

The mandate of the JCOA is to advise the CBJ Assembly on actions and policies needed to maintain and improve the quality of life for seniors within CBJ. We are committed to providing the CBJ with forward thinking, coordinated, culturally sensitive, holistic and comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing the challenges of providing robust services for an aging population. Our 2024 Priorities include the creation of a Juneau Age-Friendly Community Plan and an Office of Aging, with a focus on improving the availability of appropriate housing and promoting recreation and social activities that are accommodating and suitable for all ages in our community.

**Commissioners:** Carole Ende  
Jennifer Carson Jennifer Garrison  
Kimberly Adkison Ann Stepetin  
EJ Stokes Emily Kane, Past Chair  
Linda Kruger, Secy Deborah Craig, Chair

# JUNEAU COMMISSION ON AGING 2024 PRIORITIES

*Empowering Juneau's Elders*



**JUNEAU'S DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT:** The senior population in Southeast Alaska continues to grow faster than any other cohort. In 2010, 11% of our population was 65 and over. By 2022, seniors now represent **25%** of our regional population (AKDOLWD 2022).

**FROM GRAY HAIR TO GREENBACKS:** Juneau seniors bring an array of "silver dividends" to our community: retirement income, home ownership and property taxes, and a willingness to volunteer and contribute to the community on many levels while not taking jobs (encouraging in-migration of working age people).

**JUNEAU'S FUTURE HINGES ON STRONG SENIOR SUPPORT:** CBJ's 10-year fiscal plan states that a top priority is to "grow the senior economy". The JCOA seeks CBJ in addressing the distinct needs of Juneau seniors to enable healthy aging in the community we call home.

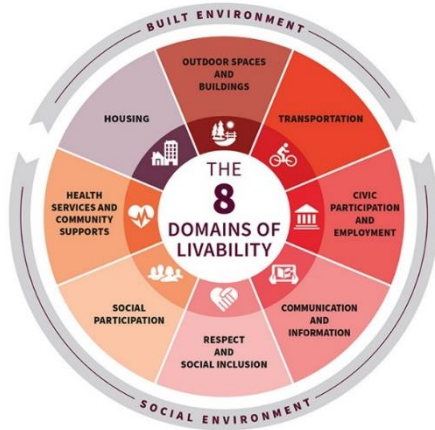
**BUILDING AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY:** Promoting the well-being and vitality of Juneau's aging population, including those needing additional support through implementation of Juneau's Age-Friendly Plan. Age-Friendly communities serve those aged 8 to 80, ensuring the availability of housing, recreational and social spaces that are accommodating and suitable for all age groups.

***Aging.... so cool everyone's doing it!***

# Juneau Commission on Aging 2024 Priorities

## PRIORITY 1: DEVELOP AN OFFICE OF AGING TO ASSIST IN THE CREATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF JUNEAU'S AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PLAN

**Background:** In 2023, the CBJ joined the **AARP Age-Friendly States and Communities Network**. Cities across this AARP sponsored Global and National Network strive to make every community a better place for people of all ages by advocating for Age-Friendly policies. By joining the **AARP Age-Friendly States and Communities Network**, cities commit to an approach that engages stakeholders across all sectors of the Eight Domains of Livability and involves older people every step of the way. This effort makes every community a better place for people of *all ages* by advocating for Age-Friendly policies to encourage active participation by older residents, promote neighborhood cohesion and maximize opportunities for residents to be active and engaged with their neighbors, family, and friends. In an Age-Friendly Community, all residents meet their essential needs in a safe, healthy environment and have opportunities for social and civic participation to help people feel part of the community. Age-friendly initiatives contribute to improved economic



performance and a vibrant, desirable, and competitive environment for housing and commercial investment. Age-friendly initiatives foster collaboration between public and private entities, encouraging joint investment and efforts in programs and projects. They enhance the community for individuals of all ages by advocating for Age-friendly policies and effecting positive changes in social and service environments.

In 2023, AARP and JCOA began the process of information gathering by hosting listening sessions to learn from residents what services and facilities are valued and what changes or additions are desired. The information helped to update the 2020 Senior Needs Survey and resulted in an Age-Friendly Blueprint for Juneau. With the help of stakeholders, JCOA will continue the process of developing an **Juneau Age-Friendly Plan** by combining our local knowledge base with national strategies surrounding the Eight Domains of Livability. *JCOA's initial focus will be the Domains of Housing, Outdoor Spaces (Recreation), Social Participation and Inclusion.*

**Priority: Create an Age-Friendly Community Plan utilizing the Age-Friendly Blueprint as a foundation for actionable initiatives. This priority underscores the commitment to creating a comprehensive framework that addresses the diverse needs of Juneau's aging population.**

**Background:** Our senior population continues to grow while other age groups diminish. This situation calls for immediate action, urging the CBJ to recognize and acknowledge the substantial and valuable resource represented by seniors by ensuring adequate representation within the city structure by creating a position that can provide oversight and coordination of senior needs. Currently the CBJ provides support for an array of senior services that could be more effective if coordinated more proactively. In 2022, the JCOA helped form the Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition (SREC) to bring regional providers together to better coordinate services and we procured funding to assist with systems change. Nonetheless, it is our belief that long-term, permanent change is only possible with the support of the CBJ and development of an Office of Aging.

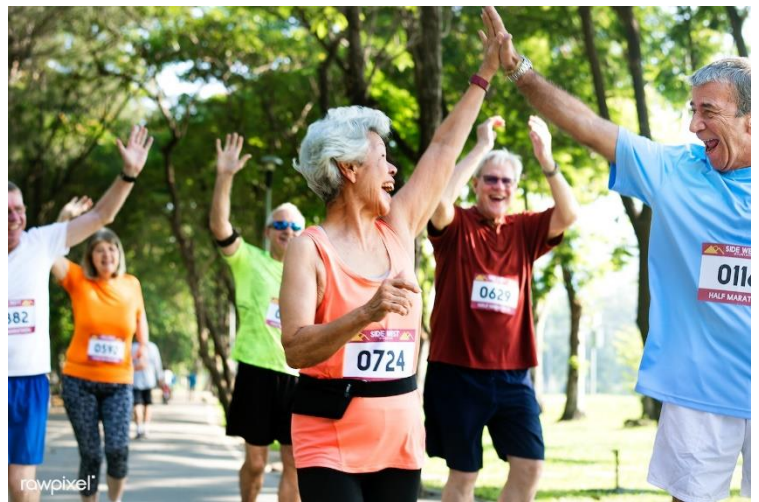
**Priority: Creation of an Office of Aging Coordinator within the City and Borough of Juneau to ensure representation of senior and eldercare needs and challenges to facilitate creation and implementation of the Juneau Age-Friendly Community Plan.**

## Juneau Commission on Aging 2024 Priorities

### **PRIORITY #2: ENCOURAGE INCLUSIVE RECREATION AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES VIA THE CREATION OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PLANNING THROUGH THE OFFICE OF AGING** **Age-Friendly Domains: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, and Civic Engagement.**

**Background:** Healthy aging is a key component to improving community and one of the two areas of emphasis for JCOA's Age-Friendly Planning is related to Recreation and Social Engagement. The 2020 Senior Needs Survey revealed that walking was the most popular activity among seniors, closely followed by hiking. However, concerns were raised regarding the challenges and safety issues associated with winter walking. Transportation needs highlighted the importance of enhanced snow removal from sidewalks and the provision of dry, safe pathways during the winter. Additionally, there was a prioritized need for transportation linked to a meal program aimed at addressing issues related to food security and social isolation.

One high priority identified is the need for an independent community senior center offering navigation to help seniors and families find services and information; social and recreational activities; information resource/ IT help, etc. Better information and communication about senior services and opportunities was also identified as needed.



The 2020 Senior Needs Survey found over 80% of seniors 55-74 are active, exercising or recreating at least once a week and 72% of those 75 and over exercise or recreate at least once a week. The survey also found that 40-48% of Juneau seniors who responded participate in Community Schools, UAS and online classes. The Juneau Age-Friendly Plan aims to coordinate services to further enhance the overall well-being of the senior community. Survey respondents expressed a vision for a dedicated senior center akin to the Zack Gordon Youth Center, serving as a focal point for recreational pursuits such as pickleball, Tai Chi, walking, and more. The envisioned center would also facilitate social and educational opportunities, including lectures, training, and senior-focused classes.

**Priority: Support creation of an Office of Aging Coordinator within the City and Borough of Juneau to ensure that seniors have a voice regarding recreational activities and transportation options, as well as establishment of a community owned and operated Senior Center that serves the broad array of senior needs – from those with high levels of health seeking recreational activities such as Pickleball, yoga, Tai Chi and walking, as well as intellectual and social activities such as Age-Friendly lecture series, and promotion of continued learning. This would be in addition to our current system that does well in helping those needing support services.**

# Juneau Commission on Aging 2024 Priorities

## PRIORITY #3: FOSTER AGE-FRIENDLY HOUSING VIA THE CREATION OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PLAN THROUGH THE OFFICE OF AGING

### Age-Friendly Domain: Housing and Social Participation (Neighborhood Development)

**Background:** In 2020, the JCOA with financial and technical support of CBJ, conducted a survey of residents 55 and older. It identified affordable, *Age-Friendly housing as a dominant concern* that was inextricably connected with health care and overall cost of living. Housing is defined not merely as shelter, but as a home that meets the physical, social and financial needs of an aging population. Thus, the overarching objective is to establish thoughtfully designed, age-friendly housing options in Juneau, emphasizing the importance of creating inclusive living spaces. This fosters a community that accommodates the varying needs of its residents, promoting independence and well-being among all as we age.

#### SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

- Equitable use
- Flexibility in use
- Simple and intuitive use
- Perceptible information
- Tolerance for error
- Low physical effort
- Size and space for approach and use.

#### Recommendations

1. Embrace **Universal Design**
  - Adopt the concept of **Universal Design** as a best practice to integrate age-friendly features into the design, regardless of the age of the targeted buyer today.
  - Establish standards that guarantee housing in Juneau meets the basic requirements for individuals of all ages and physical abilities, whether starter homes or residences for seniors to age in place.
  - Make **Universal Design** a central goal in the Community Development Department (CDD), Planning Commission (PC), and the CBJ Assembly.
2. Incentivize Age-Friendly Housing
  - Collaborate with local developers and contractors to incentivize development of more age-friendly housing options using voluntary measures rather than strict regulations.
  - Offer financial incentives, tax breaks, or other rewards to developers who prioritize age-friendly design elements in their housing projects.
3. Explore Innovative Housing Models
  - Encourage diverse housing options, including co-housing, Tiny Homes, micro-housing, college dorm-sharing with seniors, senior village-to-village, organizations, multigenerational housing, and cottage-style housing.
  - Remove regulatory obstacles and actively support the integration of these innovative housing models into the community.
4. Address Regulatory Barriers:
  - Identify and eliminate regulatory obstacles hindering age-friendly housing development.
  - Collaborate with stakeholders to streamline approval processes for housing projects emphasizing universal design and age-friendly features.
  - Ensure that city employees engaged in permitting and development consistently prioritize the question: "What kind of housing do you imagine needing and wanting for your well-being as you move towards being an elder?"

**PRIORITY: Support creation of an Office of Aging Coordinator within the City and Borough of Juneau to 1) ensure that senior housing needs are encompassed in community planning and 2) embrace the concept of universal housing that meets the needs of Juneau residents whether they are "8 or 80".**