organ transplant
- Stroke

### Social Isolation

When a disease outbreak occurs, daily activities can become dangerous and may therefore be conducted virtually, postponed, or cancelled. Under these conditions, people can quickly become isolated, especially if they live alone. Research has linked social isolation to physical and mental conditions including high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, and Alzheimer's disease.<sup>4</sup> These types of conditions can worsen the impacts of communicable diseases.

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September 2020. [https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/docs/Northwest\\_Regional-Climate-Fact-Sheet-P.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/docs/Northwest_Regional-Climate-Fact-Sheet-P.pdf)

3 CDC. 2022. "People at Higher Risk of Flu Complications." <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm>.

4 National Institute on Aging. 2019. "Social isolation, loneliness in older people pose health risks." <https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/social-isolation-loneliness-older-people-pose-health-risks>.





Approximately 42,364 people (roughly 1 in 4 households) in Clark County are living alone. Of the 42,364 people living alone in the county, 43.8% are adults over 65.<sup>5</sup> In comparison, this age group makes up only 15.5% of the total population in Clark County.<sup>6</sup> This means social isolation disproportionately impacts adults over 65 in Clark County.

## SHOCKS

When a local outbreak, epidemic, or pandemic occurs, nonessential facilities and events are the first impacted. These are easily cancelled or postponed and do not affect the regular daily activities of community members. Next, certain daily-use facilities may be impacted, such as schools, workplaces, or marketplaces, and people will turn to virtual, remote, or delivery options where possible. Essential facilities related to healthcare, food, utilities, transportation, and governance may have other modifications.

When a disease outbreak occurs, there is heightened potential for exposure for those who have certain home, health, or employment situations. People who reside in a congregate living situation are more at risk of exposure to a disease than someone able to more properly isolate. There are 1,968 congregate living facilities in Clark County, with a total of 27,241 licensed beds, or an average of about 13 licensed beds per facility. About two-thirds of these facilities have 6 or fewer licensed beds, although there are 162 facilities that have over 50 licensed beds. The more people in a congregate care facility, the more emphasis on communicable disease safety is needed. Similarly, people with preexisting conditions that require healthcare or caregiving may face heightened exposure.

During the emergency phase of an outbreak, epidemic, or pandemic, it is important to clearly communicate public health information. This could include information about personal behavior (such as masking and washing hands) and where to get treatment, including preventive vaccines. To reach a range of older adults, communication channels need to be varied and should include reaching out directly to congregate living facilities, engaging trusted leaders, and connecting with caregivers.

## Extreme Heat

Extreme heat is on average the deadliest hazard in the United States.<sup>7</sup> Definitions of extreme heat days vary and are relative to the local climate; warm nights and heat waves should also be part of the discussion, as these stress people and infrastructure over time. Warm nights that occur alongside extreme heat days do not give people a chance to cool off and recover. Similarly, heat waves are consecutive days of extreme heat that add stress over time.

5 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021a. "Tenure by Household Type (Including Living Alone) and Age of Householder." B25011. ACS 5-Year Estimates.

6 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021b. "Age and Sex." S0101. ACS 5-Year Estimates.

7 National Weather Service. 2021. "Weather Related Fatality and Injury Statistics." <https://www.weather.gov/hazstat/>.

## Clark County Public Health lessons learned from the COVID response:

Our data reflected that our elderly community generally were most adversely affected by the COVID-19 virus. The major barriers reported by elderly and homebound individuals included transportation, access to care, and technology challenges.

- **Transportation:** Many within our aging population no longer drive or have access to transportation. Additionally, rural and north county elderly residents reported they must rely on others for transportation. This made it difficult to access care and other services, such as obtaining groceries and other essential items.
- **Access to care:** Due to the high rate of illness among residents and staff in long-term care, assisted living, and skilled nursing facilities, the capacity of staff to provide care and vaccinations to residents was restricted. Additionally, many health care providers did not offer in-home services to their patients, or those services were significantly restricted due to staffing challenges.
- **Technology challenges:** Many within our elderly community had little to no access to technology, including computers and smart phones, and/or limitations in using technology such as online appointment kiosks and social media. This impacted their ability to make online appointments for vaccinations/care, to identify available locations for vaccinations, and to access current information about COVID-19 and safety measures. They often had to rely on family members and friends for assistance.
- Congregate settings such as long-term care facilities and adult family homes had greater difficulty with physical distancing requirements to mitigate virus transmission, leading to a reduction in their ability to accept residents in some cases.
- Physical distancing requirements also resulted in adverse mental/emotional health impacts for some, as regular caregivers became more restricted in their availability.

During the response, public health deployed a number of strategies to help mitigate the challenges faced by our elderly and homebound community members. We were able to deploy the emergency Medical Reserve Corps and other medical response organizations to support vaccinations in residential facilities caring for the elderly and in personal residences of homebound individuals. We also contracted with an organization to launch a multilingual call center to assist individuals with locating vaccine providers, with accessing wait lists online, and with making appointments at mass vaccination sites. We also were able to provide some limited wrap-around services such as rental/mortgage assistance, grocery and pharmacy delivery, and other services for those meeting some specific requirements.

Although these strategies were helpful to a degree, we recognize that there are significant and continuing systemic challenges that need to be thoughtfully and innovatively addressed if we are to fully meet the needs of our elderly and other vulnerable community members going forward.

*Contributed by:*

Belinda Walker

Emergency Preparedness & Response Program Manager

Regional Emergency Response Coordinator

SW Washington Healthcare Alliance

CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH



## FORECAST

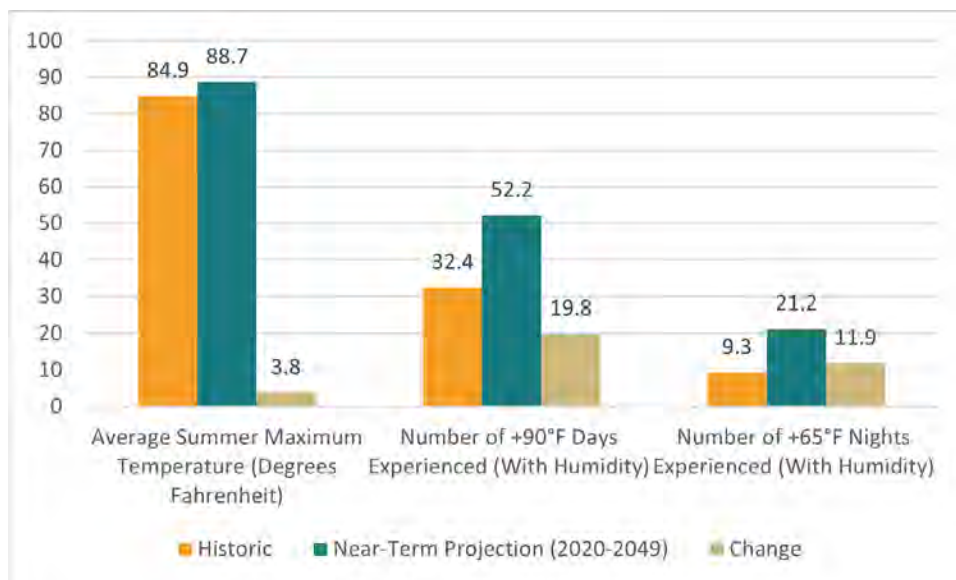
The Pacific Northwest region has experienced warmer temperatures in the last century and is projected to continue to warm over the coming century. The region warmed roughly 1.3°F between 1895 and 2011, and warm nights have occurred more often west of the Cascade Mountains (1901–2009).<sup>8,9</sup> These trends are projected to continue through the next century, with near-term projections displayed in **Figure 6-1**.<sup>10</sup>

### 2021 HEAT DOME

The 2021 heat dome sent temperatures above 115°F as measured at the Portland International Airport. It is unclear how often such an event would repeat as a result of climate change.

Older adults are especially vulnerable to extreme heat events. Some individuals are more at risk than others due to their access to and ability to use air conditioning. In Washington, only about 53% of households use air conditioning equipment.<sup>11</sup> Those who have air conditioning may not want to pay for the extra cost of running it, especially when energy costs are increased during times of heat waves and higher demand. About 7% of Clark County’s adults over 65 have had an income below the poverty line in the past 12 months.

**Figure 6-1. Examples of Communicable Diseases by Transmission Type**



8 Mote, P.W. 2003. "Trends in Temperature and Precipitation in the Pacific Northwest During the Twentieth Century." *Northwest Science* 77(4): 271–282.

9 NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). 2013. *Regional Climate Trends and Scenarios for the U.S. National Climate Assessment: Part 6. Climate of the Northwest U.S.* NOAA Technical Report NESDIS 142-6. [https://scenarios.globalchange.gov/sites/default/files/NOAA\\_NESDIS\\_Tech\\_Report\\_142-6-Climate\\_of\\_the\\_Northwest\\_U.S\\_0.pdf](https://scenarios.globalchange.gov/sites/default/files/NOAA_NESDIS_Tech_Report_142-6-Climate_of_the_Northwest_U.S_0.pdf).

10 Abatzoglou J.T., and T.J. Brown. 2012. "A Comparison of Statistical Downscaling Methods Suited for Wildfire Applications." *International Journal of Climatology* 32: 772–780. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joc.2312>.

11 U.S. Energy Information Administration, Office of Energy Demand and Integrated Statistics. 2020. "Form EIA-457A of the 2020 Residential Energy Consumption Survey." <https://www.eia.gov/consumption/residential/data/2020/state/pdf/State%20Air%20Conditioning.pdf>.



## SHOCKS

Extreme heat is experienced differently depending on where a person lives and spends their time. This difference is partially caused by the urban heat island effect (see **Figure 6-2**). Generally, areas with more tree canopy and a lower rate of impermeable surfaces will experience less extreme heat. For Clark County this means that rural areas are expected to experience lower levels of extreme heat exposure than urban cores, and within those urban cores, areas that have more green space and shade will be more hospitable (see **Figure 6-3**).

## Wildland Fire

Fire poses threats to human health, well-being, property, and infrastructure. This section generally refers to wildland fires, which are often larger, more destructive fires that start or travel through forested areas and along the **wildland-urban interface** where fuels are more concentrated. Wildland fires are often caused by human activity, infrastructure failures, or lightning and they can span hundreds of acres depending on the conditions present when a fire starts. Wildland fires can also create hazardous air quality, which older adults can be especially sensitive to.

## FORECAST

Wildland fires can be difficult to predict with certainty because local conditions like wind and moisture change constantly, and sources of fire are often human caused and less predictable. Generally, wildland fire likelihood and intensity increase under warm, dry, and windy conditions. The likelihood that wildland fires will occur in Clark County is projected to increase over the next century due to increased summer temperatures and decreased summer precipitation.<sup>12</sup> Annually, there is a 36% chance that a given year between 2022 and 2049 will have favorable conditions for wildland fire.<sup>13</sup> The number of days per year with a high fire risk is also expected to increase in the near term. Historically, from 1971–2000, on average there were 52 days a year in which fire danger was deemed high. Near-term projections from 2010–2039 show annual high-fire days will increase by an average of 6 days every year.<sup>14,15</sup>

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12 Climate Impacts Group. 2009. *The Washington Climate Change Impacts Assessment*. University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. <https://doi.org/10.6069/GWSP-MB82>.

13 Sheehan, T., D. Bachelet, and K. Ferschweiler. 2015. "Projected Major Fire and Vegetation Changes in the Pacific Northwest of the Conterminous United States under Selected CMIP5 Climate Futures." *Ecological Modelling* 317: 16–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolmodel.2015.08.023>.

14 Sheehan et al. 2015.

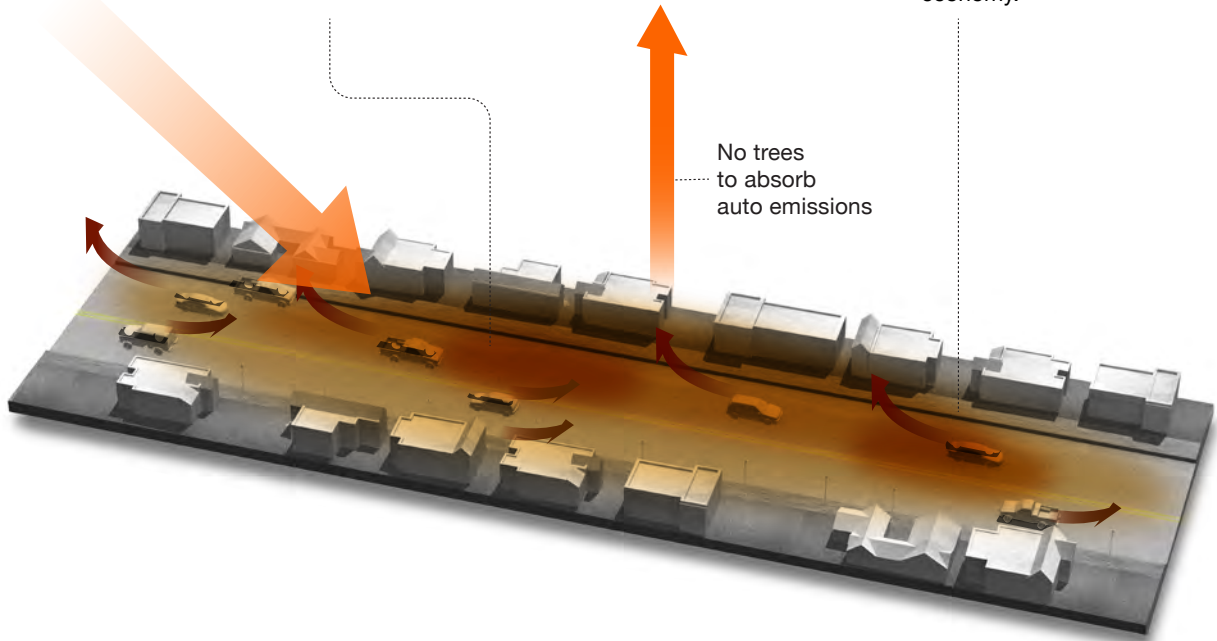
15 A high-fire-danger day is a day with 100-hour fuel moisture less than the historical 20th percentile.



# Greenery and the urban heat island effect

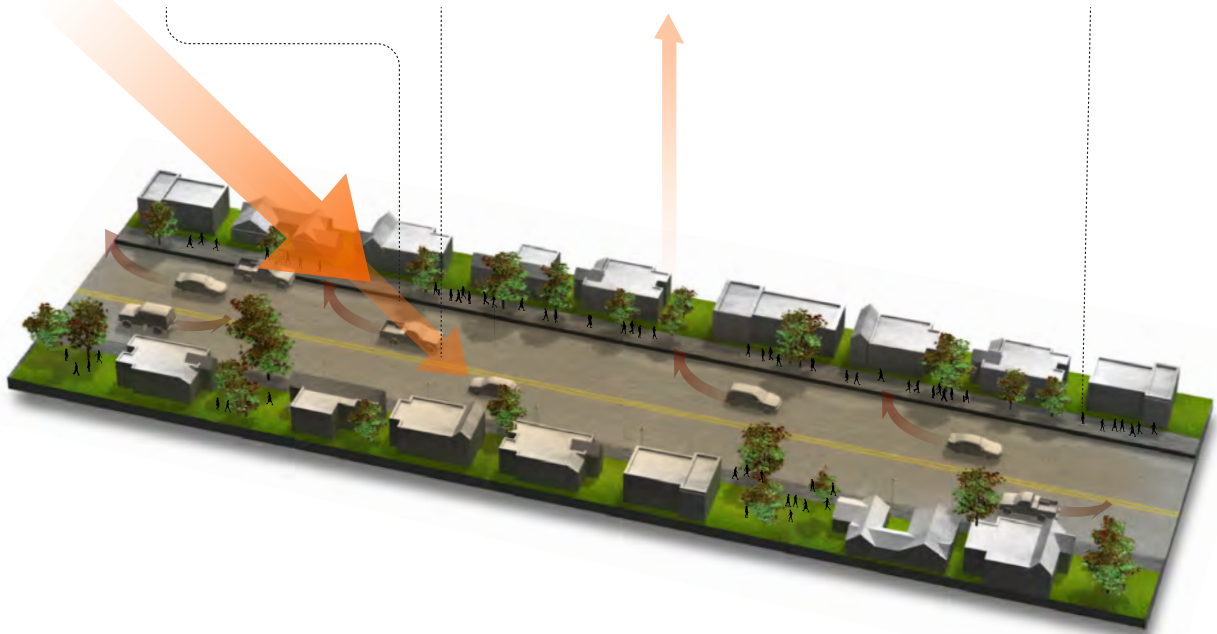
## No Greenery

- 1** Solar energy is emitted by the sun.
- 2** Heat is absorbed and retained by dark, urban surfaces.
- 3** Heat is slowly emitted throughout the day and evening, increasing temperatures.
- 4** Increased temperatures discourage pedestrian traffic, negatively impacting local economy.



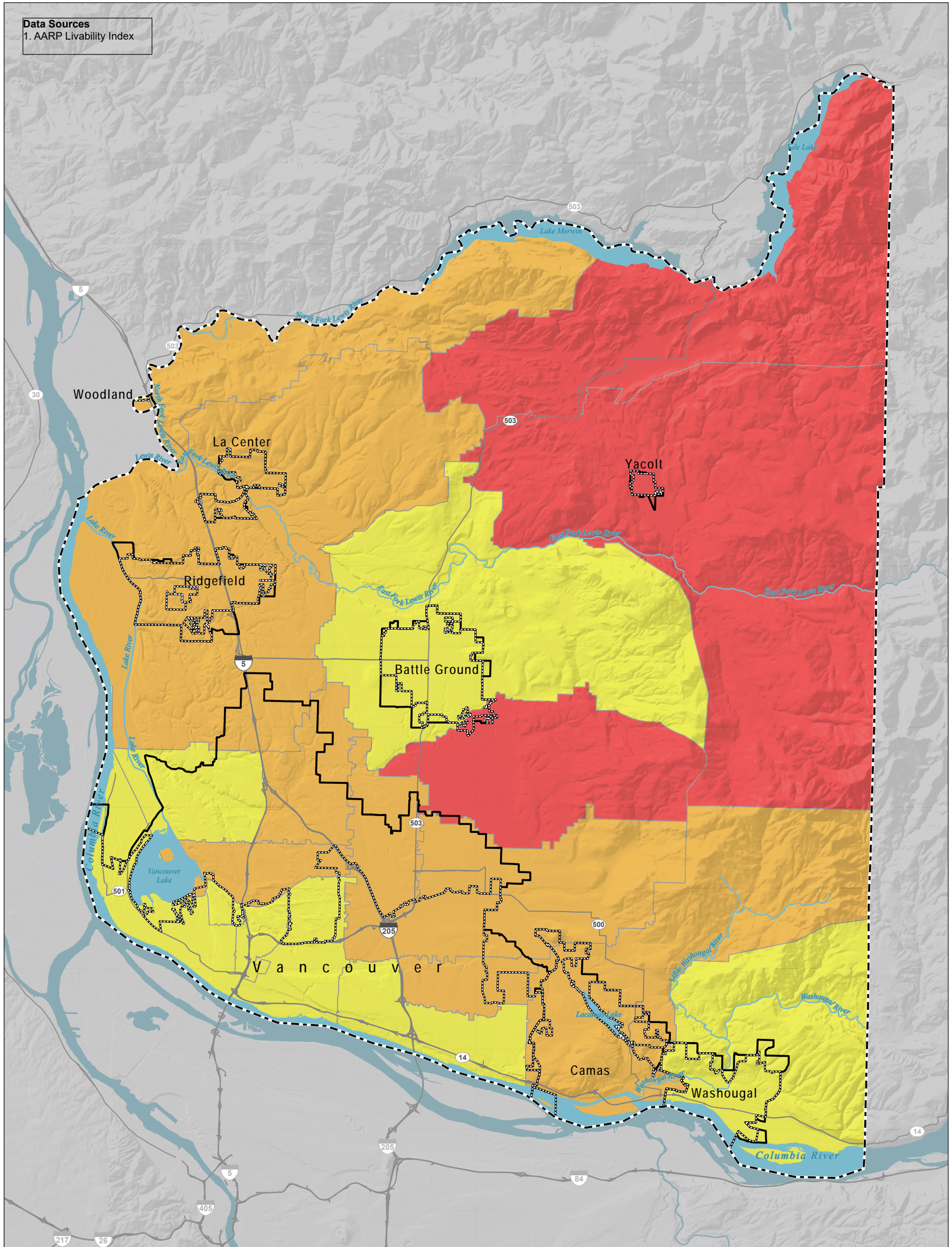
## With Greenery

- 1** Solar energy emitted by the sun partially absorbed by trees.
- 2** Light surfaces absorb, retain less heat.
- 3** Auto emissions partially absorbed by trees.
- 4** Cleaner air, cooler weather creates a pedestrian-friendly environment positively impacting local businesses.



**Figure 6-2** Urban Heat Island Effect





**Data Sources**  
1. AARP Livability Index

**FIGURE 6.3**

**Access to Parks**  
Aging Readiness Plan 2023



**NOTE:** Information shown on this map was collected from several sources. Clark County accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies that may be present.



**KEY**

Number of Parks within 0.5 Miles <sup>1</sup>

- 0-1
- 1-2
- 2-4

**All Other Features**

- Incorporated Area
- County Boundary
- Urban Growth Area

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## STRESSORS

Large fires can trigger evacuation orders, which is especially pertinent for older adults who live in congregate housing, may not have a car or driver's license, and may have certain access and functional needs that require assistance during an evacuation. Older adults can also require additional assistance in recovering from a destructive fire. Being on a fixed or low income makes unexpected expenses difficult or impossible to deal with. **Figure 6-4** shows the percentages of the total Clark County and Washington State populations made up of different vulnerable subpopulations. The proportion of people with a disability is especially high for people 65 and older, which emphasizes the importance of accessible hazard response programs and pre-planning.

## SHOCKS

Different mapping data can help to determine areas at risk of fire. Historic fire patterns are one consideration for future occurrences, as topography and wind patterns influence fire behavior. According to Washington Department of Natural Resources data, two large wildland fires have occurred in Clark County since 1973.<sup>16</sup> The Hilltop fire occurred in 2010 in the eastern portion of the county, burning 134 acres. In 2020, the Fruit Valley fire burned 166 acres between Vancouver and Fruit Valley. See **Figure 6-5** for these historic fire perimeters. Another consideration is burn probability, or the risk of a large wildland fire burning a given location. Much of the county has no risk or very low risk, but there are portions of rural eastern Clark County with moderate risk (as seen on **Figure 6-6**). Approximately 43 households reside in the moderate fire probability areas of the county.

## Storming and Flooding

Storms can involve intense precipitation over a short period of time and can be accompanied by heavy wind, thunder, and lightning. Intense precipitation can cause flooding when soil is saturated and drainage systems are blocked or overwhelmed. Dam failure can also cause or contribute to flooding.

## FORECAST

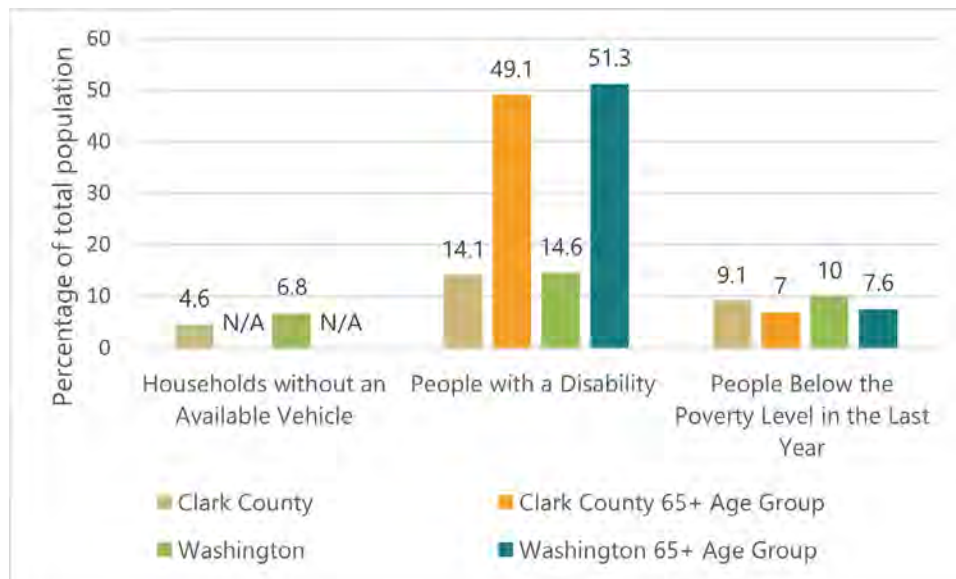
Clark County's total annual precipitation has historically (1980–2009) been 17.8 inches. When accounting for climate change under a **high-emissions scenario**, Clark County is projected to see between a 4% and 13% (0.7- to 2.3-inch) increase in total annual average precipitation between 2020 and 2049.<sup>17</sup>

16 Washington Department of Natural Resources, Wildfire Division. 2021. "Washington Large Fires 1973-2021." [https://gis.dnr.wa.gov/site3/rest/services/Public\\_Wildfire/WADNR\\_PUBLIC\\_WD\\_WildFire\\_Data/MapServer/0](https://gis.dnr.wa.gov/site3/rest/services/Public_Wildfire/WADNR_PUBLIC_WD_WildFire_Data/MapServer/0).

17 Salathé, E.P., L.R. Leung, Y. Qian, and Y. Zhang. 2010. "Regional Climate Model Projections for the State of Washington." *Climatic Change* 102(1–2): 51–75. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-010-9849-y>.



**Figure 6-4. Evacuation and Recovery Vulnerability**



Along with more total precipitation throughout the year, precipitation amounts during storms are projected to increase. The amount of precipitation occurring during **heavy storms** is projected to increase by 10% and the amount of precipitation during **extreme storms** is projected to increase by 3%.<sup>18</sup> This would increase the magnitude of flooding, meaning areas that flood regularly would expand without changes to the natural or built environment. A majority of climate models project increases in precipitation for winter, spring, and fall, with decreases in summer precipitation.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, warmer temperatures in the winter and spring are projected to create earlier spring snow melt, earlier peak stream flows, and greater potential for flooding.<sup>20</sup>

## STRESSORS

Flooding is the second most deadly hazard in the United States, mostly related to drowning. When floods occur, evacuations may be necessary. As discussed in the wildland fire section, evacuation

### HIGH EMISSIONS SCENARIO

*This refers to RCP 8.5, a climate model that assumes business-as-usual greenhouse gas emissions over time, while other models project reductions in emissions. Of the available climate models, outcomes do not differ significantly prior to 2050 and this plan analyzes data prior to 2050.*

### HEAVY STORMS

*Heavy storms are considered storms that have the most precipitation in one day over a 2-year span..*

### EXTREME STORMS

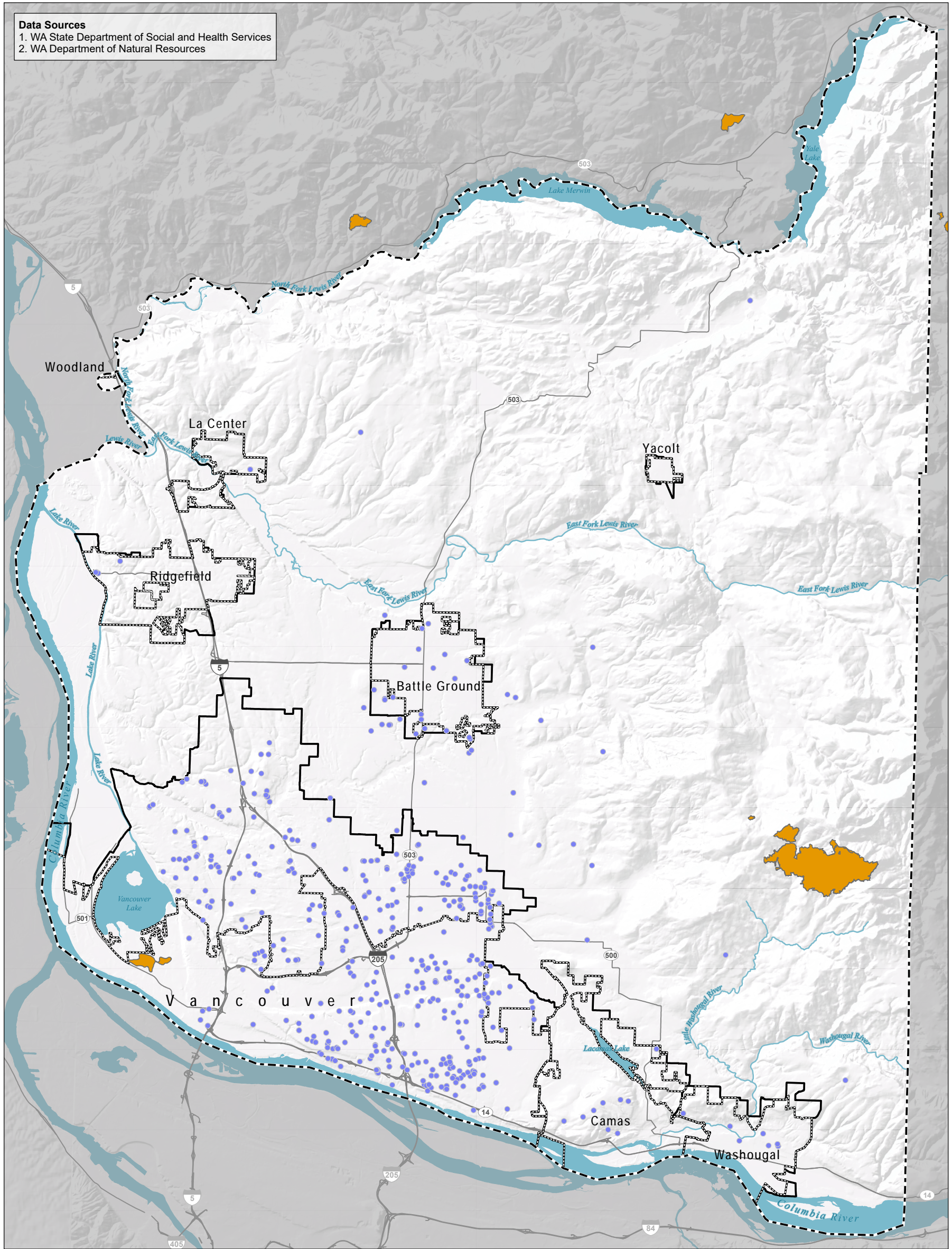
*Extreme storms are considered storms that cause the highest amount of precipitation in one day over a given 25-year span.*

<sup>18</sup> Salathé et al. 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Rogers, M., and G.S. Mauer. 2021. "Pacific Northwest Climate Projection Tool." University of Washington Climate Impacts Group.

<sup>20</sup> Washington Department of Ecology. 2015. "Inventory of Dams in the State of Washington." Publication No. 94-16. <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/94016.pdf>.





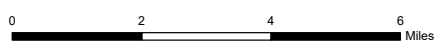
**Data Sources**  
 1. WA State Department of Social and Health Services  
 2. WA Department of Natural Resources

**FIGURE 6-5**  
**Fire Perimeters**  
 Aging Readiness Plan 2023

- KEY**
- Long Term Residential Care Facilities<sup>1</sup>
  - Washington Large Fires 1973-2021<sup>2</sup>
- All Other Features**
- ▭ Incorporated Area
  - ▭ Urban Growth Area
  - - - County Boundary

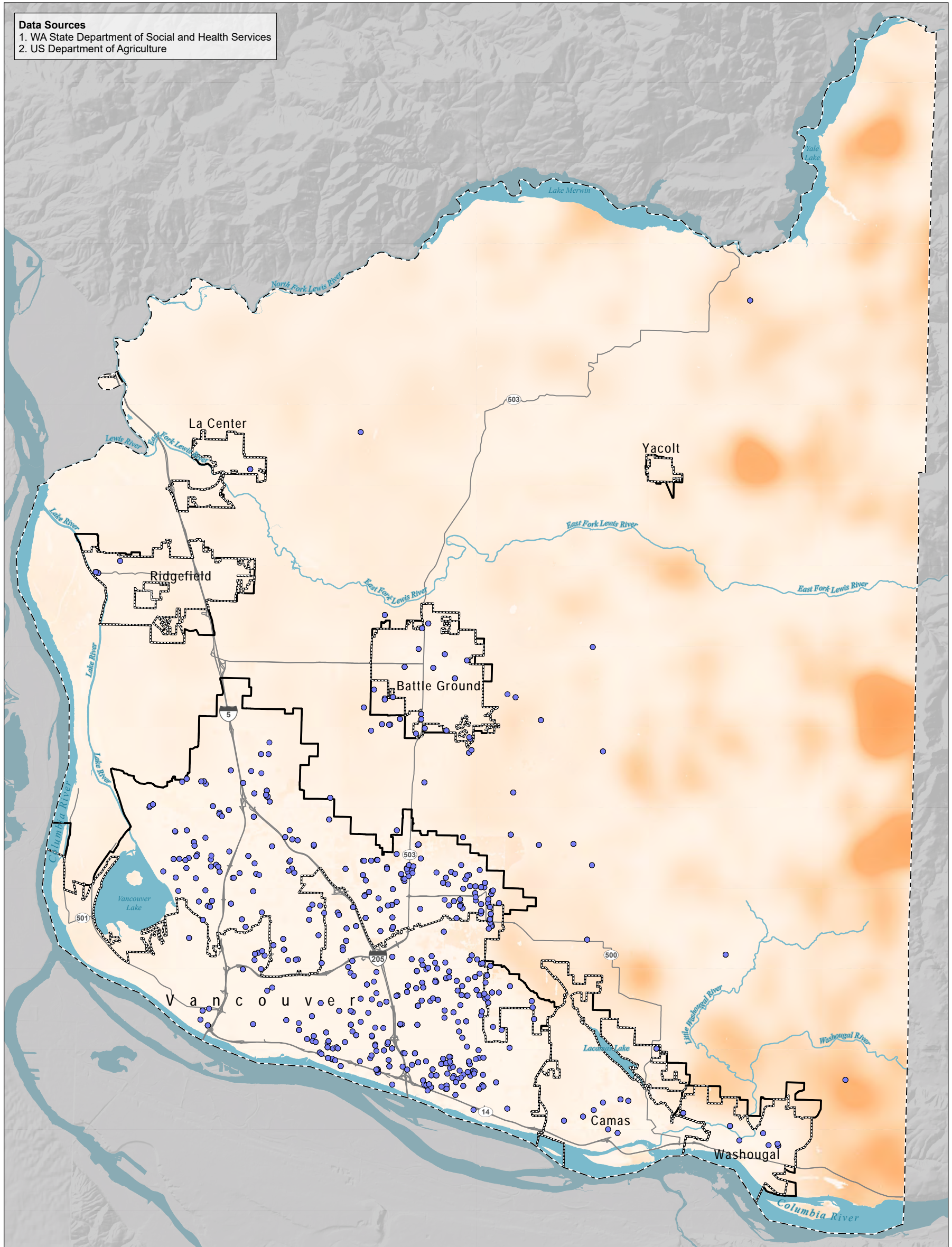


**NOTE:** Information shown on this map was collected from several sources. Clark County accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies that may be present.



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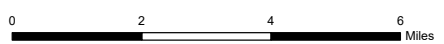
**Data Sources**  
 1. WA State Department of Social and Health Services  
 2. US Department of Agriculture

**FIGURE 6-6**  
**Burn Probability**

Aging Readiness Plan 2023



**NOTE:** Information shown on this map was collected from several sources. Clark County accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies that may be present.



**KEY**

- Long Term Residential Care Facilities<sup>1</sup>
- Burn Probability<sup>2</sup>**
  - Higher Risk
  - Low Risk
- All Other Features**
  - Incorporated Area
  - Urban Growth Area
  - County Boundary

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can be especially difficult for older adults who may have access and functional needs, and can require facility-specific planning for congregate living facilities. **Figure 6-7** displays assisted living facilities in Clark County relative to Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, Flood Hazard Areas. After a flood occurs, structures often require repairs and removal of mold. Necessary repairs can be difficult to deal with for older adults with low or fixed incomes. Figure 6-4 shows the percentage of older adults experiencing poverty or with access and functional needs that make response and recovery difficult.

## SHOCKS

FEMA designates flood hazard areas in the United States based on the chance of a 100-year or 500-year storm inundating an area. Figure 6-8 displays FEMA's flood hazard areas in the county. Flood zones in Clark County are along rivers and lakes and in low-lying areas. As climate change causes increased intensity of storms (outlined in the forecast above), hazard areas will likely expand.<sup>21</sup>

### 100 & 500 YEAR STORMS

*A 100-year storm has a 1% chance to occur in a given year and a 500-year storm has a 0.2% chance to occur in a given year.*

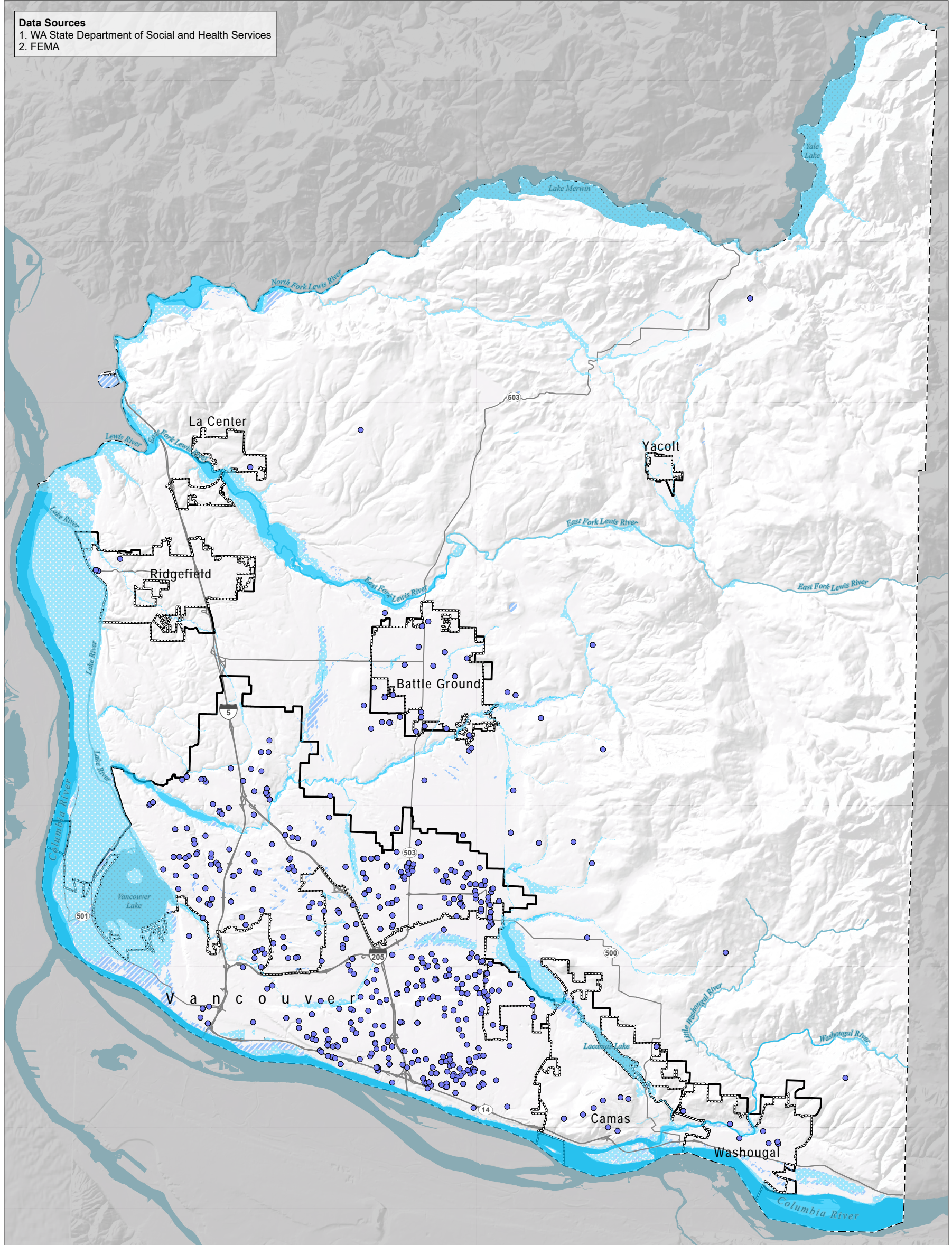
One additional flood consideration is dam failure. Dam failures are infrequent but generally occur alongside other hazard events such as heavy precipitation or seismic activity. Failures can occur in a few hours or in a matter of minutes. In Clark County there are 29 dams that hold 10 acre-feet of water or more. Dams are classified based on the potential consequences of a dam failure, with a high-hazard dam presenting the threat of extensive losses to life, utilities, structures, or the environment.

Four of the County's dams are considered High Hazard Class including Merwin Dam, Curtis Dam, Erikson Dam, and Tri-Mountain Estates Dam. Some portions of jurisdictions in Clark County are at risk of damages due to dam failure, with Woodland, Vancouver, and unincorporated areas projected to see the most widespread damage under a dam failure scenario. Over 90 critical facilities would sustain damages under a dam failure scenario including 5 emergency service providers, 5 energy facilities, 27 transportation facilities, and 31 water and sanitation facilities.<sup>22</sup> Dam conditions vary over time and are continually assessed and rated by the state Department of Ecology to determine maintenance needs.

21 AECOM. 2013. "Climate Change Report." June 11, 2013. [https://aecom.com/content/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Climate\\_Change\\_Report\\_AECOM\\_2013-06-11.pdf](https://aecom.com/content/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Climate_Change_Report_AECOM_2013-06-11.pdf).

22 Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency. 2017. "Clark Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan." <https://www.cresa911.org/173/Hazard-Mitigation>.



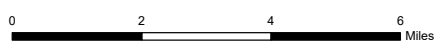


**Data Sources**  
 1. WA State Department of Social and Health Services  
 2. FEMA

**FIGURE 6-7**  
**Assisted Living Facility Flood Risk**  
 Aging Readiness Plan 2023



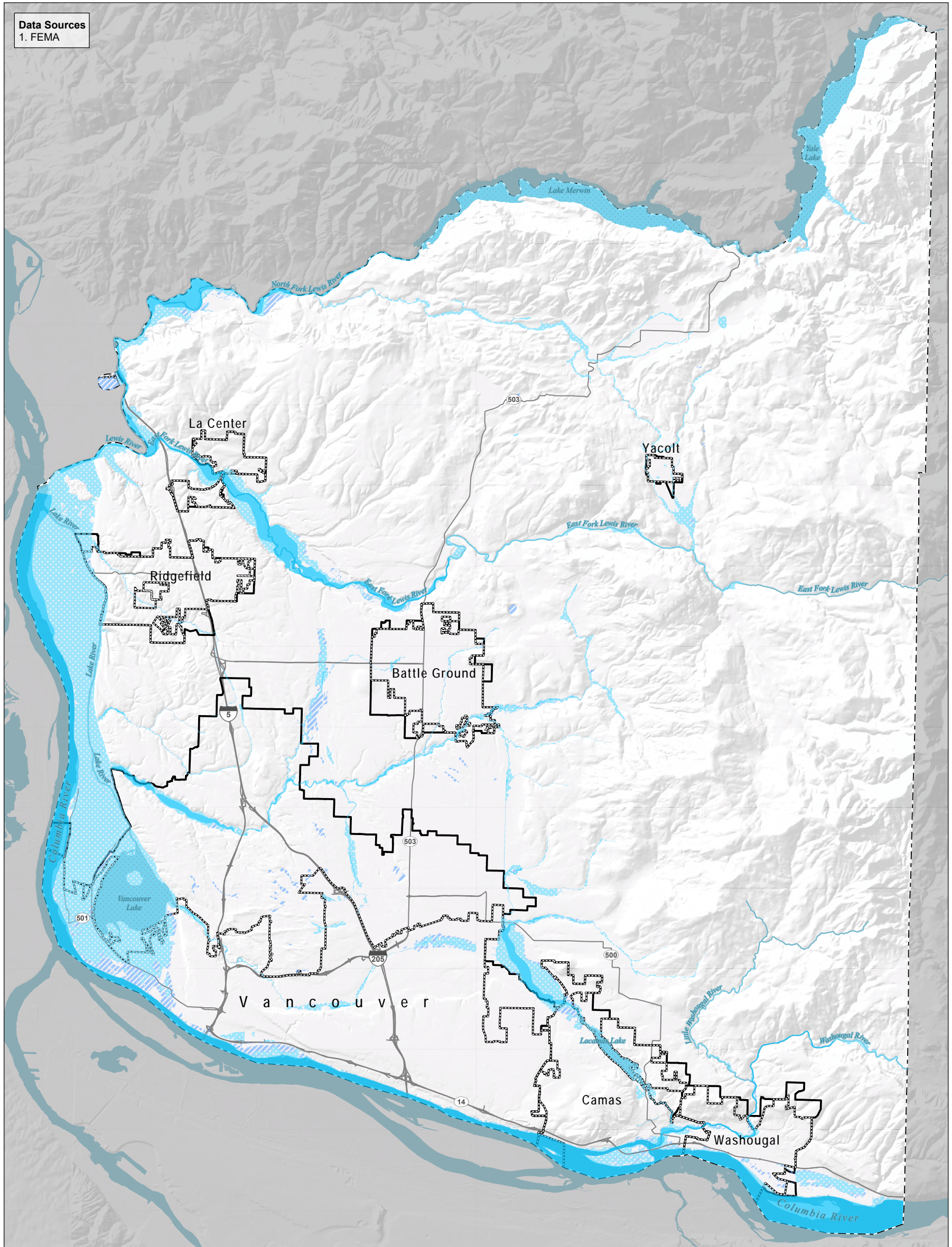
**NOTE:** Information shown on this map was collected from several sources. Clark County accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies that may be present.



- KEY**
- Long Term Residential Care Facilities<sup>1</sup>
  - FEMA Flood Zone Designation<sup>2</sup>**
    - Floodway
    - Floodway Fringe
    - 500 Year Flood Area
  - All Other Features**
    - ▭ Incorporated Area
    - ▭ Urban Growth Area
    - ▭ County Boundary

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**Data Sources**  
1. FEMA

**FIGURE 6.8**  
**FEMA Flood Hazards**  
Aging Readiness Plan 2023



**NOTE:** Information shown on this map was collected from several sources. Clark County accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies that may be present.



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**KEY**

**FEMA Flood Zone Designation <sup>1</sup>**

- Floodway
- Floodway Fringe
- 500 Year Flood Area

**All Other Features**

- Incorporated Area
- Urban Growth Area
- County Boundary





## Seismic and Geologic Hazards

Seismic and geologic hazards are interrelated hazards that involve disruption of the ground surface. Seismic hazards include ground shaking and surface rupture as a result of earthquakes. Surface rupture occurs along faults, while ground shaking can impact buildings from miles away. Geologic hazards involve soil movement and can come in the form of landslides or liquefaction. Landslides occur when soil, rocks, and debris slide down a slope. This can lead to casualties and damage to structures downslope. Liquefaction occurs when earthquakes cause soils to shake and lose their solid state, acting as liquid and causing potential structure damage.

Depending on the seismic or geologic hazard and when it occurs, older adults may be more at risk of injury than the general populace. Sudden ground shaking may be more likely to result in an older adult taking a fall. Similarly, responding to a landslide may take more time for an older adult due to potential mobility issues.

### FORECAST

#### Seismic Hazards

Predicting exact timing of seismic hazards is not possible, but there are scenarios that can be considered to help understand the potential impacts of these events when they do occur. These are detailed in the Shocks subsection, below.

#### Geologic Hazards

Geologic hazards are often triggered or heightened by another hazard event, such as an earthquake or heavy rains. These hazards can cause landslides by dislodging soil and rocks along slopes. Furthermore, wildland fires can increase the risk of landslides in a recently burned area, because vegetation that would normally help with slope stability is removed during the fire. As such, the projected increase in likelihood and intensity of fire and flooding can increase the risk of landslides. Liquefaction, however, is caused by earthquakes. This means the occurrence of liquefaction is unpredictable. These hazards are described in more depth in the Wildland Fire and Flooding Forecast subsections.





## STRESSORS

The main stressor for seismic and geologic hazards is related to the resilience of structures when exposed to ground movement. Some buildings, known as **unreinforced masonry buildings**, are especially at risk of collapse in an earthquake. As of October 2018, 249 unreinforced masonry buildings are present or suspected in Clark County.<sup>23</sup> Washington State adopted a statewide building code in 1975; buildings built after this point have a higher level of structural integrity.<sup>24</sup> The structural integrity of buildings built prior to 1975 cannot be generalized. To better understand the structural integrity of a specific building, a site-specific investigation may be necessary.

During and after seismic or geologic hazard events, the response and recovery needs often mimic those of a flood or fire.

## SHOCKS

### Seismic Hazards

Clark County is susceptible to major earthquakes from the Cascadia Subduction Zone. In 1700, a magnitude 9 Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake occurred and lowered coastal elevations as much as 6 feet. If a magnitude 9 Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake were to occur again, moderate potential damage is projected in the western portion of the county including Ridgefield and Woodland (see **Figure 6-9**). The rest of the county would be projected to experience light potential damage under this scenario. The county is also susceptible to earthquakes from shallower faults, such as the Portland Hills Fault to the south, and has experienced a number of earthquakes of magnitudes between 5 and 7 in the past century. The southwestern corner of the county, including a portion of Vancouver, may experience moderate potential damage as a result of seismic activity from the Portland Hills Fault.<sup>25</sup>

### UNREINFORCED MASONRY BUILDINGS

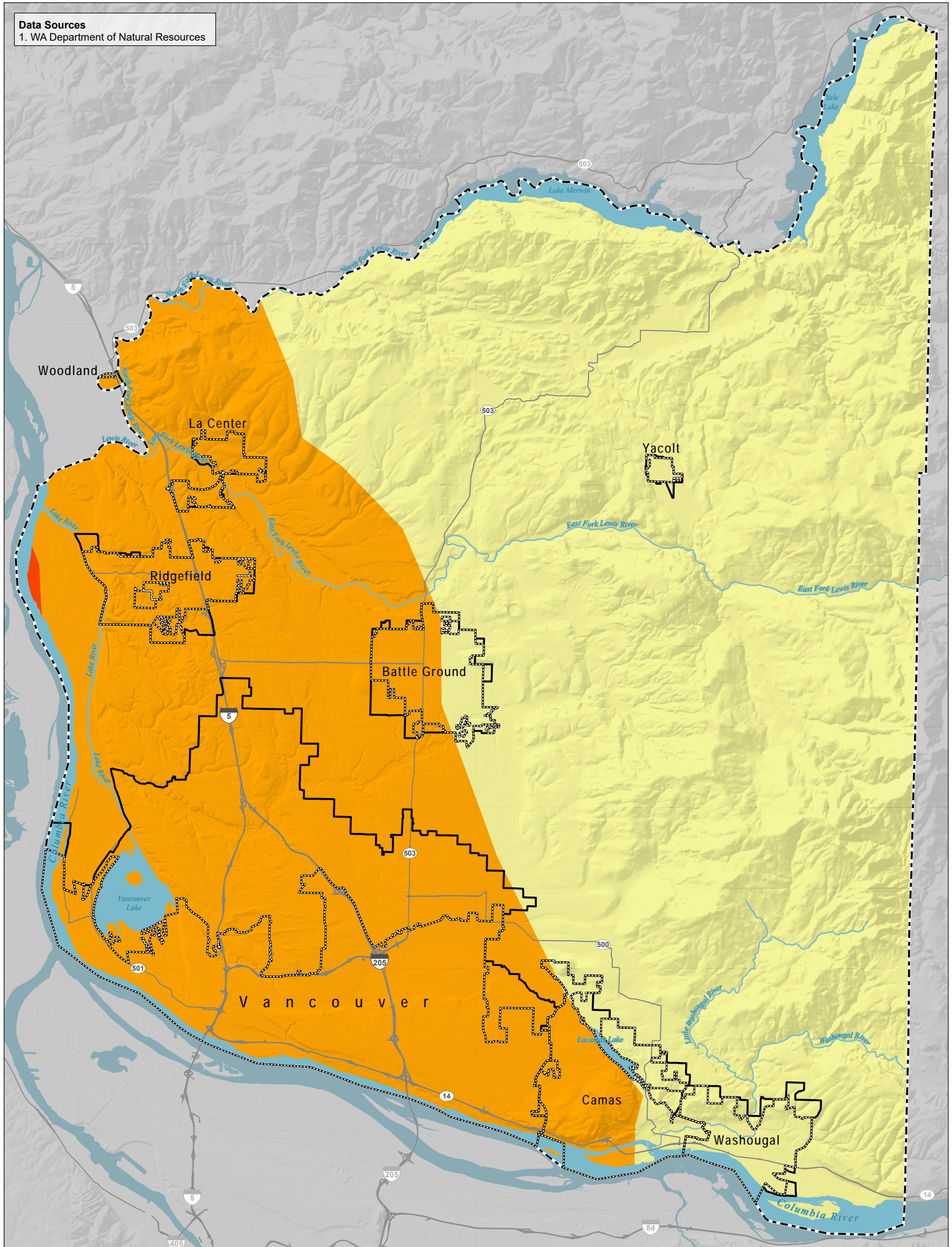
*An unreinforced building has walls or other structures made of wood, brick, cinderblock, tiles, adobe, or other masonry material that is not braced by reinforcing material, such as rebar in concrete or cinderblock, and is especially at risk of collapse in an earthquake.*

23 Washington Department of Commerce. 2018. "Unreinforced Masonry Building Inventory." <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/programs/research-services/unreinforced-masonry-building-inventory/>.

24 Ash, C., E. Fischer, and K. Goettel. 2017. "Washington State Building Code History." [https://www.eeri.org/images/sesi/WashingtonBuildingCodeHistory-Rev\\_2-09-2017.pdf](https://www.eeri.org/images/sesi/WashingtonBuildingCodeHistory-Rev_2-09-2017.pdf).

25 Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency 2017.



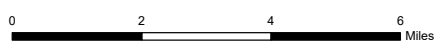


**Data Sources**  
1. WA Department of Natural Resources

**FIGURE 6-9**  
**Cascadia 9.0 Peak Ground Acceleration**  
Aging Readiness Plan 2023



**NOTE:** Information shown on this map was collected from several sources. Clark County accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies that may be present.



**KEY**

**Shaking Intensity (MMI value)<sup>1</sup>**

- 6 - Strong
- 7 - Very Strong
- 8 - Severe

**All Other Features**

- Incorporated Area
- Urban Growth Area
- County Boundary

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## Geologic Hazards

Geologic hazard risk is related to soil types and other factors like slope steepness and presence of water. In Clark County there is moderate to high liquefaction risk along bodies of water, especially in the southern and western portions of the county (see **Figure 6-10**). Landslide risk is more spread across the county, although the most common risk areas are along streams, creeks, and rivers (see **Figure 6-11**).

## Volcanic Hazards

Clark County is near the Cascade Range of volcanoes, which extends north into British Columbia and south into Northern California. Two volcanoes, Mount St. Helens and Mount Hood, are relatively near Clark County and present some level of risk.

There are several types of hazards associated with volcanic activity and only a few are relevant to Clark County (described below). Refer to the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan to learn more about other types of hazards associated with volcanoes.

### Pyroclastic flows and surges

Pyroclastic flows are avalanches of hot rock and gas traveling up to 200 mph to low-lying areas. These are usually associated with the primary eruption.

### Lava flows

Lava flows can destroy property or infrastructure but they are not considered a major risk to human life because they are generally slow moving. This hazard can cause cascading hazards like forest fires, flooding, lahars, and debris avalanches.

### Ash fall

Ash is made up of rock, mineral, and glass fragments of varying sizes that accumulate in the air during an eruption. Where ash fall occurs is dependent on wind speed, particle size, and precipitation.

### Lahars

Lahars are fast-moving water and rock debris flows that originate from volcanoes. Eruptions, major storms, or earthquakes can trigger these flows. They generally are channeled into waterways and can destroy forests, structures, or infrastructure in their way.

## FORECAST

Most volcanic eruptions are preceded by earthquake activity, ground deformation, and gas emissions. These short-term indicators can provide scientists with hours or days of warning; however, months or



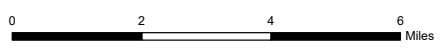
**Data Sources**  
1. WA Department of Natural Resources

**FIGURE 6-10**  
**Liquefaction Susceptibility**  
Aging Readiness Plan 2023

KEY	
Liquefaction Susceptibility <sup>1</sup>	All Other Features
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Moderate to High	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px dashed black;"></span> Incorporated Area
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Low to Moderate	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px solid black;"></span> Urban Growth Area
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightyellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Very Low to Low	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px dashed black;"></span> County Boundary
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:paleyellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Very Low	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:green; border:1px solid black;"></span> Bedrock	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:brown; border:1px solid black;"></span> Peat	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Water	

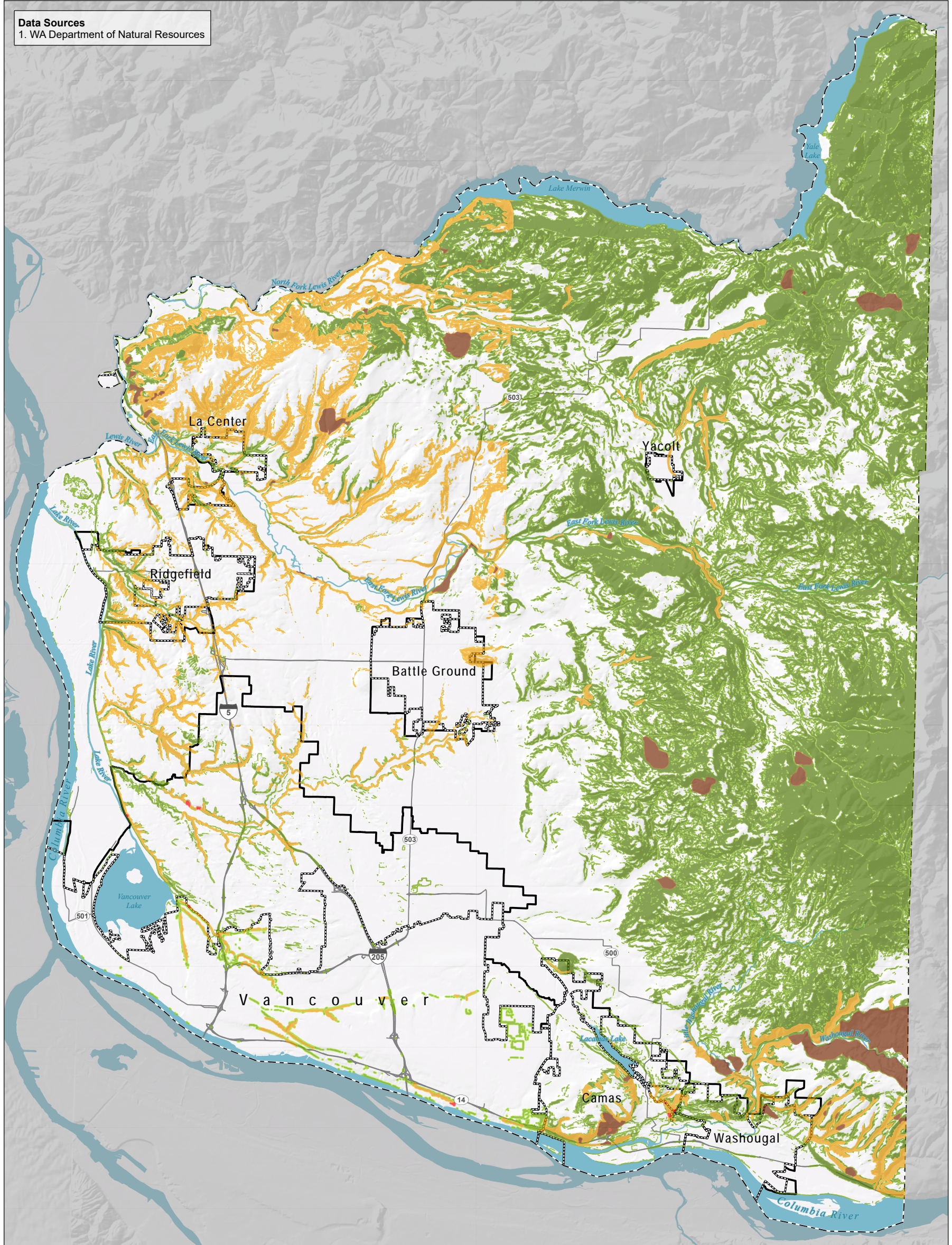


**NOTE:** Information shown on this map was collected from several sources. Clark County accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies that may be present.



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**Data Sources**  
1. WA Department of Natural Resources

**FIGURE 6-11**  
**Landslide Hazard Areas**  
Aging Readiness Plan 2023

KEY	
Steep Slopes and Landslide Hazard Areas <sup>1</sup>	All Other Features
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Areas of Historic or Active Landslides	<span style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;"> </span> Incorporated Area
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Areas of Potential Instability	<span style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;"> </span> County Boundary
<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Areas of Older Landslide Debris	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> </span> Urban Growth Area
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Slopes > 15%	
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> Slopes > 25%	



**NOTE:** Information shown on this map was collected from several sources. Clark County accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracies that may be present.



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years of advance warning is extremely rare. Monitoring networks for Mount Hood and Mount St. Helens exist and are maintained by the U.S. Geological Survey and Pacific Northwest Seismograph Network at the University of Washington.

Historically, the Cascade Range volcanoes average nearly two eruptions per century, and five eruptions have occurred in the past 150 years. The most recent major eruption occurred at Mount St. Helens on May 18, 1980.

## **STRESSORS**

Volcanic eruptions can put strains on multiple aspects of society, including infrastructure and public health.

Ash fall can be a direct stressor to physical and mental health. Exposure to ash can cause strain to lungs and eyes. It can also cause individuals to feel stressed and panicked. For older adults with preexisting respiratory issues, these effects can turn into a major health issue.

Ash fall can cause significant damage to infrastructure and systems that people rely on. For example, ash fall can significantly damage systems that require air filtration, such as heating and air conditioning systems, combustion systems, electronic devices, and other mechanical equipment. This can lead to compounding issues such as a high demand on the labor force and first responders, as well as additional stress on older adults who are already at higher risk of physiological issues from extreme heat or cold. Ash fall can disrupt transportation systems by reducing visibility and accumulating on roadways. This can cause older adults to lose their chosen form of mobility if transit systems are impacted or if they do not feel comfortable driving in poor conditions. Ash can also become wet, which can cause electrical shorts or structural failures if it accumulates heavily on rooftops.

## **SHOCKS**

Pyroclastic flows and lahars are the main volcanic hazards that could cause shocks to small portions of Clark County because of potential Mount Hood or Mount St. Helens eruptions.

In the event of a Mount St. Helens eruption, pyroclastic flows and lahars are possible in the farthest northeastern portion of the County. This hazard area has no structures or residences located within it, making its risk to older adults in Clark County minimal. Volcanic mudflows could travel down the north and south forks of the Toutle River, and the Kalama River, outside of Clark County.

A potential Mount Hood eruption presents flooding and bank erosion risk in southern Clark County along the Columbia River at Camas and Washougal. These issues would be caused by lahars and debris impacting the flows of the Sandy and Hood Rivers upstream. This type of event would take more than



3.5 hours to reach Clark County, providing some warning time to first responders and those requiring evacuation. Approximately 3,200 people live in this hazard zone and would potentially require evacuation. As discussed earlier, older adults can encounter multiple issues with evacuation including transportation and mobility issues causing delays to evacuation or functional needs requiring specific amenities at temporary shelters.

Maps of these hazard areas are included in the Clark County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

## **Existing Programs, Resources, and Responsibilities**

Agencies and jurisdictions across Clark County have various requirements and roles to plan for and address emergencies. Emergency management efforts are regionally coordinated by CRESA. Their services include 9-1-1 dispatch, technology and communication, and emergency management. CRESA works closely with local law enforcement, fire/emergency medical service providers, and other local and state agencies.

### **CLARK REGIONAL NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN**

The Clark Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan is a plan that assesses hazards and specifies policies, programs, and projects that can reduce destruction from hazards. This plan responds to federal requirements and establishes eligibility for funding under FEMA grant programs. Natural hazards assessed within this plan include dam failures, droughts, earthquakes, floods, landslides, severe weather, volcanos, and wildland fires.

### **COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan is a framework for cross-jurisdictional mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities. It provides details on how a variety of sectors and services integrate into managing emergency issues and lays out the roles and responsibilities of the different participating organizations.

Sectors related to emergency management that are covered in this plan include the following:

- transportation
- communications, information systems, and warning
- public works and engineering
- fire fighting
- emergency management
- mass care, housing, and human services
- resource support
- public health and medical services



- search and rescue
- hazardous material response
- agriculture, natural resources, and animal rescue
- energy
- public safety, law enforcement, and security
- long term community recovery
- public information

## **MOUNT HOOD AND MOUNT ST. HELENS COORDINATION PLANS**

Mount Hood and Mount St. Helens each have plans that coordinate actions that agencies must take to minimize loss of life and damages before, during, and after volcanic hazards occur. These plans detail the agencies, responsibilities, and communication pathways that are needed for coordinated response. They also describe important components of hazard response like staged alert levels, which correspond to different planned agency actions and help to deliver the public with timely and accurate notifications. Both of these plans are consistent with the National Incident Management System and complement local, regional, and state emergency plans.

The Mount St. Helens Coordination Plan is maintained by the Mount St. Helens–Mount Adams Planning Working Group, which includes all agencies with responsibilities in the planning area. Clark County is represented on this working group by Clark County’s Sheriff’s Office and CRESA. The Washington Emergency Management Division assembles the working group to review suggested plan updates annually and in the aftermath of a significant incident. Coordinated updates occur every 5 years.

The Mount Hood Coordination Plan is maintained by the Mount Hood Facilitating Committee, which includes members from each jurisdiction with statutory responsibility for emergency management. Clark County’s representative on the facilitating committee is CRESA. The Oregon Office of Emergency Management assembles the facilitating committee for annual plan review and updates.





## VISION AND STRATEGY

This section explains how to promote emergency preparedness in Clark County. It includes goals for Clark County and how they were generated from community feedback, as well as specific strategies for each goal to meet the vision. Each strategy includes a description, score, interested parties, key terms, and resources. Scores are based on the progress made on a specific strategy to this point throughout the county. Interested parties include all likely involved implementing parties, such as potential lead agencies, partners, and organizations that may offer resources. Some strategies also include case studies from around Clark County.

# How to Read a Strategy

The following text explains the anatomy of each strategy and how Clark County and cities and towns within the County could implement the ARP.

## Title - This explains the intent of the strategy

**Score:** For existing strategies included in the original 2012 plan, this explains how well the strategy has been implemented in the past decade. See detailed 'Strategy Score Description' on page 5.

**Case Study:** An important example of this strategy implemented well locally.

**Data:** Which data was used to score the strategy

**Measure Description:** This explains the precise action that the County, cities, or partner agencies need to take to implement

**Type:** This explains the type of government or agency action this strategy is. Strategies of the same type are scored consistently.

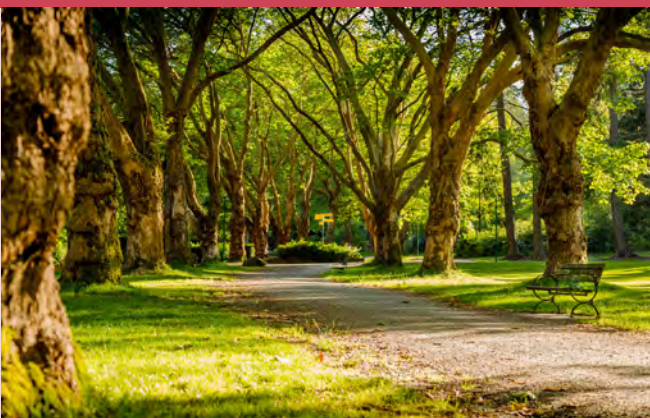
**Interested Parties:** Government, Agency, or Non-profit implementors

**Key Terms:** Important definitions that should be used consistently

**Resources:** County documents and nation-wide examples

**Priority:** Each goal has one priority strategy. Priority strategies should be implemented first because they were identified by the community and/or lays the groundwork for supporting strategies.

## Goal EP-1: Mitigate the impacts of potential hazards before they occur



**What We Heard:** Community members felt that special attention should be given to preparing critical facilities for natural hazards such as seismically retrofitting and locating said facilities outside of known hazard zones. In addition, stakeholders wanted to improve vegetation in the county by creating various tree standards and diversifying forested areas.

**AARP LI Measure:** None

# Strategy EP-1.1: Reduce the transmission of airborne diseases

**Score:** New

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Public facilities with filters

**Measure Description:** All new and existing public facilities within Clark County should install air purifiers to reduce the transmission of airborne diseases like COVID-19. Preparing public facilities to better mitigate the risk of airborne diseases can reduce the impact of such diseases on Clark County residents.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County Public Health: Investigation and Response (Infectious Disease Prevention & Control Program); Clark County; Clark County cities

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy EP-1.2: Manage the urban forest to enhance public health goals for older adults

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [Urban Heat Island Effect](#); [Science Direct Species and Diversity](#)

**Case Study:** The **City of Vancouver's Urban Forestry** resources provide community members with guidance on how to preserve, manage, and enhance existing trees and vegetation. The city also provides various other resources about tree permitting, regulations, best care practices, and information on the benefits of trees.

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** Adopt public forestry standards that maintain diversity, protect tree canopy on private property, and increase tree standards in land uses associated with the urban heat island effect. Review street tree species lists and standards to minimize damage to sidewalks.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County Public Works; Clark County cities; Clark County Community Development; Clark County Community Planning

**Key Terms:** None

# Strategy EP-1.3: Work with Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency, or CRESA, on hazard mitigation and emergency preparedness to ensure older adults are well integrated into emergency preparedness planning efforts

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [CRESA Hazard Mitigation](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** City/Town Survey

**Measure Description:** When drafting new plans, including requests for proposals, for hazard mitigation and preparation plans and comprehensive planning, Clark County and local cities should work with CRESA to integrate best practices and opportunities into those plans.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County; Clark County Public Health: Investigation and Response (Emergency Preparedness & Response program); Clark County cities; CRESA

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**



# Goal EP-2: Prepare for natural hazards through education and improved communication



**What We Heard:** Community members voiced that existing alerts are hard to navigate and may be inaccessible to some (e.g., people who are blind, non-English speakers). In addition, it is sometimes hard to interpret the severity of alerts and determine next steps. Lastly, stakeholders felt like rural and disabled households are especially vulnerable during emergencies and wanted to see more programs designed to help them prepare and respond to hazards.

**AARP LI Measure:** None

## Strategy EP-2.1: Develop older adult-specific alerts and communication channels

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [CDC Emergency Preparedness of Older Adults](#); [5 Steps to Neighborhood Preparedness](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New program participants

**Measure Description:** Create systems that inform those who do not rely on technology, such as a neighborhood door-knock plan. Implement a severity rating system that informs older adults when a major natural hazard event is imminent.

**Type:** Partner Program

**Interested Parties:** CRESA; County neighborhood associations; City of Vancouver neighborhood associations; homeowners' associations; Clark County Public Health; 211info

**Key Terms:** Door-knock programs establish volunteers who check in with vulnerable populations in an emergency situation.

## Strategy EP-2.2: Encourage neighborhood associations and homeowners associations to work with Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency, or CRESA, to educate community members about emergency preparedness and implementing local programs.

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [CRESA Public Education Request](#); [CRESA Emergency Preparedness](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New educational programs

**Measure Description:** Encourage neighborhood level preparedness by partnering with CRESA. This could include presentation, implementation of phone trees, and other neighborhood connections with the goal of connecting and preparing older adults.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** County Neighborhood Associations; City of Vancouver Neighborhood Associations; Homeowners' Associations; CRESA

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy EP-2.3: Connect caregivers and interested community members to educational resources about hazard preparedness

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [Clark County CERT](#); [Washington Military Department Emergency Management Division](#); [Vial of Life](#); [Fire Safety Checklist Caregivers of Older Adults](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Resources Distributed

**Measure Description:** All members of the community, but especially those who care for others, should be equipped with knowledge on how to sufficiently prepare for natural hazards. Caregivers should develop specific plans with the people who they care for on what they will do leading up to, during, and after a natural hazard event.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** CRESA; Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy EP-2.4: Promote the development of a voluntary Vulnerable Population Registration for emergency service providers

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [Broward County Vulnerable Population Registry](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New registries

**Measure Description:** The County should develop a registration of vulnerable populations for emergency service providers to aid to people who cannot help themselves during a hazard event. Emergency service providers can then help individuals who may not be able to communicate to others for help.

**Type:** Partner Program

**Interested Parties:** CRESA; Clark County Sheriff's Office; city police departments; fire departments; other emergency service providers

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy EP-2.5: Equip community and other evacuation centers with generators and refrigerators to use during emergencies

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [Generator for Emergency Response](#); [ADA Checklist for Emergency Shelters](#); [Guidebook for Cooling Centers](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Upgraded Facilities

**Measure Description:** Install refrigerators at evacuation centers so they can host medication that requires refrigeration. Provide generators at evacuation centers in case power is lost during an emergency.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County; Clark County cities; libraries; Clark County Public Health: Investigation and Response (Emergency Preparedness & Response program); CRESA; Council for the Homeless

**Key Terms:** None

**Priority**

# Goal EP-3: Provide essential services during hazard events



**What We Heard:** Community Members expressed concern about access to medications and other healthcare services during emergencies because there are regulatory barriers to stockpiling. In addition, stakeholders are interested in healthcare services that can mobilize before and during hazard events.

**AARP LI Measure:** None

## Strategy EP-3.1: Improve access to healthcare during hazards

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [Mobile Health Clinics Improve Access to Healthcare](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New mobilized healthcare

**Measure Description:** The county should develop plans that specifically address providing healthcare to vulnerable populations during a hazard event. Mobilized healthcare units provide accessible healthcare to vulnerable populations during hazard events.

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Healthcare Providers; Clark County Public Health; CRESA; First and early responders

**Key Terms:** Mobilized healthcare is an innovative model of healthcare delivery that provides a wide range of services to vulnerable populations.

**Priority**



## Strategy EP-3.2: Provide an emergency evacuation shuttle service

**Score:** New

**Resources:** None

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** New shuttle services

**Measure Description:** Clark County should explore partnerships that could provide emergency shuttle services during a hazard event. A registrar of vehicles, their locations, and their capacities should be developed to prepare for a hazard event.

**Type:** Partner Programs

**Interested Parties:** C-Tran; Community in Motion; School Districts; CRESA

**Key Terms:** None

## Strategy EP-3.3: Distribute emergency preparedness resources through community partners already connected to older adults

**Score:** New

**Resources:** [Nontraditional Community Partners for Emergency Management](#)

**Case Study:** None

**Data:** Upgraded Facilities

**Measure Description:** Form partnerships with community service providers like Meals on Wheels People to provide communication and other resources, such as fans during heat events, to vulnerable older adults..

**Type:** Planning

**Interested Parties:** Clark County Public Health; AAADSW; CRESA; Community Organizations

**Key Terms:** None