




IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO AGE WELL

Expanding the Village Model of Care
for California's Older Adults





Village Movement California offers an infrastructure of community-based organizations known as villages that address the five goals of the Governor's Master Plan for Aging. This infrastructure is a proven solution for meeting the needs of California's aging adult population.

By expanding the village model of care to all of California's counties, we can help meet the goals of the Master Plan for Aging and ensure that California's aging population has the support they need to age well.



Across human history, generations of people have lived close together, giving and getting support throughout their lifespan. Communities functioned as villages with families and neighbors looking out for one another. The village model of care for older adults and Village Movement California draws inspiration from this history.

“It takes a village” to ensure that all Californians can age well. By 2030, California will be home to 10.8 million older adults, accounting for one-quarter of the state’s population. Our state’s over-60 population is projected to diversify and grow faster than any other age group, with people of color making up 47% of the population. The need for a community-based approach to aging has never been more critical.

California is responding to these demographic changes by implementing the Governor’s Master Plan for Aging. With its five key goals — housing, healthcare, equity and inclusion, a strong caregiving infrastructure, and affordability — the Plan emphasizes the need for California communities to come together to build a California for All Ages “where people of all ages and abilities are engaged, valued, and afforded equitable opportunities to thrive as we age, how and where we choose.”

At the heart of the Master Plan is the need for a coordinated model of care that builds on the strengths of diverse communities throughout California. For such a need, Village Movement California offers a promising solution. It provides a community-based infrastructure of villages that prioritizes the health, independence, and social connectedness of older adults. It leverages our state’s vast reservoirs of social capital — family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and caregivers — to provide care for older adults so they can remain in the places they call home. And it fosters a cost-effective approach to caring for the state’s rapidly growing population of moderate- and middle-income older adults, preserving their financial resources and preventing their slide into poverty. In this way, villages protect the safety net services for those who need them most.

OLDER ADULTS THRIVE IN VILLAGES

Villages are neighborhood-based membership organizations that connect older adults to the community, programming, and expertise they need to continue living lives of purpose and promise while remaining in their own homes. The model got its start in the late 90's and has grown to an estimated 300 villages across the country.

A Community of Service

For the roughly 90 percent of older adults nationwide who say they want to age in community, the village model of care offers social connection, volunteerism, assistance with instrumental activities for daily living, and connections with licensed service providers to support people as they age. Villages offer a wide variety of services in exchange for a modest monthly membership fee. Those services typically include transportation, home maintenance and modification, technology support, friendly calls and visits, grocery shopping and errands, health and wellness classes, education and planning for age related transitions.

A Cure for Loneliness and Social Isolation

Villages make significant contributions to human flourishing by building meaningful connections among older adults and between older adults and other generations. As more research is surfacing around the epidemic of social isolation and chronic loneliness that is plaguing our nation and much of Western society, villages offer a response that bridges social care and health care to reduce isolation, foster reciprocal interaction, and strengthen the mental, physical, and social health of people in community.

Villages are, by definition, rooted in community and culture and can provide the culturally sensitive care that older adults need. This is especially important for California as our state remains significantly more racially and ethnically diverse than the U.S. overall and has large communities of LGBTQ+ older adults. Because villages often arise out of neighborhoods where individuals and families of similar cultures already live in proximity to one another, villages can provide culturally affirming care that is well attuned to the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic needs of their members.

"For years people thought the best thing you could do for a lonely person is to give them support. Actually, we found that it's about receiving and also giving back. So the best thing you can do for someone who is lonely is not to give them help but ask them for help. So you give them a sense of worth and a chance to be altruistic. Even if we're getting the best care, we still feel lonely if we can't give something back. The care is extremely valuable but it's not enough."

~ Dr. Stephanie Caccioppo, assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience, University of Chicago

"How Loneliness Damages Our Health,"
New York Times, April 20, 2022



Moderate- and Middle-Income Older Adults

Villages also offer an important response to the social and economic challenges arising from our country's rapidly growing demographic of moderate and middle-income older adults. There are millions of Californians whose income is too high to allow them to qualify for Medicaid benefits even though they are not wealthy enough to access necessary health and aging resources.

Over the next decade, the number of middle-income older adults in the U.S. is expected to nearly double in size — reaching 16 million older adults by 2033.

In California, moderate to middle income seniors 75+ are expected to account for nearly 34% of the state's older adult population. Given the exceptionally high cost of senior care and housing in our state — an estimated 17 percent higher than the national average — it is vital that we recognize the unique needs of this population early on with the kinds of affordable and accessible care solutions that they can access and that villages provide. Otherwise, there is a risk that these older adults will fall into poverty and require more of the state's resources creating an economic challenge that the state is currently unprepared for.

VILLAGE MOVEMENT CALIFORNIA IS READY TO SUPPORT GROWTH

California's village network is vibrant and dynamic, and demand for villages is spreading. To support the growth of the village model, leaders from across several villages in California came together to launch Village Movement California in 2018.

Village Movement California serves as the statewide coalition of 45 villages (with more launching) that represent an estimated 10,000 members, volunteers, family members, and caregivers serving the state's older adults. It is the village engine, serving an essential role in strengthening shared learning and innovation across villages and supporting the network's longer-term sustainability while serving as a collective voice for the rapidly growing number of aging Californians who want to age in their homes and communities.

Over the next decade as California's older adult population continues to grow, the demand for professional caregiving is likely to far outstrip the dwindling supply of caregivers and affordable assisted living options available to meet their needs.

Village Movement California and its network of villages is poised to offer a ready solution, to be a critical element of California's continuum of care for older adults. But in order to fulfill that role, they need to be better integrated into California's long-term services and supports (LTSS) system and recognized for the ways they are already contribute to the goals and strategies of the Master Plan for Aging.

Villages at a Glance

More than
5,000
VILLAGE
MEMBERS
in California

3,000
VOLUNTEERS
support villages,
with **1/3**
VOLUNTEERS BEING
VILLAGE MEMBERS
themselves

45
VILLAGES
throughout the state
with **7+**
NEW POTENTIAL
VILLAGES
in development

MOST POPULAR VILLAGE SERVICES:

- social & educational engagements
- transportation
- home maintenance
- technology support
- friendly calls/visits



VILLAGES SUPPORT THE MASTER PLAN

Governor Gavin Newsom's Master Plan for Aging, with its five bold goals for supporting older adults in the state, provides a helpful framework for policymakers and advocates for older adults to address California's aging demographic. While the Master Plan outlines several comprehensive strategies and targeted policies for achieving these five goals, there are also innovative models, such as California's network of villages, that already offer practical solutions to supporting aging Californians.

Villages are included in the Master Plan for Aging, and Village Movement California is moving swiftly to fulfill its initiative. What follows is an exploration of how the village model aligns with each of the five goals outlined in the Master Plan for Aging and how Village Movement California and the villages we represent can support the strategies and initiatives that policymakers are looking to implement under each of those goals.

GOAL#1: HOUSING FOR ALL STAGES & AGES


WE WILL LIVE WHERE WE CHOOSE AS WE AGE IN COMMUNITIES THAT ARE AGE-, DISABILITY-, AND DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY AND CLIMATE- AND DISASTER-READY.

At the heart of the village model is the ability for older adults to age in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities of choice. A home is more than housing or a roof over one's head. It also is part of a person's sense of identity and belonging. Housing that allows for older adults to remain in the places they know enables them to feel secure, healthy, and connected to the resources and people they depend on.

By supporting older adults to age in their homes, villages help reduce the need for the creation of additional housing. The village model provides the wrap-around support of volunteer caregivers from the community who help older adults with all manner of needs that arise in their daily lives — from grocery shopping to in-home care visits to transportation. Village-sponsored

transportation is especially valuable for older adults who may need to frequently get to and from appointments with medical providers and for those living in rural areas where public transit access may be more limited.

Villages help to build communities that are both age-friendly and climate-friendly by serving as neighborhood hubs for education and communication about disaster and emergency preparedness and response. When climate emergencies occur, such as wildfires and floods that are common throughout California, villages make it easier to conduct outreach, deploy resources, and enable older adults to access emergency centers.



"Having left rural California to move to another state, my mother in her mid-70's remained there in her home. This meant I would not be nearby to help while she had her replaced hip fixed. Having cared for her through multiple operations, I know the work it takes to manage 2-3 weeks of in-home care.

The Anderson Valley Village was miraculous! Villagers ran her errands, stopped in to do chores and check-ins, and took her thoughtful gifts. Caregiving is one of the most important jobs. Without the support of caregivers, we would all suffer."

~ Taunia G., daughter of an Anderson Valley Village member

GOAL#2: HEALTH REIMAGINED

WE WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE SERVICES WE NEED TO LIVE AT HOME IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND TO OPTIMIZE OUR HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE.

Villages have a built-in infrastructure for delivering social care that is equally essential as health care. Social care addresses the unmet needs that support healthy aging and independence — for example, assistance with transportation, shopping, food preparation, laundry, companionship, and social connection.

Villages deliver social care and health care supports through the help of volunteers and community caregivers who facilitate these services in the homes of older adults. Where contact with a medical provider is essential for an individual, village caregivers can ensure that individual gets to and from medical appointments or is able to access their doctor through telehealth and other in-home visits. Hospital discharge programs that integrate villages have been shown to reduce re-admission rates of older adults by supporting them with home-based recovery.

Villages are also sources of trusted information and referrals for older adults to access providers and enroll in government benefit programs such as Medicare and Medi-Cal. Villages routinely offer programming that educates older adults on healthy aging topics and priorities such as nutrition, brain health, mental health, and reducing injury and fall risks. The village infrastructure becomes the literal means by which “medical services and non-medical supports can be integrated and made accessible to people living both in home and in community,” just as California’s Master Plan for Aging suggests.



In 2019, San Francisco Village launched the Hospital Readmission Prevention Program in collaboration with Sutter Health and the Acute Care for Elderly unit at CPMC Mission Bernal Campus. A recently completed study by the Sutter Institute for Advancing Health Equity shows that village members who enroll in the program as patients are four times less likely to be readmitted to the hospital within 30 days after discharge.



GOAL #3: INCLUSION & EQUITY, NOT ISOLATION

WE WILL HAVE LIFELONG OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK, VOLUNTEERING, ENGAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP AND WILL BE PROTECTED FROM ISOLATION, DISCRIMINATION, ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND EXPLOITATION.

The village model is inherently one of connection and inclusion. It offers a multitude of opportunities for social engagement and volunteerism through village-sponsored programming and support services that build a sense of purpose and meaning in people's lives. Villages are the antidote to social isolation because they are person-centered, community-based, and responsive to the unique needs of the people in their communities.

Villages cultivate volunteers of all ages and from all walks of life increasing connection, engagement, and leadership between and among people of various generations and backgrounds. Many volunteers are themselves older adults, providing opportunities for inclusion for those providing supportive services as well as those receiving them. As members of their local community, village leaders and volunteers are also well-positioned to provide culturally and linguistically responsive communications that strengthen equity and inclusion, particularly for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals living alone.

Today's digital technology can improve opportunities for connection and can be an important means of delivering information or accessing other sources of care, particularly when people become less mobile.

During Covid, villages quickly pivoted to online programs and classes to keep members connected. Most continue to bring people together virtually, strengthening digital literacy and community connections. Villages address the digital divide experienced by older

adults through access to devices and home-based technology support. Villages equip members to access telehealth support and stay connected to the village, family, and friends.

Villages also offer opportunities for civic engagement. Village members often participate in climate action organizations, age-friendly community planning projects, tutoring projects, and efforts to mobilize voter registration and participation.

As noted in the Master Plan for Aging, California is seizing on the opportunity to invest in and expand on its burgeoning network of public information, assistance, and resource connection portals for older adults and people with disabilities, known collectively as Aging and Disability Resource Connections, or ADRCs. These support hubs help to link people with a variety of health and social services that can enhance their lives and allow them to continue living in their homes and communities.

Villages already serve as ADRCs by sharing information and resources, providing referrals, and coordinating with local facilities and institutions. Additional funding support for Village Movement California would enable the growth and scaling of individual villages into an even more robust system, making them an integral component of California's ADRC community support networks.



The Master Plan for Aging's Goal #3", Initiative #90 states that the Plan will "promote and adapt village models of volunteerism and services building on the strengths of California's diverse communities." Village Movement California has leveraged private funding to build an infrastructure to fulfill this initiative.





GOAL #4: CAREGIVING THAT WORKS


WE WILL BE PREPARED FOR AND SUPPORTED THROUGH THE REWARDS AND CHALLENGES OF CARING FOR AGING LOVED ONES.

As California's older adult population continues to grow, the need for caregiving support is expected to dramatically increase, putting pressure on an already dwindling workforce of direct care workers. Older adults who live more than 10 miles from family members or who do not have family are especially impacted by the caregiver shortage. Villages frequently take on roles and activities of family caregivers, so much so that a new term — friend caregiver — has emerged in the aging field.

Caregiving can be challenging and stressful, both for the caregiver and the recipient. It requires focused time, attention, and training on the part of the caregiver to address the unique needs and circumstances of the person they are assisting. Villages support both the caregiver and the care receiver through programs, social events, and volunteer services.

The village model offers a robust response and solution to these challenges. It is grounded in the concept of mutual aid and support for one another, neighbor helping neighbor, friend and family member supporting each other. Villages are intentional, caring communities that are built on reciprocity and shared interest. They offer vital touchpoints for caregiving for and to older adults living at home who may otherwise feel isolated, particularly those who are widows or widowers, solo agers, or those who do not have children living close by.

Village programming for volunteers and family caregivers provides them with the resources and compassion they need to aid them as they care for loved ones. By offering support, resources, and training, villages connect caregivers to one another, forging stronger formal and informal caregiving networks.



Pasadena Village's Caregiver Support Group helps members of the Pasadena Village who are themselves caring for loved ones — whether a spouse, family member, neighbor, or friend. The group connects caregivers with each other so that they do not feel alone and overwhelmed in their caregiving. Village Movement California collaborated with the support group to create a toolkit and training program on key approaches and best practices in caregiving.

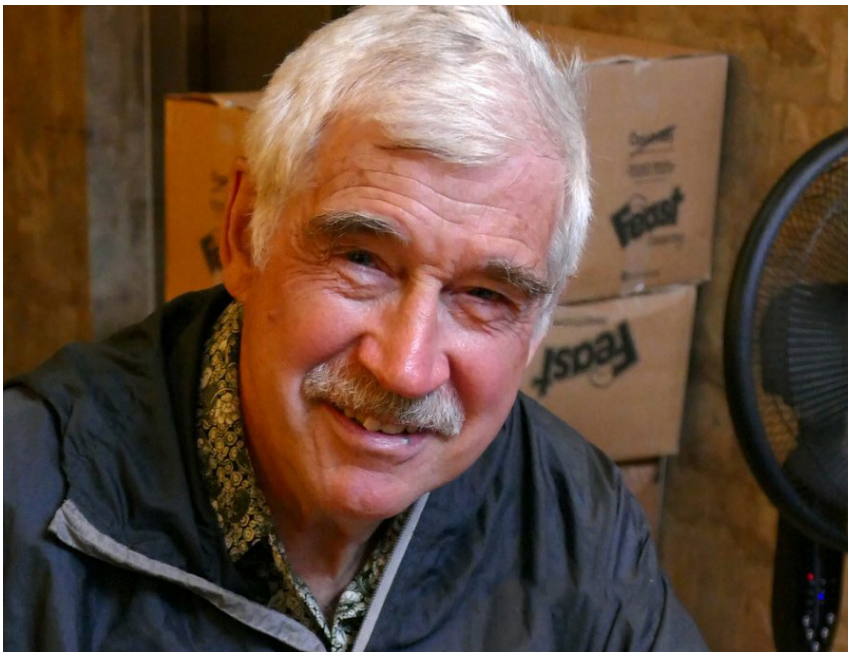
GOAL #5: AFFORDING AGING:

WE WILL HAVE ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR AS LONG AS WE LIVE.

Economic security is essential to ensuring that, as we age, we have access to housing, food, and health care and other resources that enable us to thrive into our later years. Yet there are many dynamics in our society today, particularly here in California, that can make economic security elusive — from a lack of affordable housing and higher costs of living to inequities in housing, education, and employment that have persisted for decades.

Villages enable greater economic security among older adults by providing the infrastructure that allows them to be cared for and remain in their homes longer, preserving their financial assets and savings for other uses and ensuring those resources are available to them over the long haul.

Similarly, villages help to protect the state's financial resources by leveraging the social capital of communities to meet the needs of aging adults, reducing their need for public benefits and ensuring that benefits are reserved for those who need them most. For older adults who do qualify for public benefits, villages can facilitate enrollment in food access programs, Medi-Cal, and other state and federally funded benefit programs. Villages also help adults plan for their future through the financial and advanced planning, programming, and connections that villages offer.



Roger is a member and volunteer at Ashby Village in the Bay Area. He's part of the Home Safety Assessment team that checks members' homes for hazards, suggests improvements, and often does simple handyman projects himself. Helping village members is a way to help himself—to find out what aging is all about, how people are coping, and how they can stay in their own homes safely.



EXPANDING THE POSSIBILITIES FOR AGING WELL

In any stage of life, our ability to thrive as human beings is dependent upon many factors that support our holistic well-being — from our most basic needs for health and safety to having access to housing, reliable transportation, and a sense of belonging and engagement in our community. The village model of care touches on all of these factors and conditions. It is a comprehensive and cost-effective system of care that supports older adults in navigating the transitions in aging while remaining in their homes and communities. It is fundamentally person-centered, caregiver-friendly, and community-driven. And it employs a variety of strategies and approaches that directly support the implementation of California’s Master Plan for Aging.

But to effectively address the challenges and opportunities laid out in the Master Plan, Village Movement California requires the state’s investment and integration — investment that enables us to further build out our infrastructure of villages across the state and integration that incorporates villages into the long-term services and supports system that state policymakers are developing.

Villages and Village Movement California offer a dynamic and viable means for supporting a California for All Ages, enhancing and expanding the ways that we can age well. We are ready to work with you to bring our solutions to the table. Let’s join forces to make California’s vision a reality.

CALIFORNIA MEMBER VILLAGES

NORTHERN CA

Anderson Valley Village
Ashby Village
Avenidas Village
Brisbane Village Helping Hands
Carquinez Village
Clayton Valley Village
Eden Area Village
Foster City Village
Greater Niles Village
Hotel Oakland
Lamorinda Village
Marin Villages:
 Mill Valley, Ross Valley, Tiburon,
 San Rafael, Twin Cities, Novato
NEXT Village San Francisco
Redwood Coast Village
San Francisco Village
Sausalito Village
Sebastopol Village
Village Network of Petaluma
Village Santa Cruz County
Village Sonoma Valley
Villages of San Mateo County:
 Sequoia, Mid-Peninsula, Coastside

SOUTHERN CA

AgingNext Village
Care Connections Network
ChaiVillageLA
City Heights Village San Diego
Conejo Valley Village
Kern Valley
North County Village
Palos Verdes Peninsula Village
Pasadena Village
San Clemente Village
Serra Mesa Village
SLO Village
South Bay Village
Tierrasanta Village
Westside Pacific Villages

** List as of June 2023*



AGING.
BETTER.

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Find a digital version of this report and learn more
about Village Movement California at VillageMovementCalifornia.org