



MASTER PLAN FOR AGING

Insights from a Human-Centered
Design Process

Greater Good Studio
The SCAN Foundation

OUR PROCESS

To ensure that the Master Plan for Aging honors and responds to the diverse realities of Californians, Greater Good Studio spent the last several months learning from older adults, people with disabilities, and those who support them.

We conducted “day in the life” research sessions with over 20 older adults and their care teams to understand their activities, behaviors, needs, and assets related to their long-term care and quality

of life. We talked to people in their homes, went on walks in their neighborhoods, accompanied them while they got their groceries and medicine, and even shadowed them as they volunteered or spent time with family and friends.

We worked closely with regional coalitions throughout the state to identify and meet with individuals living in rural, suburban, and urban communities. We learned from a broad cross section of individuals of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, income levels, ability levels, and housing situations.



With the regional coalitions and The SCAN Foundation, we facilitated five community design workshops that were attended by over 300 stakeholders, including older adults, people with disabilities, social service providers, policymakers, elected officials, and research participants. We shared these insights from our research, and invited workshop attendees to generate further questions and brainstorm

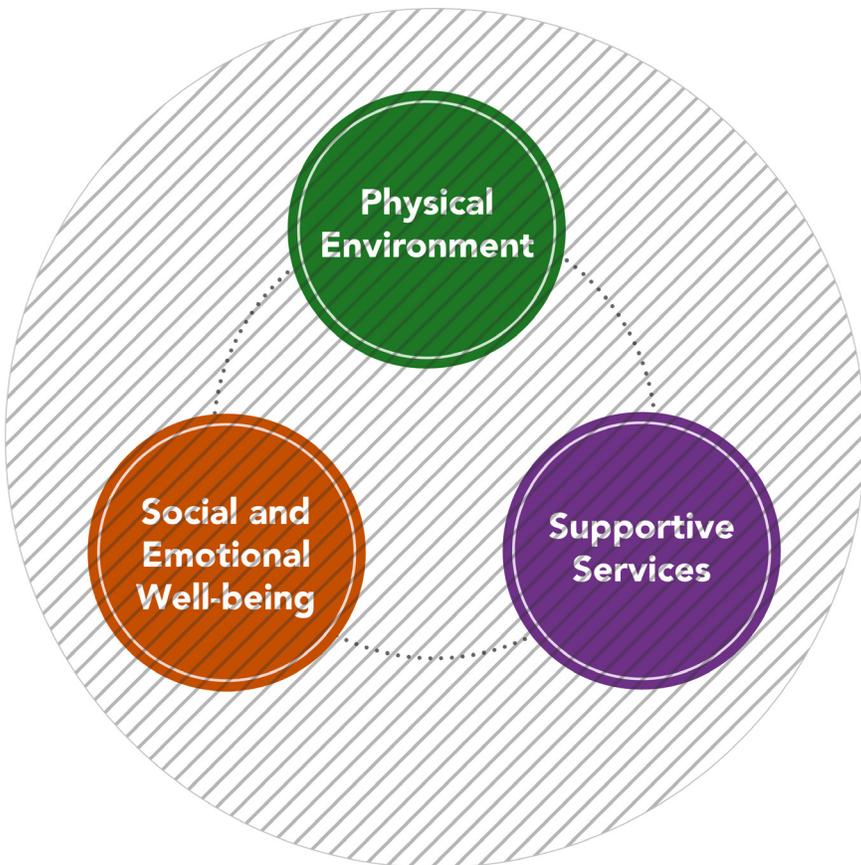
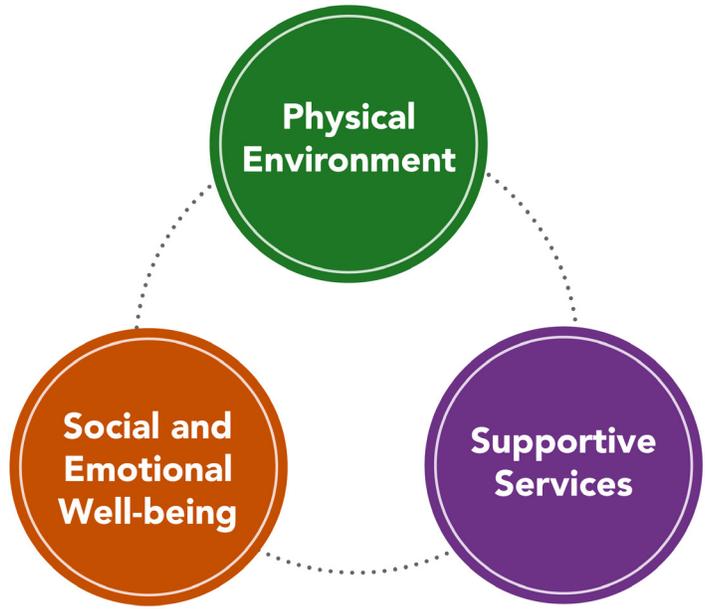
ideas in response to the challenges we heard. Collectively, the workshops generated over a thousand concepts aimed at improving the experience of aging in California. These concepts are the basis for strategies and ideas for policies, programs, and tools that will be included in a final set of recommendations that will be made available later in the fall.



QUALITY OF LIFE ELEMENTS

We learned that there are three areas that deeply impact the ability for older adults to fully thrive.

The **physical environment** - their homes, their neighborhoods, and the amenities that are, or are not, present; **supportive services** - the formal supports available to them, be it health care, meal delivery, care coordination, transportation, or otherwise; and **social and emotional well-being** - their overall mental health, how valued and supported they feel, and the quality of their relationships with others.



There are also additional factors - such as race, gender, ability, economic status, and sexual orientation - that can impact one's overall experience and make aging more difficult.

INSIGHTS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Below are the insights that emerged from research pertaining to the physical environment.

NEIGHBORHOOD

- > The physical places older adults and people with disabilities live in matter. They can be supportive, providing safe and easy access to food, transportation, and health care and encouraging social interactions; or they can be withering, limiting their mobility, social connectivity, and overall well being.
- > Living close to major polluters can affect everyone's health, but older adults and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to the health implications.

TRANSPORTATION

- > The well-being of older adults and people with disabilities can become compromised when they are not able to access basic needs and amenities due to a lack of transportation options that are safe, reliable, flexible, and/or affordable.
- > When mobility is lost for reduced for older adults and people with disabilities, there is also a profound loss of their independence.

HOUSING

- > The need for high quality, accessible, and affordable housing is dire. Those that have it struggle to keep it; those that don't have it search and wait for years.
- > Navigating confusing housing rules and lengthy processes is so arduous that even social service providers have difficulty.
- > Homelessness is not solved simply by providing a roof over one's head, though it is a good place to start.

INSIGHTS

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Below are the insights that emerged from research pertaining to supportive services.

HOLISTIC SERVICES

- > The people setting regulations and policies are often not the ones needing to follow them, leaving people on the ground to figure out how to actually make them work for their needs.
- > Personalized, customized, and dignified supportive services can make the difference between care that works and care that hurts.
- > While some people need specific services to meet specific needs, others have a broader array of needs that are best addressed in a coordinated and holistic way.
- > Some people are lucky enough to find someone to guide them through the complicated landscape of supportive services. Others are not so lucky, and are left to cobble resources together.

LONG-TERM CARE

- > The concept of long-term care is not generally understood, so most adults don't plan for it, and are facing limited options when it is needed.

CAREGIVING

- > The compensation that caregivers receive often does not reflect the actual time and effort they put in to truly meet the needs of their clients.
- > Caregiving to a loved one is a financially, physically, and emotionally demanding role. Sometimes, the demands of the role overshadow its rewards.

INSIGHTS

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Below are the insights that emerged from research, pertaining to the social and emotional well-being.

ELEVATING AND CELEBRATING AGING

- > Even though no one can escape aging, we have deprioritized it as a society, characterizing it as something to be feared, burdened by, or simply ignored, rather than something to elevate and celebrate.
- > Many older adults have experienced trauma in their life that has gone unaddressed. Those traumas continue to show up in their lives and can affect their health and overall well-being.

PLANNING FOR AGING

- > While we plan for many aspects of our life and sometimes even our death, most of us don't plan for aging.

CAREGIVING

- > Caregiving to a loved one is a financially, physically, and emotionally demanding role. Sometimes, the demands of the role overshadow its rewards.
- > Having supportive family and friends around makes other life challenges much more manageable.

JOB/VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- > Older adults and people with disabilities have a wealth of knowledge, skills, and experiences they want to offer society, but their value is not always recognized and their wisdom is underutilized.
- > Older adults and people with disabilities want to engage in activities that bring their life purpose and meaning, and want to do so in ways that challenge them and push them to grow.
- > The active lifestyles older adults are leading (or want to lead) don't always match the sedentary perception of retirement that people have.