

**AARP AGE-FRIENDLY
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA
ACTION PLAN
DECEMBER 2025 - DECEMBER 2029**

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Insert PDF of County Manager's Support Letter as page 2

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Introduction to Washoe County, Nevada: As of early 2026, Washoe County, Northern Nevada, stands as the state's second-largest county in population, experiencing a sustained population increase driven by urbanization and migration. The county's population is projected to exceed 513,000 residents in 2026. A defining characteristic of this growth is the rapid aging of its population, with the cohort of residents aged 60 and older increasing significantly, placing Washoe County as part of Nevada's ranking among the fastest-aging areas in the United States

The county seat and largest city is Reno, and next largest city is Sparks. Unincorporated Washoe County includes significant residential, rural, and industrial areas outside Reno and Sparks city limits, covering neighborhoods like Sun Valley, Cold Springs, Spanish Springs, Lemmon Valley, Verdi, Mogul, Washoe Valley, Incline Village and Gerlach. These areas are governed and serviced directly by Washoe County. On the west, Washoe County borders Lake Tahoe and the Sierra Nevada mountain range and is home to world-class ski resorts and mountain recreation. To the west is Pyramid Lake which is entirely contained within the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Reservation. To the far northeast, near Gerlach, is the Black Rock Desert and gateway to the annual Burning Man Project.

2026 Population Overview and Growth Trends: Washoe County's population continues to grow, with an estimated 2026 total of approximately 513,388 to 521,522, representing an annual growth rate approaching 0.8%. This growth is largely fueled by in-migration from neighboring states, particularly California, and from Clark County, NV.

- **Median Age:** The median age in Washoe County is around 39, reflecting a mix of younger workers attracted by tech industries and a significant influx of retirees.
- **Household Structure:** There are over 200,000 households, with an average size of 2.48 persons, indicating a mix of family-oriented and single-person households.
- **Growth Density:** The population is heavily concentrated in the urban areas of Reno and Sparks, which comprise the vast majority of the county's population, while rural areas like Washoe Valley grow at a slower rate, despite having much higher median ages.

The Rising Senior Demographic (Age 60+): The most dramatic demographic shift in Washoe County is the acceleration in growth of the 60+ population. The senior community has been consistently outpacing all other age groups in growth since 2010.

- **Senior Population Growth:** Estimates indicate a massive surge in residents aged 65 and older, which increased by over 70% between 2010 and 2022. By 2026, this 60+ population is expected to be well over 100,000, continuing toward a projected 130,000 by 2030.
- **Aging in Place/Aging in Community:** A significant portion of this population (over 11% of all households) consists of seniors living alone. This creates high demand for accessible housing, transportation, and healthcare services.

- **Economic Impact of Seniors:** While many seniors in Washoe County are homeowners, a notable percentage face high housing cost burdens, spending over 30% of their income on housing, highlighting a need for affordable housing options for older adults.

Economic and Employment Landscape in 2026: Washoe County has transitioned from a solely gaming-based economy to a more diverse hub of technology, warehousing, and manufacturing.

- **Unemployment and Workforce:** The labor force participation rate remained stable, but the unemployment rate was approximately 4% in 2025, showing a tight labor market.
- **Income Trends:** The median household income is estimated above \$88,000, with a poverty rate of 10.65%.
- **Industries:** Major employment sectors include services, retail, and manufacturing. The senior boom has also intensified demand for health services and personal care workers, which are facing staffing challenges in 2026.

Diversity and Social Characteristics: The demographic landscape of Washoe County is becoming increasingly diverse, changing the ethnic makeup of the area.

- **Racial and Ethnic Composition:** The population is roughly 62–64% White, with a significant and growing Hispanic/Latino population, which comprises over 25–26% of residents. The Hispanic population has seen the fastest growth over the last decade. Asians make up 5.77%, and there are smaller percentages for Black or African American, Native American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and multiracial populations
- **Foreign-Born Residents:** About 14% of the population is foreign-born, matching national averages.
- **Veterans:** The county has a notable veteran population, numbering over 30,000, with a high concentration of Vietnam-era service members.

Housing and Urban Development Challenges: The surge in population, particularly seniors, has placed pressure on the housing market.

- **Housing Demand:** To accommodate growth, the region is projected to require thousands of new housing units by 2042.
- **Rental vs. Ownership:** While over 57% of units are owner-occupied, the rental market is tight, with a vacancy rate around 6.9% as of 2020-2022 trends.
- **Senior Housing:** The demand for assisted living and aging-friendly housing has led to targeted developments aimed at the 65+ demographic.

Age-Friendly Features of Washoe County: Washoe County is one of the fastest aging areas in the United States with a surging population of people 60+ expected for decades to come. This gives older

adults here a huge voice in planning for a better future for all of us as we age—in housing, transportation, outdoor spaces, health, social and community services, work and civic engagement, social participation, respect and social inclusion and communication and information systems. There are a large number of community organizations in Washoe County working for the benefit of seniors and that are supportive of the Age-Friendly Livable Communities initiatives.

- The Washoe County Human Services Agency Senior Services Division runs two senior centers and seven other community meal sites to provide congregate meals and social activities to about 1000 seniors throughout Washoe County. They operate the Home Delivered Meals Program (Meals on Wheels) for nearly 1300 homebound clients. They provide social services to low-income seniors through caseworkers and homemakers for about 300 clients in each program. The Washoe County Senior Advisory Board advises the county commission and the Human Services Agency/Senior Services Division on issues relating to seniors. They successfully petitioned the County Board of Commissioners in 2022 to become an Age-Friendly county. They completed a 3-year process to revise the old 2014 Washoe County Master Plan for Aging Services in September 2025. The new 2025 Washoe County Senior Services Master Plan will also serve as their Age-Friendly Action Plan.
- Reno has a Senior Resident Advisory Board whose job is to advise the city council on matters relating to community seniors, promote activities, advocate for seniors and foster engagement for residents 60+. The City of Reno hired a Seniors Activities Coordinator with ARPA funds who plans multiple enrichment programs for Reno residents.
- Washoe County, Reno and Sparks have a large network of parks and walking/hiking paths that encourage people of all ages to go outside and enjoy the beauties of Northern Nevada. Reno and Sparks Parks and Recreation programs connect seniors' Medicare and other health plans with fitness benefits to provide free access to multiple recreation, social, exercise and health activities. Reno and Washoe County have hired activities coordinators that create and supervise free social and recreation opportunities for seniors here to attract older adults to socialize and combat isolation. Connections Central is a new organization here in Northern Nevada that brings small groups of people of all ages together to join facilitated conversations to uplift hearts and spirits through story sharing and meaningful conversations
- Reno also has a separate, community-run, all-volunteer Age-Friendly Project since 2018. The Reno Age-Friendly Team has over 200 members made up of staffs from agencies and nonprofits and individual community members who work together on age-friendly issues in

many mutual endeavors. The Reno Action Team members regularly present updates and recommendations to elected officials and community groups to advocate for affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options for elders, improved connections to in-home and community services they need to remain safely and securely at home, and increased opportunities for enriching their personal connections to others.

- Sparks City Council, which is very supportive of its senior community, approved their city joining the Age-Friendly Network in 2021 but its senior advisory board was dissolved before it could create its action plan. Sparks now has a Citizens Advisory Committee with senior representatives that advise their council on seniors' community concerns among other issues, but it has not actively resumed work on age-friendly planning as of today.
- The Senior Coalition of Washoe County is a private nonprofit 501(c)(4) organization that advocates for the senior community at local, state and federal levels and teaches community members how to become advocates as well.
- The Center for Healthy Aging is a private nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that funds programs in the community that help seniors "add life to years" and works closely with Age-Friendly Reno, Senior Coalition and Washoe County Senior Advisory Board on multiple projects.
- There is a well-respected senior newspaper that has been in business here for nearly 40 years, **Senior Spectrum**, which publishes monthly articles that help its senior readers stay up to date on activities, events, politics, advocacy, legal and health issues, resources, travel, etc.
- AARP Nevada has a strong presence in Washoe County due to the Reno-Sparks AARP Chapter that meets monthly, the AARP Age-Friendly Reno project, and its large group of AARP Nevada volunteers that support many free activities for members and non-members alike. Activities include weekly park walks, Walk-With-a-Doc, community gardening, caregiving/fraud prevention/advocacy events, music and theater events and more.
- The University of Nevada Reno (UNR) Medical School and its Sanford Center for Aging work together to train health professionals to improve the care of older adults here in Nevada. Sanford Center runs multiple classes for community seniors to improve their health, and it houses an online caregivers resource website www.nevadacaregivers.org with hundreds of local resources. The state's Nevada Aging and Disabilities Services Division includes age-friendly concepts in their strategic plans and produces a fact-filled research study, **Seniors Count**, every two years.

In conclusion, Washoe County in 2026 is a vibrant, expanding age-friendly community with a distinct, rapidly aging population segment. With over 17% of its residents aged 65 or older and a 60+ population growing faster than any other age group, the county is navigating a transition that prioritizes senior services alongside economic growth and diversification. The demographic profile suggests a future of continued urbanization, growing diversity, and a crucial, ongoing focus on building infrastructure that supports a senior-heavy population. With the 2025 Senior Services Master Plan in place, the Washoe Senior Advisory Board is ready to submit that plan as their Age-Friendly Washoe County Action Plan.

Age-Friendly Washoe County, aligned with [Washoe County Senior Services](#), focuses on creating a livable community for all ages, particularly focusing on improving transportation, housing, and social engagement to allow seniors to age in place and in community. The initiative, linked with the [WHO Age-Friendly World network](#), promotes dignity, community inclusion, and access to services.

Mission: The Senior Advisory Board will advise and support Washoe County staff to provide direct services, supportive programs, and community connections that empower seniors, address immediate needs, and promote long-term well-being.

Vision: “Living Well. Aging Well.” – Ensuring every Washoe County senior has access to essential services and opportunities to thrive, maintain independence, and engage with their community.

Core Values & Principles:

- **Independence:** Assisting older adults to live comfortably and independently in their own homes.
- **Inclusion:** Ensuring services are available to all, valuing diversity, and prioritizing those most in need.
- **Active Engagement:** Providing opportunities for volunteering, social interaction, and purposeful living.
- **Accessibility:** Improving transportation options and expanding, user-friendly, and accessible community information.
- **Collaboration:** Partnering with community leaders, organizations, and caregivers to create a safe and responsive environment.

Community Assessment Process: The Washoe County Senior Services Advisory Board (the Board) studied and discussed various assessment surveys and in March 2023 chose the same condensed one-page two-sided assessment survey that the Age-Friendly Reno Project had used. See the survey form at p. __ . Surveys were made available online and in paper format and data

entry and analysis was done by Washoe Senior Services staff. From May 2023 until May 2024,, they collected 612 surveys in the first round of survey collection and then on staff recommendation, extended the survey collection until May 2024. Surveys were available online and at senior centers, senior living complexes, information fairs, recreation centers, churches and other places in the community. The assessment results were as follows:

Washoe County Senior Services Survey Overview: The survey collected extensive feedback from a total of 695 Washoe County seniors on community issues, quality of life, housing, transportation, information sources, and additional concerns, highlighting priorities and areas for improvement.

Community Importance of Outdoor Spaces and Transportation: Community members value outdoor spaces and transportation highly, with over 50% rating them as most important.

- Outdoor spaces: 50% most important in extended collection; 52% in first collection.
- Transportation: 50% most important in extended; 52% in first.
- Least important responses: 11-12% for outdoor spaces and transportation.
- Declined to respond: 4% for both surveys.

Housing Preferences and Arrangements Most seniors prefer to age in place, with a strong preference for in-home caregivers and affordable rents.

- In-home caregivers: 53% most important (extended); 54% (first).
- Affordable rents: 61% (extended); 63% (first).
- Other options: shared housing (22-32%), group care housing (25-35%), 55+ communities (50-51%).
- Least important: shared housing (38-38%), group care housing (33-32%).

Quality of Life Factors and Priorities: Healthcare, independent living, activities, and healthy foods are key to seniors' quality of life.

- Healthcare & wellness: 62-63% most important.
- Independent living: 70-72% most important.
- Activities: 51-51% most important.
- Healthy foods: 52-53% most important.
- Employment & engagement: 43-44% most important.
- Declined to respond around 4-5%.

Transportation Preferences and Options: Most seniors prefer to drive but support improved transit and alternative options.

- Improved transit: 58-60% most important.
- Rideshare: 50-51% most important.
- Paratransit access: 45-46% most important.
- Carpool: 27-37% most important.
- Walking/biking: 44-46% most important.
- Declined to respond: 8% for all options.

Information Sources for Senior Services: Seniors prefer to get information via internet, senior centers, and traditional media.

- Internet: 56-54% most important.
- Senior centers: 51-52% most important.
- TV/Radio: 47-48% most important.
- Newspapers/magazines: 36-38% most important.
- Public library: 34-35% most important.
- Declined to respond: 8% in both surveys.

Senior Living Locations by Zip Code: Majority of respondents are from zip code 89512 (12%), 89431 (11%) and 89502 (11%), with smaller percentages from other areas.

- 89512: 12%
- 89431: 11%
- 89502: 11%
- Other notable areas: 89433 (8%), 89436 (7%), 89434 (5%), 89430 (0.3%).
- Very low representation from many zip codes (0.1%).

How Seniors Heard About the Survey: Most seniors learned about the survey through senior centers, Senior Fest (an annual large senior-centric information and health fair), and social media.

- Senior centers: 11-12%
- Senior Fest: 10-15%
- Online/social media: 8-12%
- Friends/relatives: 2-5%
- Other sources include libraries, community organizations, and publications.
- Declined to answer around 1-17%.

Age Range of Respondents: Majority are aged 65-74 (37%) and 75-84 (24%), with smaller groups under 55 and over 85.

- 65-74: 37%
- 75-84: 24%
- 55-64: 16%
- Under 55: 1%
- 85-94: 4%
- 95+: 0.2%
- Declined to answer: 15-18%.

Senior Living Situation: Most seniors do not live in facilities, with 45-46% living independently.

- Living alone: 36-38%
- In a facility: 1%
- Declined to answer: 16-18%.

Income Levels of Seniors: Income distribution is fairly balanced, with around 17-23% earning under \$20K and similar percentages in other brackets.

- Under \$20K: 17-19%

- \$20K-\$39K: 23-24%
- \$40K-\$59K: 11%
- \$60K-\$99K: 17%
- \$100K+: 8-10%
- Declined answer: 21-22%.

Key Comments and Suggestions from Seniors:

- Need for more affordable and diverse activities (fitness, arts, crafts, holiday events).
- Friendlier staff and better utilization of senior/resource centers.
- Affordable housing options, especially for solo seniors and those concerned about post-spouse living costs.
- Improved disability and handicap accessibility citywide.
- Additional resources: senior discounts, multilingual services, home assistance, volunteer opportunities.
- Better meal options: vegetarian, larger portions, more variety.
- Affordable medical services.
- Addressing senior homelessness and transportation issues.
- Increased access to computers, phones, and law enforcement patrols

Creating the Action Plan

At the same time as the survey process was underway, in 2023, the Board decided to delve into a process of revising, re-working and updating the Washoe County 2014 Master Plan for Aging Services as part of their action-planning process.

In 2023, the Senior Board created a workplan to learn about and address the needs of Washoe seniors in an updated master plan/action plan. Since they operate under Nevada's Open Meeting Law, they invited local subject matter experts and community partners to their monthly board meetings to present the latest information on current senior needs and asked for their recommendations on possible goals and actions to reach them. From November 2023 to November 2024, at each meeting, experts and community members were invited to make presentations and suggestions to update the master plan. After hearing from the local experts and the senior community, each board member volunteered to take at least one goal and draft objectives, action steps, stakeholders, leaders, metrics and resources needed for reach each goal. Their draft ideas were then presented at later board meetings for further board discussion and input from community partners and the public. In December 2024, all the draft objectives and plan matrices were then assigned to Board members with expertise and experience in writing strategic plans. The Board heard reports and discussed several drafts of the plan until it was approved by the Board in July 2025. In October 2025, the Board decided that the new 2025 Senior Services Master Plan would also

become their Age-Friendly Action Plan. The Board Chairperson then presented the plan to the Board of County Commissioners in October 2025 where it was met with approval and received by the Commission.

Community Partners: The following organizations, staff, volunteers and community members provided expert advice and invaluable community input to help create the Action Plan:

Access to Healthcare

- Age-Friendly Reno Action Team
- AARP Nevada
- Center for Healthy Aging
- Circle of Life Hospice
- Community Foundation of Northern Nevada
- Food Bank of Northern Nevada
- Neighbor Network of Northern Nevada (N4)
- Nevada Aging and Disability Services
- Nevada Department of Veterans Affairs
- Nevada Housing Coalition
- Nevada Youth Empowerment Program
- Northern Nevada Legal Aid, Senior Law Program
- Reno Food Systems
- Reno Senior Resident Advisory Board
- RTC Washoe
- Senior Coalition of Washoe County
- Seniors in Service
- Senior Outreach Services
- Senior Spectrum Newspaper
- Sparks Senior Citizen Advisory Committee
- Sparks City Attorney
- Sun Valley Senior Center & General Improvement District
- UNR Sanford Center for Aging
- VA Sierra Nevada Health Care, Veterans Affairs
- TRIO Community Meals

- Washoe County Board of County Commissioners
- Washoe County District Attorney
- Washoe County Housing & Homeless Services
- Washoe County Human Services Agency
- Washoe County Manager's Office
- Washoe County Senior Services
- Washoe County Senior Advisory Board

Action Plan Objectives and Age-Friendly Domains

After over two years of board meetings, and small work group sessions, the Board settled on eight objectives with accompanying actions, stakeholders, leaders, resources and metrics. Their purpose is to have a road map to guide the Board and staff as they provide the highest quality senior services possible. By having local organizations share their expertise on ways to support and/or collaborate with Washoe County, they were able to prepare a thoughtful plan based on informed decisions. Each objective was drafted by small groups of Board members, presented to the board to be adapted and adopted. Senior Services staff provided their input and guidance during this process, and the Board is committed to working closely with staff to execute the plan. The Plan's key objectives, actions, goal dates and responsibilities are summarized below:

- **Volunteer Services:** Expand volunteer participation in Senior Services.
Plan: Create volunteer advisory work group to update volunteer program; hold trainings and volunteer fairs
Goal Date: Work Group created December 2025; Quarterly reports, starting July 2026
Responsibility: Washoe County Senior Services, Volunteer Advisory Work Group
- **Food Insecurity:** Expand seniors' access to food and nutrition services.
Plan: Convene annual roundtable on food insecurity; evaluate county food services, explore new sources of food services; quarterly senior breakfasts
Goal Date: December 2025 and ongoing
Responsibility: Senior Advisory Board, Senior Services, community partners
- **Social Isolation:** Increase social interaction among seniors.
Plan: Create working group/convene annual roundtable to address isolation; maintain Activities Coordinator, support more adult daycare programs, pilot a Neighbor-to-Neighbor program in Sun Valley, re-instate Friendly Visitor Call Program
Goal Date: December 2025 and ongoing

Responsibility: Senior Advisory Board, Senior Services, Sun Valley seniors

- **Housing:** Advocate for more affordable and accessible housing for seniors
Plan: Convene annual roundtable to discuss housing issues impacting seniors, advocate for rent stabilization and rent supports, track housing affordability, support shared housing models.
Goal Date: FY26-27
Responsibility: Senior Advisory Board, Washoe County Human Services/Senior Services
 - **Education and Resources:** Develop/promote/partner on a variety of educational programs reaching seniors, healthcare providers and caregivers annually
Plan: Offer programs for caregivers, end-of-life issues, grief counseling, aging in place, fraud prevention, elder abuse
Goal Date: January 2025 and ongoing
Responsibility: Senior Services, Senior Advisory Board, community partner experts
 - **Transportation:** Advocate for more accessible and affordable transportation options for seniors.
Plan: Convene annual roundtable on transportation needs of seniors, advocate for expansion of services, invite providers to senior centers for sign-ups and presentations
Goal Date: FY28-29
Responsibility: Senior Advisory Board, RTC Washoe, Senior Services
 - **Legal Protection:** Expand resources addressing legal rights and safety of seniors.
Plan: Convene legal services roundtable, expand funding for senior law center
Goal Date: December 2028
Responsibility: Senior Advisory Board, Northern Nevada Legal Aid/Senior Law Project
 - **Communication & Outreach:** Increase participation in county senior services and programs through focused outreach using all communication channels.
Plan: Promote availability of educational, social, recreation, transportation, social services on county website, and other communication channels (social media, flyers, radio/tv, press release, and more.; quarterly and annual reports.
Goal Date: Second quarter 2026
Responsibility: Senior Advisory Board, Senior Services, volunteers
- Action Plan Matrix Document:** As stated previously, the 2025 Washoe County Senior Services Master Plan is being submitted to AARP National Age-Friendly States and Communities as the Age-Friendly Washoe County, Nevada Action Plan for 2026-2029. Please see attached matrix.