

Master Plan for Aging Local Playbook Workgroup Meeting Summary, July 29, 2026

Updates on the Five Bold Goals

A. Housing for All Stages and Ages

Discussion focused on aging in place supports and related housing concerns.

The Volunteer Center reported that its Helping Hands program continues to provide small home safety modifications, including grab bar installation. Clay noted that some funding sources no longer allow grab bar installation due to evidence-based practice requirements. Lisa added that the Volunteer Center continues offering Matter of Balance and fall prevention programming.

The Seniors Council is developing a newsletter and invited organizations to submit flyers, announcements, classes, and events.

Scott shared additional updates regarding fall prevention efforts and home hardening support in Scotts Valley.

Damien's Ladder was noted as exceeding expected impact in helping households remain safely housed.

B. Health Reimagined

Members discussed medical access, oral health, and dementia-related developments.

Dientes Community Dental shared that its senior oral health PSA campaign is expanding nationally, with updated outreach planned for early 2027. Dientes also reported availability for new senior patients at Watsonville clinics.

Suzanne brought up the shortage of local physicians and the difficulty many residents face in getting timely medical appointments. Marilyn argued that broader political leadership must address systemic healthcare issues, including private equity's role in hospitals.

Philip shared updates from the Alzheimer's Association conference included research related to cannabis compounds for agitation in dementia and possible links between GLP-1 medications, lifestyle interventions, and reduced dementia risk.

A potential UCSC/UC Davis medical training pipeline was mentioned as a future strategy to increase the local physician workforce.

The PG&E Medical Baseline program was mentioned as a support for residents using medically necessary in-home equipment.

C. Inclusion and Equity, Not Isolation

Members shared community programming intended to reduce isolation and increase social participation.

Steven announced that Scotts Valley will hold “Coffee with the Legends” as part of the city’s week-long 60th anniversary activities.

Katie and Clay shared updates on a monthly guided nature walk program open to all ages in Watsonville. Intergenerational arts and crafts, a country western dance, and a senior prom were announced.

Darshana shared upcoming Scotts Valley programming including a memoir writing class, a planning series on senior transitions, and trail walks.

An upcoming Alzheimer’s-related film screening by a local Santa Cruz filmmaker was announced. Darshana also highlighted a nine-part caregiver education series related to Alzheimer’s disease.

Sheree referenced a microlearning video on oral health and dementia care created with the Alzheimer’s Association and partners.

D. Caregiving That Works

Discussion centered on support systems for caregivers and service gaps after hospital discharge.

Jessica from Del Mar reported plans to expand a caregiver support group at the Stroke Center to two in-person sessions. A possible relocation to the Aptos Library was mentioned, along with exploration of caregiver classes at the London Nelson Center.

The group discussed the gap between hospital discharge and the start of IHSS services. Potential resources identified included MSSP, Community Supports, APS, and Enhanced Care Management through Health Projects Center. APS was noted as a possible support in expediting IHSS. It was also clarified that IHSS may provide retroactive payment for up to two months in some approved situations.

E. Affording Aging

This section generated substantial discussion regarding financial strain and system navigation.

Suzanne shared Cost Plus Drugs as a potentially lower-cost option for medications. Ares noted that GoodRx is a widely accessible discount resource and generally has no eligibility barrier.

Participants discussed the challenges older adults face with internet billing, digital-only systems, and complex customer service processes. Concern was raised that app-based systems and online portals can be exclusionary for seniors. Stephanie emphasized the importance of allowing advocates and caregivers to help older adults navigate services. HICAP was recommended as a resource for annual Medicare Part D plan review.

California's "Click to Cancel" law was mentioned as an example of consumer protection that may have relevance for older adult access issues.

Katie mentioned Cruzio as a possible low-cost internet support resource for seniors.

Lisa announced a HICAP information session scheduled for October 26 during open enrollment.

Disaster Preparedness

Preparedness emerged as an important cross-sector issue.

The Volunteer Center shared that it offers LISTOS/Ready California preparedness trainings, including off-site presentations and large-print and bilingual materials.

Kendra offered County support for disability and functional needs preparedness outreach.

Darshana reported that a recent fire and fall prevention presentation at the Scotts Valley Senior Center was successful.

Regina promoted involvement in Cruz Aware, Firewise, and neighborhood-level preparedness planning.

Clay mentioned new legislation allowing Area Agencies on Aging direct access to emergency response centers, along with related county coordination work.

Veterans and Additional Community Updates

Katie reported that the recent Veterans Service Fair at the Watsonville Senior Center was successful and brought in veterans who had not previously visited the center. Members discussed opportunities to strengthen collaboration with the local Veterans Services Office. Kendra noted additional county-level veterans connections.

Action Items

Members to send flyers, announcements, classes, and event information for inclusion in the Seniors Council newsletter and broader distribution.

Continued exploration of financial education programming through community credit union contacts.

Ongoing coordination around emergency preparedness outreach and county collaboration.

Clay encouraged the group to think about the next phase of the workgroup: not just sharing updates internally, but better communicating collective progress to the public, elected officials, funders, and the press. He continued by encouraging members to use the mailing list between quarterly meetings and emphasized that the group is a strong, collaborative team.

Announcements & Upcoming Events

Falls prevention classes in Prunedale to begin August 12.

HICAP information session scheduled for October 26 during open enrollment.

Continued invitation for organizations to use the mailing list between quarterly meetings.