

# AGE+DISABILITY FRIENDLY NOVATO



## Three-Year Action Plan

2025- 2028



# AGE + DISABILITY FRIENDLY NOVATO

A circular sunburst graphic composed of numerous thin red lines radiating from a central point, positioned to the right of the main title.

**In Partnership With**



**CITY OF NOVATO**  
CALIFORNIA



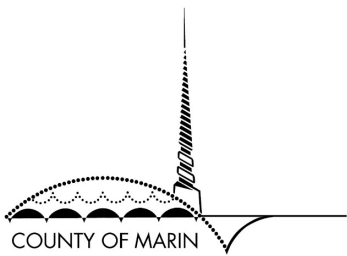
Marin Aging and  
Disability Institute

**Prepared By**



Waypoints  
Strategies





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May 14, 2025

Rafi Nazarians  
Advocacy Director  
AARP California  
200 S. Los Robles Ave., Suite 400  
Pasadena, CA 91101-2423

Dear Mr. Nazarians,

I am pleased to write in strong support of the Age and Disability Friendly Novato (ADFN) Action Plan 2025–2028, developed in collaboration with the City of Novato, local stakeholders, and community partners, with generous support from the California Department of Aging through the Local Age and Disability-Friendly Planning (LADAP) Grant.

This comprehensive plan is the result of a year-long, community-driven effort — informed by robust public input, staff leadership from the City of Novato’s Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, the guidance of the Marin Aging and Disability Institute and Waypoints Strategies, and the enthusiastic engagement of Novato residents. It reflects our shared commitment to making Novato, along with the County of Marin, a more inclusive, accessible, and livable community for residents of all ages and abilities.

The ADFN Action Plan identifies strategic priorities based on community feedback and a thorough local needs assessment. It aligns with the broader goals of California’s Master Plan for Aging and reinforces AARP’s mission of fostering age-friendly communities across the state. From promoting safe and affordable housing, to increasing mobility and transportation access, to strengthening community connection and digital inclusion, this plan positions Novato as a model for responsive, equity-focused local planning.

I wholeheartedly support the ADFN Action Plan and commend AARP California for its continued advocacy and partnership in this vital work. As a County Supervisor, I remain committed to advancing policies that uphold the dignity, independence, and well-being of older adults and people with disabilities in our community.

Thank you for your leadership and for supporting efforts that help cities like Novato become stronger, more inclusive places for everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'EL' or 'Lucan' in a stylized, cursive script.

Eric Lucan  
Marin County Supervisor, District 5

# BACKGROUND

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## **The Age and Disability Friendly Novato Process**

In 2023, the Marin Aging and Disability Institute (MADI) received a grant from the California Department of Aging, Local Aging and Disability Action Planning Program. This grant was designed to support the formulation of Age and Disability Friendly Novato (ADFN) through the AARP process of conducting a community assessment and developing a three year Age and Disability Friendly Novato Action Plan. The goal of the assessment report is to reflect the current needs of older adults, people with disabilities and family caregivers.

This Action Plan, centered on community engagement and equity principles and practices, is designed to support the health and well-being of people of all ages and abilities while focusing on the policies, programs and services designed for older adults, people with disabilities and family caregivers.

## **Why Communities Need Age and Disability Planning**

Age and disability friendly planning is taking place at the state, county and local levels all across the U.S. and in other countries as a way to address the demographic shifts we have seen in the past 20 years and will see in our future. There are currently 11 States, 1 Territory, 290 Counties and 638 local Age Friendly communities in the Age-Friendly Network.



City of Novato staff participate in Ageism and Ableism Training

The County of Marin and the City of Novato's over-60 population is growing faster than any other age group. Residents age 65 and over make up 24% of the Novato population as of 2023.(U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). An additional 30% increase is expected in Marin in this demographic in the next ten years (State of California, Department of Finance Forecasting (2020-2060)).<sup>4</sup> Twelve percent of the Novato population has disabilities.<sup>8</sup> This number grows proportionally with the increase in older adults.

According to AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving, roughly one in five US adults are unpaid family caregivers.<sup>20</sup> On average family caregivers provide 20 hours of caregiving services each week- on top of their full-time jobs.<sup>20</sup>

### **How the ADFN Action Plan is Tied to the State Master Plan on Aging**

The State of California Master Plan on Aging<sup>5</sup> includes goals and strategies for people with disabilities and caregivers, along with older adults. The Master Plan for Aging is a “blueprint” to prepare the state to address the coming demographic changes and to address not only the need's of today's older adults, but to create a plan for aging across the lifespan.

One of the strategies is The Master Plan for Aging Local Playbook, “designed to assist local government communities in building environments that promote an age and disability friendly California.” (California Department of Aging, 2022). The grant program funding Novato's Age and Disability Friendly initiative originates from the strategy and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.



## Using Storytelling for Prioritizing and Planning

Over the past year and a half, many Novato residents chose to share with us their personal experiences of life and living in Novato. One individual shared an anecdote about an ancestor of his/hers, who founded the City and also worked on Grant Avenue when it was just a dirt road. We also heard from residents who, at a young age, had immigrated to "the beautiful garden of Novato" and grew to raise children and grandchildren here. Parents raising children with disabilities, as well as adults living with disabilities, shared stories of their struggles in finding connection, participation and inclusion within the local community, as well as finding the services necessary to meet their needs. Caregivers expressed their frustration in balancing self-care with the responsibility of caring for a loved one with a disability. Veterans let us know about their community work with the Rotary. Others told us about how it felt to be homeless in Marin and to transition to living in Novato at Homeward Bound. These stories and the stories about aging and being disabled in Novato informed our ADFN Assessment Report and the priorities of this Action Plan.

You can see and hear many of these residents tell their stories on the [Marin Age and Disability Friendly Novato website.](http://MarinAgeandDisabilityFriendlyNovato.org)

[agedisabilityfriendlynovato.org](http://agedisabilityfriendlynovato.org)



Katherine



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# Community Profile: The City of Novato

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The northernmost City in Marin County, California, Novato is 29 miles north of San Francisco and 37 miles northeast of Oakland. Novato's population of nearly 52,000 and large area of 28 square miles, leads to a lower population density. These factors, in addition to the ample open and space and abundance of public parks in and near Novato, create the rural environment locals know and love.

Originally home to the Coast Miwok, Novato's native history is honored and recognized, geographically in and around the county, and historically in local museums. Novato was settled in the 1800's, and after a post WWII population boom, incorporated as a City on January 20, 1960. Residents and visitors appreciate the historic charm of downtown Novato with its pedestrian-friendly spaces and blooming landscapes, which collectively create a welcoming environment for residents and visitors alike.

The City Council is made up of five members, elected by district to overlapping four-year terms. The Mayor and Mayor Pro-tem are selected for a one-year term from among the members of the City Council. Operationally, the City governs under a council-manager form of government.

Novato is home to many different types of neighborhoods some that benefit from being near the Bay. Neighborhoods like Bahia offer water access and great bird-watching. The Hamilton neighborhood also has walking trails, parks and a City pool that residents flock to for recreation. Residents enjoy the proximity to the Napa and Sonoma Valleys and Point Reyes National Seashore.

In addition to water access, Novato provides a number of sporting opportunities including programs at the Hamilton pool, striped courts for pickleball, bocce ball courts, many soccer and baseball/softball fields, golf at Marin Country Club, a skate park, and school and youth programs that are enjoyed by family members of all ages. Novato is home to the North Bay's biggest 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade downtown which is organized by volunteers that bring people and family together to celebrate the City and residents.

# Demographic Profile

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## DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE COUNTY AND NOVATO

### **Aging in Marin County**

In 2023, Marin County was declared one of the fastest aging counties in the US. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020-2023).<sup>1 2</sup> Since 2014, the Marin County population 60 years and older has increased by 44% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).<sup>3</sup> An additional 30% increase is expected in this demographic in the next ten years (State of California, Department of Finance Forecasting (2020-2060)).<sup>4</sup> Marin residents aged 60 and over are projected to reach 42 percent of the population in 2041.<sup>5</sup>

### **Aging and Disability in Novato**

Novato's 2020 population of 53,225 makes it the second largest City in Marin County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Since 2010, Novato has had a 9% increase in the portion of the population 60 years and older.<sup>6</sup> Residents age 65 and over make up 24% of the Novato population as of 2023. By 2030, the 65+ population is projected to be over 25%.<sup>7</sup> Increasing proportions of older adults in communities have brought similar changes in disability demographics.<sup>7</sup> Twelve percent of the Novato population have disabilities.<sup>8</sup> Seven percent of Novato residents with disabilities are under 65 years.<sup>9</sup>

### **Caregivers in Novato**

With the increase in community members over 60, and with disabilities, chronic diseases and functional challenges, family and friend caregivers have become the providers of complex care in our communities. Twenty-two percent of survey respondents said they were caregivers. A significant proportion of caregivers in Novato are older adults. Thirty-nine percent of caregivers have a disability or conditions that impact their life.



## NOVATO DEMOGRAPHICS ACCORDING TO THE 2020 CENSUS<sup>10</sup>

- Novato's total population in 2020 was 53,225
- Median age is 48.6 years.
- Residents age 60 and over (31%); approximately 1 in 3 residents)
- Novato's cost of living is 7% higher than the California average<sup>11</sup>
- Racial demographics for total population
  - 63% White
  - 27% Hispanic or Latine
  - 13% Two or more races
  - 4% Asian
  - 4% Black or African American
  - 0.8% American Indian
- Per capita income - \$55,813
- Marin has the highest poverty rate in the Bay Area with 14.4% of its residents living in poverty. The poverty threshold of a family of 4 that rent is \$49,037. <sup>12</sup>
- Approximately 3.5% of residents 65+ years in one or two person households have incomes below the FPL <sup>13</sup>



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# The Path to Age and Disability Friendly Novato

Nearly ten years ago a group of volunteers began to look at the quality of life for aging adults in the City of Novato with the intention of joining the World Health Organization Age Friendly Global Network. Since then the AARP has become the U.S. National affiliate for the age-friendly network and the City of Novato's General Plan 2035 update was adopted in 2020.

The 940 state, county and local Age-Friendly communities organize their work to create a social and built environment that supports the well-being of both older residents and people of all ages. The State of California Master Plan on Aging<sup>15</sup> asks counties, cities and towns to develop local plans that are age and disability friendly.

*"An age-friendly community enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age. It is a place that makes it easy for older people to stay connected to people who are important to them. And it is a place that helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages and provides appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves."*

*-World Health Organization*

## Age and Disability Friendly Domains

- Affordability of places to live
- Accessible infrastructure
- Inclusive and safe public Spaces
- Inclusive activities and events
- Employment and civic participation
- Accessible communication of information
- Community health support
- Respect and Inclusion

## Goals of City of Novato General Plan

- Great Places
- Living Well
- Economic Vitality
- A City That Works
- Environmental Stewardship

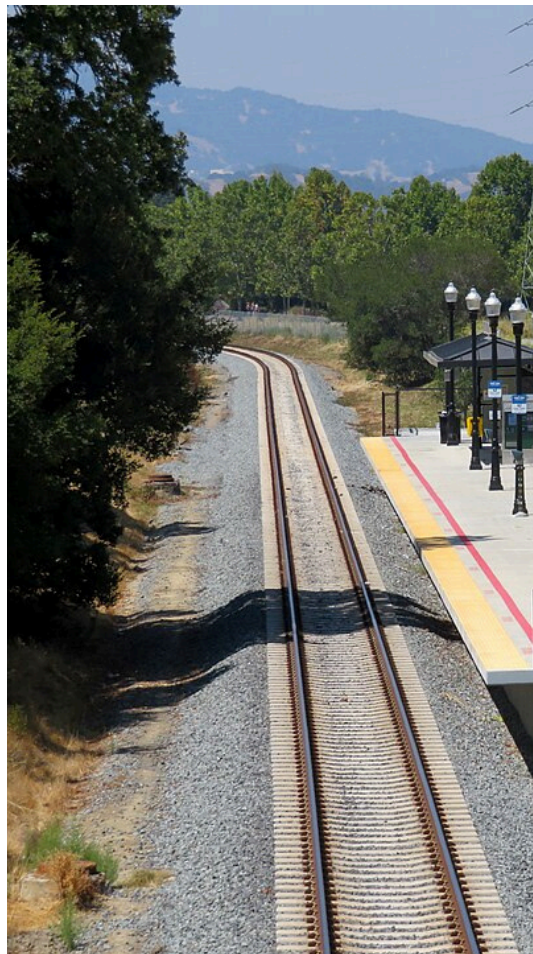
**The first four goals provide the framework for this Action Plan and the Age and Disability Friendly domains**

# The Path to Age and Disability Friendly Novato

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## **Marin Aging and Disability Institute (MADI) Receives Grant, Planning begins**

- In March of 2023 the California Department of Aging made a request for grant proposals that aligned with the timing of local citizen discussions of resurrecting the Age Friendly Novato initiative.
- A grant from the (CDA) was awarded to MADI to support Novato's local planning process (Jan.2024). In early 2024, a citizen task force formed with MADI as the fiscal sponsor. They formed an advisory committee of resident advocates for older adults and people with disabilities. The City's Parks, Recreation & Community Services Director supported the group as a staff liaison. The ADFN Initiative joined the Age Network of the 11 Age and Disability Friendly Communities for monthly collaborative meetings.



SMART Train Station Hamilton

## **Community Engagement with Ageism and Ableism Education (Oct.-Nov.2024)**

- MADI developed ageism and ableism training and hosted in partnership with ADFN bringing it to community members and for City staff to build awareness of resident experiences and change mental bias models while cultivating a network of champions for inclusive planning.

## **Launched community assessment process (Dec. 2024-March 2025)**

- A resident working group, in collaboration with the ADFN steering committee, developed a draft survey tool to collect community input that was refined and distributed online and in paper for 7 weeks from February to March 2025 in English and Spanish.

- MADI and ADFN conducted a series of small focus groups with older adults, families with children with disabilities, recently homeless, adults with disabilities, and caregivers developing a list of strengths and challenges pertaining to the age-friendly domains of community livability.

### **Application submitted and accepted by the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities (April-May 2025)**

- In partnership with the City of Novato, the ADFN Initiative filed an application with AARP in April, 2025 to be accepted into the network.

### **Age and Disability Novato Assessment Report <sup>16</sup> (April 2025)**

- Summarized survey data and comments from community engagement process to inform development of Age and Disability Action Planning

### **Researched background information for Action Plan (March-April 2025)**

- Reviewed other cities Age-Friendly Action Plans
- Summarized the City of Novato's age and disability friendly assets and resources
- Reviewed results from the 2023 Marin County Older Needs Assessment <sup>17</sup>
- Reviewed the Novato General Plan 2035,<sup>7</sup> Novato Parks Master Plan<sup>18</sup> 2024, and the City Strategic Plan <sup>19</sup>

### **Developed Age and Disability Friendly Novato Action Plan (April 2025)**

- Present plan to Recreation, Cultural, and Community Services Advisory Commission
- Present plan to Novato City Council for acceptance

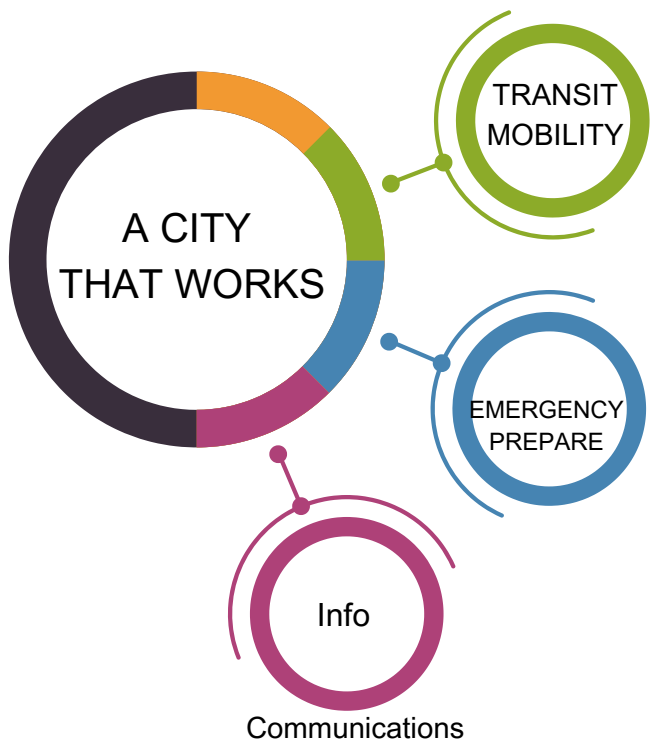
### **Implement and evaluate Action Plan July 2025-June 2028**

- Create new ADFN Action Plan Committee to oversee prioritization, execution, coordination of action items
- Create system of measurement of progress for action items.
- The Action Plan is intended to be a living document which can be revised annually or as needed.
- An evaluation of this Action Plan will begin around September, 2027 and a



# GENERAL PLAN GOALS WITH THE AGE AND DISABILITY FRIENDLY FOCUS AREAS

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# Themes Derived from the Assessment Process

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Many programs, services and places in Novato support an active and healthy community for people of all ages. The recommendations from this Action Plan are designed to build on what is already in place, to address the gaps and to be more inclusive of people of all abilities. Given how rapidly society changes, this Action Plan is a living document open to changes and new prioritization, remaining a dynamic plan in evolving situations.

Several themes rose out of the community assessment process: the data, comments and conversations that cut across all of the focus areas and the plan's recommendations.

## **An Age and Disability Friendly Novato -**

### **Promotes Positive Perceptions of Aging and Disability**

- Addresses exclusion by providing inclusive opportunities for activities, events and communications
- Creates inclusive communications with diverse images

### **Values inclusivity**

- Promotes opportunities to share diverse cultural, age, ability and race perspectives
- Brings generations together to create understanding, opportunities for connection and lifelong learning.

### **Supports residents providing resource information**

- Promotes independence and well being and enhances accessibility
- Awareness of programs encourages social connection

### **Includes older adults, people with disabilities, their families and caregivers as part of the solution.**

- Bring their voices into the decision making
- Use the stories of their lived experiences to inform solutions

# Living Well

## **According to the WHO and the AARP, an Age and Disability Friendly Community**

- Connects all residents to the programs, services and education they need to stay healthy, live long and live well.
- Has affordable, accessible and inclusive events, activities, and community spaces. encouraging relationships and understanding across age groups and ability levels.
- Encourages feedback from residents on changing needs for programming.

Ideas for Community Strengths and Challenges came out of the Assessment process

## **COMMUNITY STRENGTHS**

- Eighty-two percent of survey respondents living alone indicate they have meaningful relationships
- Eighty-eight percent of Novato residents include self-care in their schedules.
- Seventy-six percent of survey respondents exercise for fitness.
- Marin County Libraries in Novato and library events
- Margaret Todd Senior Center's (MTSC) Classes, Programs and Services
- Twice a week Congregate Meal Program at MTSC
- Eighty-three percent of respondents know about activities and events offered by Novato Parks and Recreation.
- Hamilton Community Pool and Novato Gymnastics Center
- Novato's Parks and Open Spaces: including Pioneer Park, Marin's first inclusive playground, Miwok Park with the Museum of the American Indian

## **COMMUNITY CHALLENGES**

- Lack of an intergenerational space for multigenerational connections and programming
- Lack of inclusive, affordable and accessible activities, events and spaces for youth, teens and young adults with disabilities
- Lack of resources and services for individuals with disabilities or those with complex care needs
- Many residents are not aware of existing services, programs or classes.

# Living Well

## COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

- Need for more staff and resident training on interacting and working with individuals with disabilities
- Family Caregivers need resources, help navigating support services, training and respite care for their loved one to support them in their roles.
- Many older and disabled residents and caregivers feel isolated from community and they are physically disconnected from community and don't have their social needs met.
- Food insecurity is on the rise and 11% of survey respondents report being worried their food will run out before having money to buy more.

## ACTION STEPS

1. Promote disability related events and resources including support groups, inclusive summer camps, and advocacy opportunities.
2. Identify programatic gaps and needs for older adults and people with disabilities with focus on adaptive classes and summer programs for more complex needs.
3. Provide Inclusive Spaces Toolkit for the City that includes items to help make local events more accessible.



A Meals on Wheels Delivery



# Living Well

## ACTION STEPS

4. Expand resident technology expertise by promoting public resources and training that can improve quality of life, mobility, access, and social connection.
5. Create a local online hub of resources available to support older adults and people with disabilities. Explore offline channel options.
6. Host regular inclusive, multigenerational gatherings at libraries, parks or MTSC.



Advocating for access to nature and summer camps for all

# Great Places

## **According to the WHO and the AARP, an Age and Disability Friendly Community**

- Has housing that is affordable, safe, and conveniently located near public transportation.
- Provides options for affordable home maintenance, safety modifications, and support to live at home.
- Focuses on removing indoor and outdoor physical and programmatic obstacles to be welcoming and inclusive to diverse groups of people who live, work and visit Novato.

Ideas for Community Strengths and Challenges came out of the Assessment process

## **COMMUNITY STRENGTHS**

- Novato has managed to preserve its rural character around the suburban City preserving a large part of the land for community and natural resource areas.
- Homeward Bound Shelter, Housing and Support and Resources for Adults, Families and Veterans.
- Novato has streamlined the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) (City of Novato General Plan 2035).
- As part of the Housing Element, Novato allows Single Room Occupancy (SROs) units as a provision for affordable housing (City of Novato General Plan 2035).
- The City established rent controls for residential units within mobile home parks and adopted design standards for multi-family housing (City of Novato General Plan 2035).
- Novato is partnering with Habitat for Humanity on a major affordable housing project that will include 80 affordable homes.
- Novato has a vibrant downtown area and many open space trails.

# Great Places

## COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

- Seventy-two percent of survey respondents say it is extremely or very important to remain living in Novato, and 69% want to remain in their homes, but 65% don't believe their home would allow them to live independently while aging.
- Forty-eight percent say the cost of maintaining the home might cause them to leave. 46% noted that home and yard maintenance would be the reason to leave.
- One-third of adults 60+ sustained a fall in the last year (2023 Marin County Older Needs Assessment). 20% of ADFN Survey respondents reported 1 or more falls in the last year (2025 ADFN Community Assessment Report).
- Many survey respondents noted concerns about the homeless encampments.
- Thirty percent of women survey respondents are living alone (2025 ADFN Community Assessment Report). Housing affordability struggles are more pronounced for women, low-income, Hispanics and African-Americans (2023 Marin County Older Needs Assessment).



Homeward Bound of Marin in Novato



# Great Places

## ACTION STEPS

1. Collaborate with organizations that support affordable creative housing alternatives and promote available informational sessions and local tabling opportunities.
2. Support Novato's current initiative and investment to bring affordable, accessible housing.
3. Advocate for accessibility improvements related to the Park's Master Plan.
4. Explore current resources for accessibility, aging in place and ADA safety assessments for resident homes.



Making trails for mobility devices

Editorial credit: Roger Mechan

# A City that Works

## **According to the WHO and AARP an Age and Disability Friendly Community**

- Has a variety of reliable, accessible and affordable transportation options.
- Offers mobility education that allows residents to be connected to all areas in the community.
- Provides access to the tools, resources and education to be ready and resilient during emergencies of all types with special attention to the most vulnerable populations.
- Has information that is timely, multilingual, is available in multiple formats, is accessible and is distributed widely.

Ideas for Community Strengths and Challenges came out of the Assessment process

## **COMMUNITY STRENGTHS**

- Most survey respondents (95%) said they feel safe in Novato and rate it as a very good to excellent place to live (54%) . The SMART train provides options for alternative travel (2025 ADFN Community Assessment Report).
- The City of Novato weekly E-newsletter and the Margaret Todd Senior Center monthly E-newsletters reach a large portion of the population.
- People who don't use email or text and who frequent MTSC are able to pick up flyers about programs and services.
- Twenty-one percent of survey respondents use public transportation every few weeks.
- Sixty-four percent of survey respondents say they are registered with Alert Marin.
- Sixty percent are prepared for a power outage.
- Most (72%) survey respondents noted that the way they receive information from the City of Novato is effective.

# A City that Works

## COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

- ADFN survey respondents were very concerned about the lack of convenience (45%) of and affordability (34%) of public transportation asking for more frequent stops and routes going to MTSC and medical providers.
- Thirty-nine percent are more likely to get a ride with family or friends, but many residents don't have family living nearby and friends will age out of driving eventually leaving a gap in how residents address their daily needs and medical appointments.
- For 13% of survey respondents, public transit isn't accessible for them.
- The survey produced a list of infrastructure improvement requests from respondents including sidewalk repairs, intersections for crosswalk safety, and street lighting).
- Only 21% of survey respondents know the City evacuation routes and 36% feel prepared for an evacuation.

## ACTION STEPS

1. Share the 2025 ADFN Community Assessment Report with key transportation partners, to elevate the needs and concerns of the community.
2. Bring more informational transportation options education sessions to MTSC and the libraries, and other community groups including the disability community based organizations (CBOs).



First responders connecting with children with disabilities at the 2025 Spectrum Safety Event.



# A City that Works

## ACTION STEPS

3. Collaborate with local partners to support emergency preparedness for residents with a focus on those with complex medical needs. Consider hosting regular educational workshops at MTSC with Novato Fire District and Novato Police Department.
4. Expand the reach of Novato Spectrum Safety event to older adults with developmental disabilities to build relationships between our first responders and our disability and aging community.



Building relationships between our first responders and Novato children with disabilities

# Economic Vitality

## **According to the WHO and the AARP an Age and Disability Friendly Community**

- Has affordable and accessible events, activities, and opportunities for social engagement, employment and volunteering.
- Welcomes the voices and lived experiences of older adults and people with disabilities into the community planning discussions that address their needs and services.
- Facilitates authentic connections between community members to increase community support, respect and a sense of belonging.
- Normalizes an intergenerational workforce and shifts the understanding of retirement.
- Builds awareness of family caregivers workplace needs by collecting their input and insights on effective support and resources.

Ideas for Community Strengths and Challenges came out of the Assessment process

## **COMMUNITY STRENGTHS**

- Residents appreciate and feel welcome in Downtown Novato and the MTSC.
- Twenty-five percent of survey respondents think that employment opportunities are fair to good. 17% think the opportunities are very good to excellent.
- While 47% of the survey respondents are retired, 21% work full time, 17% work part time and 8% are currently looking or may need to look for work in the future.
- The Novato Chamber has strong representation and ties with Novato leadership that position them to advocate for a strong business community.
- Workforce Alliance of North Bay provides services to job seekers and employers.

# Economic Vitality

- Forty-two percent of survey respondents volunteer in Novato.
- Thirty-seven percent of the survey respondents think there are good civic participation opportunities.
- Many Novato community groups welcome volunteers and members.

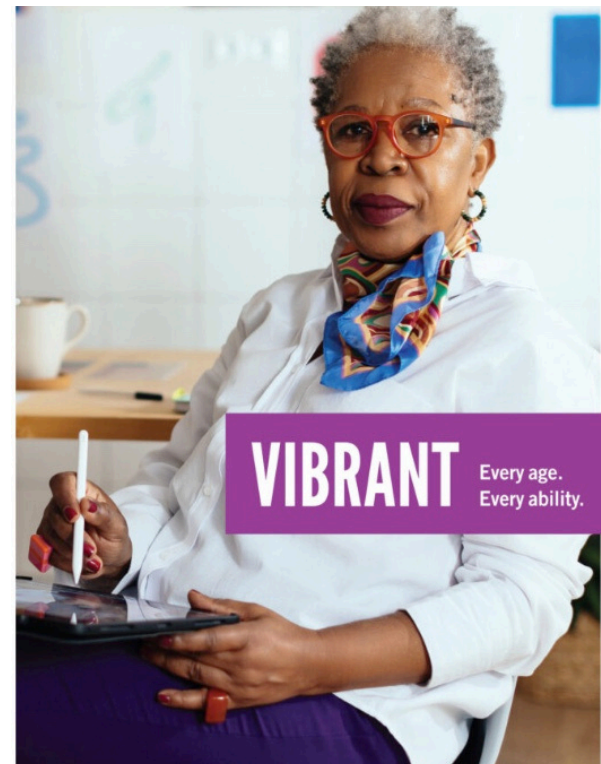
## COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

- It is difficult for people to find a comprehensive list of volunteer opportunities and civic engagement opportunities. Those who don't use the internet don't know about the City of Novato's "Get Involved" webpage.
- Many retired residents using Social Security as their main source of income are needing financial planning education and guidance to age in place. Many must consider the job market again as their cost of living increases.
- For those who need or want to continue to work, some find it difficult to learn the new methods of searching, applying and interviewing for jobs.
- Inclusion in City planning and community conversations is challenging when certain populations are not able to get to the Town Hall, online or to community spaces and advocacy groups.
- People with disabilities, caregivers, people with chronic or neurodegenerative diseases and who speak other languages struggle to make friends and participate in the Novato community.
- Few social opportunities and recreation activities for children with disabilities exist in Novato where they can play with non-disabled children.
- Unpaid caregivers say there are meaningful activities/experiences that they want to participate in, but can't, and there are no social opportunities for the ones they are caring for.

# Economic Vitality

## ACTION STEPS

1. Offer Age and Disability Friendly Business training to local businesses.
2. Create Aging and Disability Impact Awards to award to local organizations who excel in efforts to be age and disability inclusive.
3. Meet with the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Novato Business Association to share information regarding those individuals who are returning to the workforce. Explain the new users and purpose of internships.
5. Support the development of local affinity discussion groups for caregivers, older adults, parents of kids with disabilities and adults with disabilities. Connect them to other local and online group options as alternatives.



Credit: CTAgeWellCollaborative.org

# Supporting Lives and Strengthening All Futures

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## UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES

While 54% of Novato's population is non-white or mixed race, only 14% of the surveys were completed by people of color or mixed race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020. Table: Race).

**We cannot assume that the assessment data accurately represents the experience of the entire Novato Community, yet the data is still important to examine.**

- **More information is needed from these populations** to be inclusive in community planning and to advance equal access for all residents of Novato. The Hispanic-Latine and Asian populations may have different experiences. with aging and disability, and represent vital perspectives that must be understood to create a truly age and disability-friendly community. These two populations are projected to grow significantly in the future.
- **To foster future inclusive planning**, it is important to diversify the Age and Disability Advisory Council so that all communities have a voice in the initiative, bringing focus to underrepresented populations.
- **Build community partnerships** with cultural groups, local organizations and faith based groups to serve those populations.
- **Use focus groups and public forums** to discuss aging and disability experiences.

# SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION

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Discrimination against people based on their age, disability, class and race was reported by respondents through the survey. **Twenty-nine percent of the population reported one or more barriers (attitudinal, physical, social inclusion and communication)**

- Ageism and Attitudes Toward Seniors:
  - Seniors treated as less competent or invisible;
  - People assuming that aging individuals lack mental clarity or ability;
  - Stereotyping older people, treating them as inferior;
  - Social exclusion of elderly individuals, especially in community interactions;
  - Ageism in employment, with assumptions made about senior workers.



- Racial and Cultural Barriers:
  - Instances of racism or discrimination, including at public spaces and businesses;
  - Lack of racial or cultural diversity in the community;
  - Stereotypes about race and ethnicity affecting interactions in public spaces;
  - Social exclusion of minority groups, such as people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities;
  - ;Antisemitism or exclusion of Jewish individuals from some social or professional groups;
  - Discriminatory attitudes or harassment from community members based on ethnicity or perceived background.





Katie Gauntlett, Parks, Recreation & Community Services Director with Novato residents at the inclusive Pioneer Park.

- Disability and Inclusion:
  - Challenges for people with disabilities in finding accessible events or spaces;
  - People with developmental disabilities facing stigma or exclusion;
  - Lack of programs or activities that support people with disabilities or neuro-divergent individuals;
  - Issues with physical spaces not accommodating individuals with different abilities (e.g., parks, businesses);
  - Lack of support for non-disabled children to interact with peers who have disabilities.

## Living Well

Action Steps	Possible ADFN partners
1. Promote disability related events and resources including support groups, inclusive summer camps, and advocacy opportunities.	City of Novato, MADI
2. Identify programmatic gaps and needs for older adults and people with disabilities with focus on adaptive classes and summer programs for more complex needs.	MADI, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission
3. Provide an Inclusive Spaces Toolkit for the City that includes ideas to help make local events more accessible.	MADI, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission
4. Expand resident technology expertise by promoting public resources and training that can improve quality of life, mobility, access, and social connection.	MADI, Novato Libraries, MTSC, Novato Villages, Rotary and CBOs
5. Create a local online hub of resources available to support older adults and people with disabilities to age in their homes. Explore offline channel options.	City of Novato
6. Host regular inclusive, multigenerational gatherings at libraries, parks or MTSC.	Parks and MTSC, Libraries

### Great Places

Action Steps	ADFN Partners
1. Collaborate with organizations that support affordable creative housing alternatives and promote available informational sessions and local tabling opportunities.	Marin Housing Authority, EAH Housing
2. Support Novato's current initiative and investment to bring affordable, accessible housing.	MADI, Marin CountyCommission on Aging, Age and Disability Friendly Network
3. Advocate for accessibility improvements related to the Park's Master Plan.	MADI, Disability Coalition
4. Explore current resources for accessibility, aging in place and ADA safety assessments for resident homes.	San Geronimo Community Center, architects

### A City that Works

Action Steps	ADFN Partners
1. Share the 2025 Novato Community Assessment Report with key transportation partners, to elevate the needs and concerns of the community.	Marin Disability Coalition, Marin Villages, Marin Transit
2. Bring more informational transportation options education sessions to MTSC and the libraries, and other community groups including the disability community based organizations (CBOs).	Marin Transit, Marin Villages, MTSC
3. Collaborate with local partners to support emergency preparedness for residents with a focus on those with complex medical needs. Consider hosting regular educational workshops at MTSC with Novato Fire District and Novato Police Department.	Novato Villages, Marin Center for Independent Living, Novato Fire Dept.
4. Expand the reach of Novato Spectrum Safety event to older adults with developmental disabilities to build relationships between our first responders and our disability and aging community.	Spectrum Safety, Matrix, MADI Novato Fire and Police

### Economic Vitality

Action Steps	ADFN Partners
1. Offer Age and Disability Friendly Business training to to local businesses.	MADI, Chamber of Commerce
2. Create Aging and Disability Impact Awards to award to local organizations who excel in efforts to be age and disability inclusive	Center for Nonprofit Leadership, Age and Disability Friendly Marin Network
3. Meet with the Chamber of Commerce and the Novato Downtown Business Association to share education on the individuals who are returning to the workforce.	MADI, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association
4. Support the development of local affinity discussion groups for caregivers, older adults, parents of kids with disabilities and adults with disabilities. Connect them to other local and online group options as alternatives.	Parks and Recreation Libraries

# Age and Disability Friendly Novato Leadership

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## **ADFN Steering Committee**

Laura Vreeland Long, Chair  
Colleen Arnold  
Drew Bendickson  
Katie Gauntlett  
Sara Robinson  
Maria Rodriguez  
Lisa Swanson  
Tenesa Vuillemenot



Advisory Member Trish McCurdy  
with City Manager Amy Cunningham

## **ADFN Advisory Committee and Supporters**

Mari Avedano  
Sue August  
Alia Barksdale  
Connie Barker  
Pat Bennett  
Pranav Bhanushali  
Amy Cunningham  
Teresa Ehteshami  
Hanna Eide  
Pat Eklund  
Linda Henderson  
Katie Hughes  
Trish McCurdy  
Alicia Ncho-Ougie  
Tim O'Connor  
Karen Robles  
Peter Rubin  
Marilyn Sharp  
Valerie Stilson  
Julie Walters  
Nancy Weber

## **Marin Age and Disability Friendly Network**

Age Friendly Belvedere/Tiburon  
Age Friendly Corte Madera  
Age Friendly Fairfax  
Age Friendly Larkspur  
Live Well Mill Valley  
Age and Disability Friendly Novato

Age Friendly Ross  
Age and Disability Friendly San Anselmo  
Age Friendly San Geronimo and Nicasio Valley  
Age Friendly San Rafael  
Age Friendly Sausalito



# Acknowledgements

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Age and Disability Friendly Novato is extremely grateful for the meaningful partnerships with the City of Novato and the community, without which none of this movement towards a more inclusive Novato would be possible. We are thrilled to continue to build these partnerships to implement the critical action items outlined in this document.

**Age + Disability Friendly Novato (ADFN) Steering Committee** - Committee is composed of 7 members. ADFN is a collaborative effort between community members, local organizations, and the City of Novato to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all residents.

**The City of Novato's Parks, Recreation & Community Services (PRCS)** Department Director and Staff play a critical role in the Age + Disability Friendly Novato (ADFN) initiative, contributing significantly to the City's efforts to enhance livability and inclusivity for residents of all ages and abilities.

**The Margaret Todd Senior Center Facility Management** - MTSC is community hub for adults 50+ It plays a key role in promoting active aging and community connection and hosted numerous ADFN events.

**Homeward Bound of Marin** – Marin County's Chief Provider of Shelter and Supportive Housing for Homeless Families and Individuals. Hosted a focus group and community survey discussion meeting.

**County of Marin Supervisor Eric Lucan** (District 5)

**County of Marin Supervisor Dennis Rodoni** (District 4)

**Novato City Council**

**Recreation, Cultural & Community Services Advisory Commission**

**All Residents who recorded videos sharing their lived experiences**

**California Department of Aging**

**Jason Sarris, Chair, Housing and Homeless Committee of Novato**

**Neon Stian Inc., Stian World Videographer**

**North Marin Community Services**

**LilyPad Senior**

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Website: [agedisabilityfriendlynovato.org](http://agedisabilityfriendlynovato.org)

Copies of documents can be made available in alternative formats. For requests call (voice) (415) 899-8228 or by e-mailing [adfnovato@gmail.com](mailto:adfnovato@gmail.com)





# Novato Community ASSESSMENT REPORT

April 2025





# AGE + DISABILITY FRIENDLY NOVATO

A circular sunburst graphic composed of numerous thin red lines radiating from a central point, positioned behind the word 'NOVATO' in the main title.

**In Partnership With**



**CITY OF NOVATO**  
CALIFORNIA



Marin Aging and  
Disability Institute

**Prepared By**



Waypoints  
Strategies



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## COMMON THEMES AND SURVEY FOCUS AREA FINDINGS

The Age and Disability Friendly Novato community assessment was designed to gather data and insight to create a three-year action plan focused on enhancing the city's livability for all residents, particularly older adults, people with disabilities, and Caregivers. The assessment and planning were part of the AARP and California Department of Aging (CDA) Local Area Planning Process supported by a CDA grant. Age and Disability Key themes emerged across the survey focus areas:

### KEY THEMES

- **Inclusivity & Social Inclusion:** The City of Novato is readily engaging in inclusivity through innovative programs focused on its heterogeneous population (e.g., adult programs, inclusive playgrounds, youth-based environments), highlighting the need for more inclusive spaces, events & attitudinal changes. The mission: all are welcome and should feel included
- **Isolation & Social Connectedness:** Novato is a welcoming community and most people really enjoy life in Novato. However, as in many communities, barriers exist in Novato that prevent some individuals from leaving their home or traveling outside of their neighborhood. Lack of transportation is a major barrier, preventing people from feeling connected.
- **Accessibility:** Creating "Great Places" requires accessibility for people with disabilities. An accessible, inclusive city focuses on removing physical, transportation, and programmatic obstacles. As reported, accessibility remains a concern for all community members regardless of age. The community would like to work with the City of Novato relay their needs and discuss solutions.

- **Community Planning & Support:** Residents expressed their desire for improved facilities for the aging community and Individuals with diverse needs, reported as interest in an intergenerational community center. Diverse programs and community events, and improved caregiver support are also important needs.
- **Transportation & Mobility:** A City That Works improves transportation options, intersection and pedestrian safety. The survey indicates concerns about convenience, affordability and accessibility. Many survey comments offer suggestions for improvements.
- **Communication & Information:** While City communications work for many, for those respondents ages 70-84 information needs to be accessible and available in online and offline channels. It is essential to build awareness of local programs and important resources.
- **Economic Vitality:** Concerns exist around employment opportunities and the high cost of living.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Residents expressed needing enhanced support and communication to improve preparedness. Many (64%) do not feel prepared for emergencies. Only 36% are prepared for an evacuation.

## COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

- **Health and Social Connectedness:** Many people report being in good health. This impacts how they interact with others, their ability to socially engage, and improves their opportunities to pursue their aspirations. Most people report being socially connected or living with others in Novato and they feeling included and respected. This helps to combat isolation and empowers people to thrive.
- **Remaining in the Community:** A significant majority of residents wish to remain in their homes as they age, given the right support and modifications. Most people want to remain independent and autonomous as they age and remaining at home can have better health outcomes and provide stress reducing familiarity and comfort. Still most people need support to do so.

## COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

- **Use of Technology:** A majority of residents use mobile phones and computers, indicating a potential avenue for communication and service delivery. This provides convenient information channels for most of the population. Texts, emails and City mailings are the preferred form of communication, but exclude those without access to computers or mobile phones.
- **Appreciation for Existing Resources and Services:** Residents acknowledged and appreciate the specific and current City resources and services that assist and support them. Parks, libraries, Margaret Todd Senior Center and Marin Access Transportation were specifically mentioned in the survey by respondents.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Need for a Community Center and Programs:** There is a strong desire for a central community space and more diverse programming, particularly for teens, youth, and fitness activities. This presents an opportunity to create a hub that fosters social connections and provides inclusive activities for all ages and abilities.
- **Accessibility and Inclusion:** The community needs to address barriers faced by people with disabilities, including physical, attitudinal, and social inclusion challenges. This involves improving accessible parking, ensuring inclusive community events and playgrounds, and promoting a more inclusive environment.
- **Support for Aging in Place:** Many residents wish to age in their current homes, highlighting the need for housing that supports independent living, access to services, and transportation options.



The Novato Spectrum Safety event brings together the disability community and our first responders to build trust and connection

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Outreach and Inclusion of Diverse Populations:** Respondents report there is a need to better engage and serve underrepresented groups, including people of color, Veterans, and the unhoused. This requires targeted outreach, culturally sensitive programming, and addressing issues such as food insecurity and access to services.
- **Caregiver Support:** Caregivers face numerous challenges, including social isolation, financial strain, and difficulty navigating support services. Providing respite care, support groups, and better access to information and resources can significantly improve their well-being and ability to provide care.



Marin County Supervisor for District 5, Eric Lucan, participates in a Novato community workshop on Ageism and Ableism

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# Age and Disability Friendly Novato Formation

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Marin Aging and Disability Institute (MADI) is the recipient and fiscal sponsor of a California Department of Aging local planning grant. This grant is supporting the work of Age and Disability Friendly Novato-a citizen led task force. The grant was used to engage the Novato community in discussions around ageism and ableism, and, through a community assessment process, develop a three-year action plan. The plan aims to enhance the City's livability by addressing the evolving needs of Novato's older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers.

## **AN ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY BENEFITS ALL**



Novato resident and Member of Age and Disability Friendly Novato Valerie

Age and Disability Friendly Novato (ADFN) will use cross-sector collaborations to implement the actions identified in the plan by promoting existing and developing new programs, services and policies. The plan goals and actions will align with the City of Novato General Plan, Strategic Plan and Parks Master Plan. The goals and actions will also align with the California Master Plan on Aging.



# Assessment Methodology

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The ADFN Community Survey was created in collaboration between the ADFN steering committee, ADFN advisory committee, an ADFN Survey working group, the City of Novato, MADl and Waypoint Strategies. The goal was to create a survey that would provide meaningful insight and feedback from the Novato community with an emphasis on the target audiences of adults over 55, people with disabilities, caregivers, Veterans, the unhoused and the Hispanic/Latine population. This data helps identify critical areas of need for the future three-year action plan. The Steering committee included the City, MADl and Waypoints . The Advisory committee included committee members joined with the steering committee.

## **BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER WHO ARE DEDICATED TO MAKING CHANGE**

Survey revision began in October of 2024 with the creation of a working group that consisted of community members from the ADFN advisory committee. This working group met on three occasions to produce a template survey from surveys that had been created for other local Age and Disability Friendly communities. The ADFN steering committee, modified the existing template with the goal of reducing the number of questions and creating one cohesive survey for all individuals ages 18 and over. Emphasis was placed on making the survey accessible, ensuring clarity of items, and focusing the questions on the critical data points needed to develop a comprehensive action plan.



ADFN participation in the  
2023 Fourth of July Parade

# Assessment Methodology

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The revised survey consisted of 50 questions that hit on the critical domains outlined by AARP in their framework for communities becoming Age-Friendly. These include housing, transportation, health and safety, caregiving, social participation, employment, outdoor spaces and buildings, and inclusion. Survey was built and hosted on an online platform - PaperSurvey. This platform has robust privacy and security features, in order to ensure that confidential survey data is secure. It also allowed for both online and paper surveys to be easily uploaded with a streamlined data collection processes.

The survey, printed by a local company was available online and in print in both English and Spanish. The survey launched on February 7, 2025 and closed on March 21, 2025. Efforts to promote and give community access to the survey included the following:

- Postcards (English and Spanish versions) were mailed to 20,933 Novato residents in zip codes 94945, 94947, and 94949. This mailing targeted single-family and multi-family homes, but excluded PO Boxes.
- Paper surveys were mailed to a random sample of 1,000 older adult residents (70+ years old). A Spanish version of the survey was also mailed to 409 low-income Hispanic residents. The Margaret Todd Senior Center (MTSC) and Novato Gymnastics Center were designated as drop-off locations for completed paper surveys.
- Social media content was shared across multiple platforms supported by the ADFN Steering Committee, MADI, and the City of Novato.
- Survey was shared in the City of Novato's monthly E-newsletter
- Marin County Board of Supervisors newsletters spread the word of the survey to their constituents.
- Volunteers posted flyers and postcards across the Novato Community, including non-profits, food distribution sites, day care and after school programs, at trailheads, in faith centers and the school district email blasts.
- In person tabling at the MTSC, included support for survey completion and access to paper copies. Survey shared in MTSC's monthly newsletter.
- Lawn signs with link and QR code of survey were posted at local parks.
- Presentation to the City Council sharing the initiative plans.
- Asking the Recreation, Cultural and Community Services Commission to encourage residents to respond to the survey.

# Assessment Methodology

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The ADFN Advisory Committee engaged with community members across the survey development process. This included hosting multiple focus groups with the **target populations: older adults, caregivers, people with disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities**. These focus groups helped frame the need and refine the questions included in the survey. **The two other target populations were the local unhoused community and Veterans.** Homeward Bound is the primary provider of Marin County homeless shelters and resources for homeless families, Veterans and individuals in Marin. A focus group was hosted on site for residents. Gift card incentives were provided at all focus groups to encourage participation.

As a result of this effort, 614 valid surveys were collected from respondents 18 years and older (533 digitally, and 81 paper copies). We had 12 invalid surveys (incomplete or blank) and 4 from residents under 18 years of age. This survey is a statistically significant representation of the 18+ population (95% with a 5% margin of error).

**The limitations of the survey data** included the small sample size for specific populations. With the under-representation of Veterans, the unhoused, and all communities of color, it is difficult to generalize the data to the experiences of Novato residents in those communities as a whole. The data analysis related to these groups focuses on major trends, as well as the critical insights provided through qualitative data, including themes that arose through open ended question responses, as well as data collected through focus groups.

## Target Populations Survey Collection and Data Significance Per Population

2023 Population Totals		Target Survey #	Actual Totals	Significance
18+	42,822 (79%)	381	614	95% (5%MOE)
55+	20,516 (39%)	378	500	95% (5%MOE)
With a disability	6,020 (11%)	362	198	91% (6%MOE) 34% with functional needs
Veterans	2,347 (5%)	331	42	<90%
Caregivers	8,564 (20%)	368	135	90% (7%MOE) Q18 (126) I am a caregiver Q19 (135) I care for .....
Hispanic/Latine	14,252 (27%)	373	33	<90%

Sources: 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5 year estimates subject tables, AARP/NAC *Caregiving in the United States 2020*.



Novato Resident and Story Video Participant Miramparo

# Population Demographics

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## Aging and Disability

In 2023, Marin County was declared one of the fastest aging counties in the US. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020-2023).<sup>1 2</sup> Since 2014, the Marin County population 60 years and older has increased by 44% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).<sup>3</sup> An additional 30% increase is expected in this demographic in the next ten years (State of California, Department of Finance Forecasting (2020-2060)).<sup>4</sup> Marin residents aged 60 and over are projected to reach 42 percent of the population in 2041.<sup>5</sup> As longevity research expands, more people are living to 100. Since 2010, Novato has had a 9% increase in the portion of the population 60 years and older.<sup>6</sup>

Increasing proportions of older adults in communities have brought similar changes in disability demographics.<sup>7</sup> According to the World Health Organization, “Disability is part of the human condition. Almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life, and those who survive to old age will experience increasing difficulties in functioning. Most extended families have a disabled member, and many non-disabled people take responsibility for supporting and caring for their relatives and friends with disabilities.”<sup>8</sup>

Novato’s 2020 population of 53,225 makes it the second largest city in Marin County. Residents age 65 and over make up 24% of the population as of 2023. Twelve percent of the population have disabilities.<sup>9</sup>

### **Novato Population Age Ranges and Race** (Source: 2023 ACS S0101)

63% White	27% Hispanic or Latine
4% Asian	4% Black or African American
0.8% American Indian	12% Some other race
15% Two or more races	

(U.S.Census Bureau, 2023 ACS Estimates)<sup>11</sup>

## Novato Survey Population Age Ranges

The largest proportion of the survey respondents is the 65-74 cohort reflecting the bump of the baby boom generation whose ages range from 61 to 79 years.<sup>10</sup>

Age Range	% of population
65-74	14.1
75-84	7.1
85 +	2.8

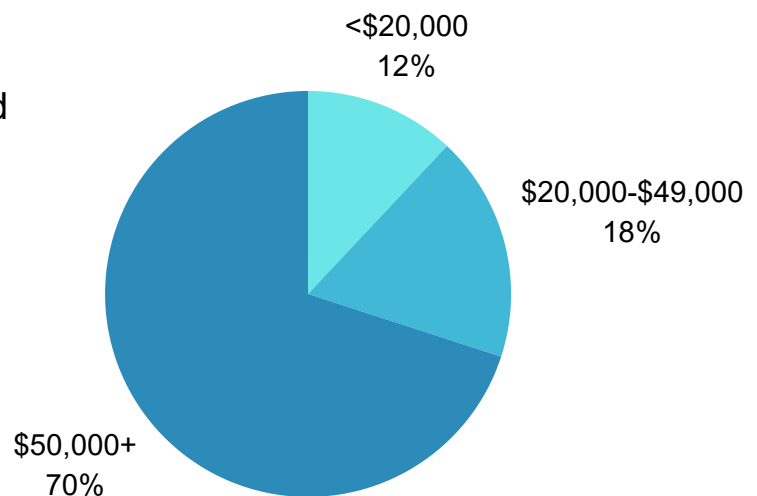
## Household Income

An estimated 9% of Novato's total population lives below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) of \$14,580 for a single person. This figure is slightly lower at 6% for the ages 65 years and over<sup>11</sup> (ACS 2023). The FPL refers to the income threshold below which a family or individual is considered to be living in poverty, For 2025, the National FPL for a single-person household is approximately \$15,650 annually, and for a family of four, \$32,150 annually.<sup>12</sup> Among Novato households headed by older adults age 65 and over, an estimated 11% have an income below \$20,000 per year; 18% have an household income between \$20,000-\$49,000, and 70% have an annual household income of \$50,000 or greater.<sup>13</sup>

**Table Showing Median Household Income by Race (ACS 2023)<sup>14</sup>**

Population	Median Household Income
White	\$125,364
Hispanic/Latine	\$78,089
Asian	\$124,802
Black or African American	\$92,619

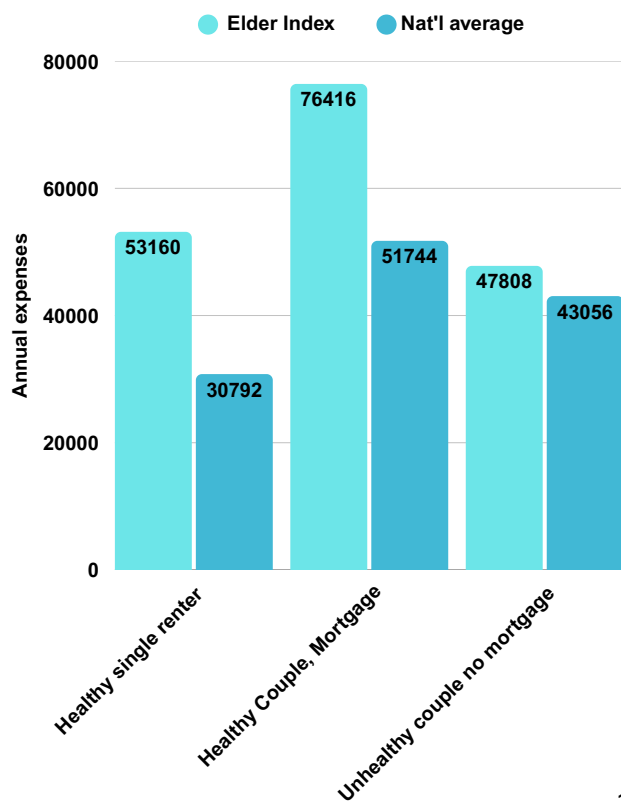
**Household Income Level for 65+ years.**<sup>13</sup>  
(ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B19037)





In Marin County, the threshold for economic self-sufficiency among older adults is below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Overall, 25% of Marin County residents are currently below the (FPL) standard for self-sufficiency in Marin County.<sup>15</sup>

The Elder Index is a better measurement of self-sufficiency for Marin. The Elder Index is a measure of the income that older adults need to meet their basic needs and age in place with dignity. Developed by the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts, the Index includes the local costs of housing, transportation, food, healthcare and essentials.<sup>16</sup> In the table below, the Elder Index figures are the annual expenses.



Elder Index Annual Expenses in Marin County 2025.<sup>16</sup>

65+ years annual Income	Elder Index-Renter	Elder Index Owner with Mortgage	% of population with that annual income
\$20,000	66,384	76,416	12%
\$20,000-\$49,000	66,384	76,416	18%
\$50,000-\$75,000	66,384	76,416	12%
\$75,000 +	66,384	76,416	58%

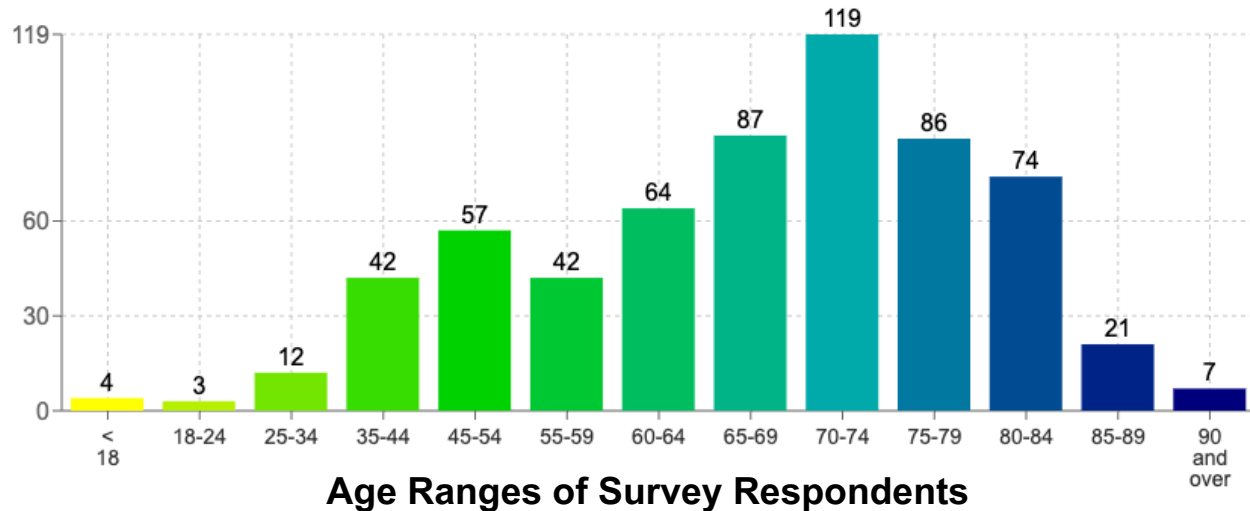
Annual income vs Expenses in Marin for 65+ years couple who are owning or renting<sup>16</sup>

The above charts explain why older adults on fixed incomes struggle to make ends meet. The County of Marin Older Needs Assessment found that 47% of those surveyed in Marin County say it is difficult to live on their total household income right now. Also, financial security is the concern that increased the most since 2019 in Marin (by 16% points since 2019)<sup>15</sup>

# Respondent Demographics

(Data below from City of Novato Community Survey unless specified)

## Age, Gender Identity, Race and Household



### Gender:

Female 70%  
Male 29%  
Nonbinary <1%

### Notable Findings

- 30% of women are living alone vs. 24 % of men (**survey**)
- More women than men are living with a roommate or housemate, with grown children and or grandchildren

### Race:

White	86%
Hispanic/Latine	5%
Asian	4%
Black or African American	2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%

### Household Composition

Partner or Spouse	58%
Alone	29%
Children or Grandchildren <18	13%
Grown children and/or Grandchildren	11%
Parent(s) or Guardian	3%
Roommate(s)Housemate(s)	2%
With Non-familial caregivers	0.3%

### Notable Findings

- Possible reasons for a high percentage of respondents being in the 65-74 age range are the survey distribution at the MTSC and younger adults not identifying with age and disability as the survey was titled.
- Among respondents, significantly more people ages 70-79 years live alone than in other age ranges

# The City of Novato General Plan Goals and the Survey Focus Areas

The Age and Disability Friendly values and goals strongly align with and support Novato's General Plan. The Age and Disability Friendly action plan will include items to preserve and enhance the distinct characteristics residents value and will offer guidance for improving the lives of all people of all abilities as they age. By actively working towards age and disability friendliness, Novato can simultaneously achieve its goals of creating a community where people can live well and contribute to the economy.

**The following graphic places the Age and Disability Friendly domains, that guided the assessment process and data collection, under the City of Novato General Plan Goals for the purposes of action planning.**

## **Living Well, Together**

A healthy, caring and interconnected community promoting well-being, safety and dignity and inclusion in indoors and outside.

Health And Wellness ● Activities and Programs ● Places and Spaces

## **Great Places**

Creating affordable housing options in proximity to community life that allow for aging in place ,including safe, inviting and accessible public and open spaces.

Housing ● Places and Spaces

## **A City that Works**

Improving city infrastructure; accessible add inclusive communications.Preparing residents for emergencies.

Transportation and Mobility ● Public Safety ● Information and Communication

## **Economic Vitality**

Promoting employment and economic security for all residents while encouraging volunteerism, engagement and participation in community decision making

Economic Security/Civic Participation ● Respect and Inclusion

# Community Comments about Living in Novato

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(Comments from survey and focus groups. All survey comments are located in the Appendix )

“I've been here for 18 years now and I'm involved in the committee, but I am also part of a multi-generational household, so **I have young children living with me and also my mom who's a senior and doesn't drive, so I provide support in that way.**”

“**Novato is very amicable and very friendly.** I mean really, really friendly. Even though I am here by myself with no family support, I always had family support. I belong to the Presbyterian Church of Novato and it's been a fantastic family for me.”

“... I like to walk the residential hills of Novato so many people have open space in their backyards. **And even though I'm walking residential streets, I'm seeing all this open space all around**”

“I live by myself and I drive everywhere. **But just the idea of not being able to drive and go around, even to get from my house to the bus stop** is impossible because of the big hill. All these negative thoughts cross my mind.”

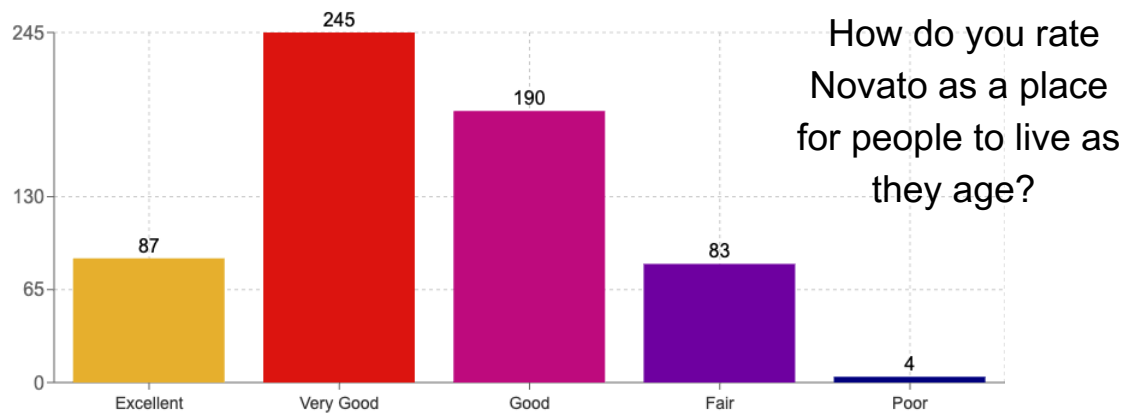
“Sometimes there are situations at home like changing a bulb or a small problem that I cannot get to, something that is too far away or **some simple things that you need in the house, but that people that have disabilities like I do, it's just impossible to get to those things.**”

“And for me it's been very hard to get back into finding groups. So I was **able to join the Senior Center** here with the meals Tuesday and Thursday. And this has been a really good way for me to meet people with the same needs and likes. Everything that **allows me and them to have a social life and a social contact and get out of the house.**”

# Living Well Together

## Health and Wellness

There are many factors that determine our individual health and well-being. The data associated with these determinants is located in several plan focus areas. This section covers the social, physical and behavioral choices. In **the next five sections the data and charts all come from the Novato Community Survey unless noted otherwise with a reference.**



**Fifty-four percent of survey respondents rate Novato as a very good to excellent place to live as they age. Fifty-five percent rate their physical health as very good to excellent.**

- **Social support:** While most residents live with others, 38% of adults 65 years and over live alone. Eighty-two percent of those living alone indicate that they have meaningful relationships compared to 87% of residents living with others. While this is a good measure for social connection, it doesn't negate loneliness or isolation.
- **Personal Safety:** Ninety-eight percent feel safe and respected in their home, 96% feel safe and respected in their current living situation and 95% in their neighborhood. Sixteen percent report falling at home once or twice in the past 12 months. Ten percent reported experiencing abuse or mistreatment in their home or community (included physical, emotional, financial or neglect). Twenty-one percent of adults 75+ in Marin County list crime, financial abuse and scams on on their top10 concerns.<sup>15</sup>

# Living Well Together

## Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the lack of access to sufficient nutritious food to meet basic needs. Eleven percent in Novato report being worried that their food would run out before having money to buy more as compared to 17% in the County. Eleven percent in Novato use local food programs. Eighteen percent report only sometimes or never having balanced meals. Women and people of color are twice as likely to be food insecure.<sup>15</sup> Because food insecurity is rising in Marin and federal funding for nutrition programs might be reduced, food insecurity is a significant issue to address.

## Fitness and Self-Care

The majority of Novato respondents (88%) include self-care activities in their schedules. Ninety-six percent communicate and visit with friends or family. Twenty-eight percent join religious or spiritual activities. Eighteen percent access mental health resources. While 83% know about them, 30% participate in the programs, activities and events offered through Novato Parks and Recreation. Margaret Todd Senior Center is used by 24% of the total respondents. Seventy-six percent said they exercise for fitness.



Learning new skills at the  
Gymnastics Center

Age Range	% of all reported visitors
60-69	24%
70-79	38%
80-90+	24%



# Living Well Together

## Future Dependence

Optimism bias, fear of losing independence, lack of awareness of options and other reasons contribute to why adults and the elderly might not plan for a time when they can no longer care for themselves. While 54% say they will rely on friends and family to help them when unable to care for themselves, 31% haven't thought about their future plans. Many commented on having long term care insurance, but the population needing care in home increases while the caregiver shortage continues in Marin. Presently, 25 % Novato respondents report difficulties with independent living some to all of the time. Ages 75-84 reported the most difficulty.

## Functional Challenges

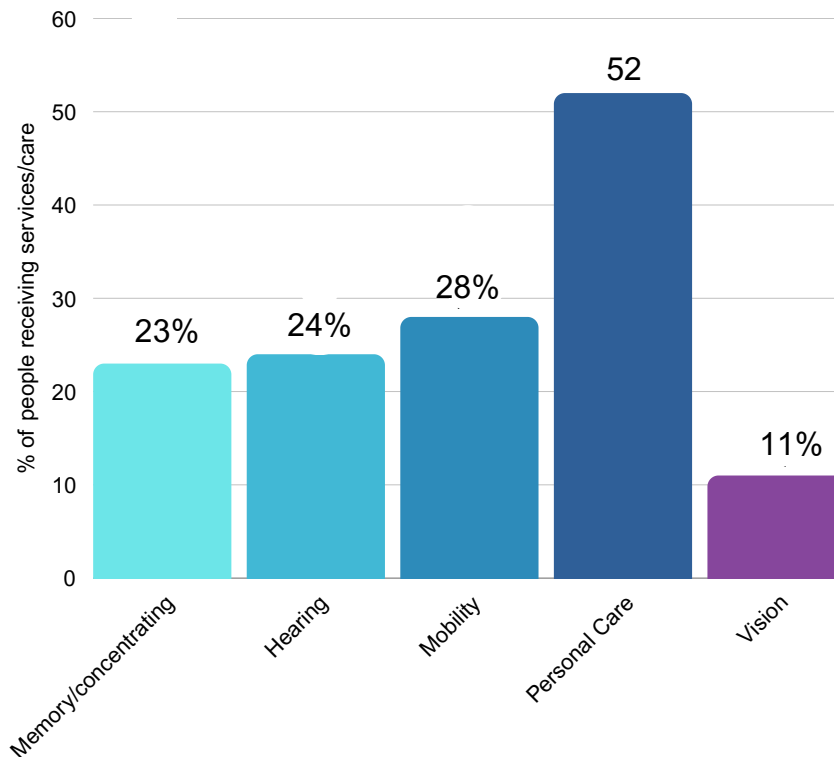
Fifty-nine percent of the people who reported having developed some functional challenges and or chronic health conditions have difficulty with independent living. Forty-one percent of those reporting aging into disability have difficulty with independent living.



Novato resident Trish and City Manager, Amy Cunningham

# Living Well Together

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% of people with functional difficulties needing services or care in Novato

## Activities and Programs in Novato

### Participation Today

- 53% visit the libraries
- 48% join recreational or educational activities
- 80% visit local parks, trails and nature walks
- 22% participate in organized clubs (Rotary, VFW, other)

# Activities and Programs in Novato

## Ideas for Future Planning from the Novato Community Survey

Rank	Desired Recreational or Cultural Activities/Spaces in Novato	Number of Responses
1	Community Center/Meeting Spaces	15
2	Activities/Programs for Specific Age Groups (Teens/Youth/Children)	13
3	Fitness and Exercise Programs (General)	12
4	Pickleball	7
6	Social Activities/Get-Togethers (General)	6
7	Arts and Culture Programs and Classes	6
8	Senior-Focused Programs (Beyond Margaret Todd Center)	6
10	Swimming Facilities/Programs	5
12	Intergenerational Programs	3
13	Dance-Related Activities	3
14	Community Gardens	3
15	Adult Education/Learning Classes	3
16	Tai Chi and Yoga	3
17	Programs/Support for Individuals with Disabilities	3
18	Outdoor Amenities in Parks	3
23	Specific Class Interests (Stained glass, painting, ceramics, etc.)	2
24	Pet-Related Programs (Petting zoo)	1
29	Specific Sports/Games (Bocce ball, team sports, card groups, chess)	2
30	Live Music/Performances	2
31	Relaxation/Well-being Classes	2
32	Open Meeting Spot Downtown	1
35	Other Unique Recreational/Cultural Suggestions (Birding, fishing, karaoke for autism, etc.)	1 each

# Suggested Improvements and Enhancements For Living Well Together in Places and Spaces

Accessibility for Disabled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>More accessible permit</b> Parking needed</li> <li>• <b>More activities</b> for children with disabilities</li> <li>• <b>Every playground and park accessible</b> to children and adults with disabilities</li> <li>• <b>More swimming pools with wheelchair access</b></li> </ul>
Community & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>An inclusive and active community center for all</b> ages/ethnicities/abilities/orientations</li> <li>• <b>More inclusivity for people with disabilities</b></li> <li>• <b>Arts involvement</b> geared towards anti racism</li> <li>• <b>More inclusive spaces</b></li> </ul>

(Assimilated from open comment questions in Novato Community Survey)



Council Member Eklund joins the Ice cream sundae servers at Margaret Todd Senior Center

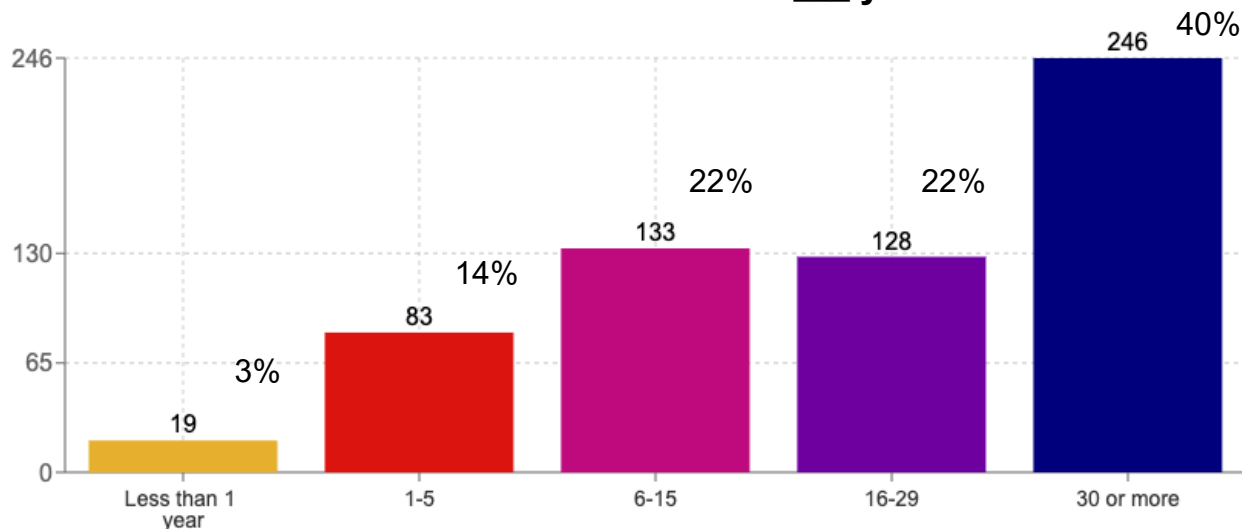


# Great Places

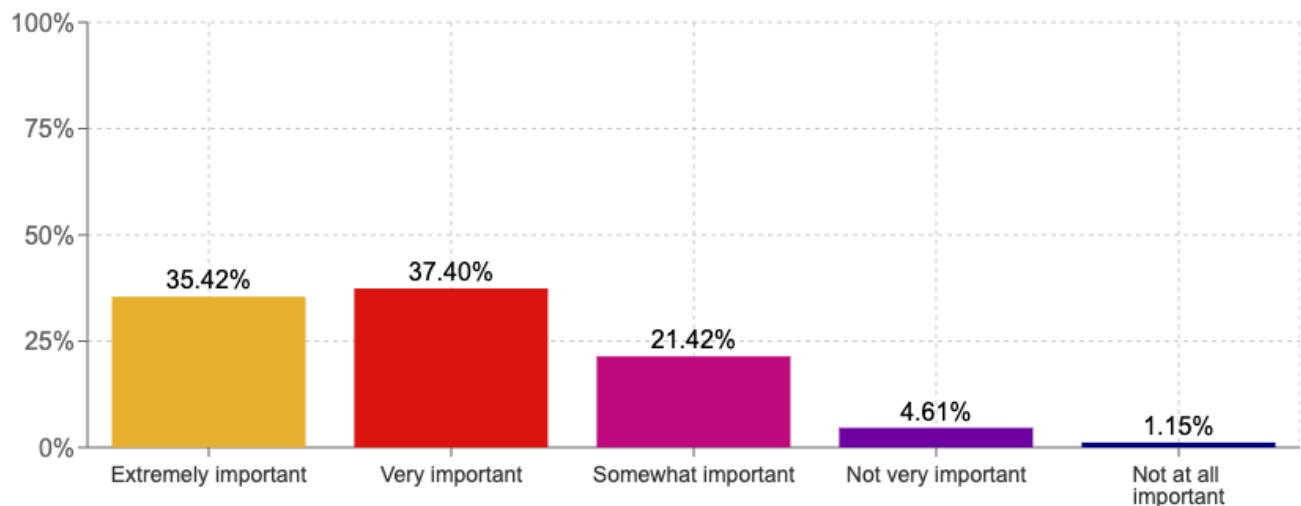
## Housing

Housing and city spaces are fundamental pillars of an Age-Friendly Community because they influence how individuals of all ages and abilities, particularly older adults and people who are disabled, can live with dignity, safety, and active engagement.

**I have lived in Novato for \_\_\_\_ years.**



**How important is it for you to remain living in Novato?**





# Great Places

## Remaining in Community

- Most (69%) of Novato's residents want to remain in their homes as they age, and most of the respondents (80%) to this survey own their homes.
- The major factors that would cause someone to leave Novato are:
  - Wanting a home that will allow one to live independently while aging (65%)
  - Being a walkable distance from services, shopping and parks (57%)
  - The cost of maintaining the home (48%)
  - The home and yard maintenance (46%)
- Wanting a smaller or larger home is not a factor in deciding to leave

## Household

- 57% live with a partner or spouse
- 29% live alone
- 13% live with children or grandchildren (<18)
- 11% live with grown children and/or grandchildren
- 3% live with parents or guardian
- 2% live with a roommate/housemate
- <1% live with non-familial caregivers



Visitors to the Spectrum  
Safety Event

# Great Places

## Housing

**Survey respondents currently live in a**

Single Family House	71 %	Duplex,triplex,fourplex	1.0%
Townhouse/Condominium	15 %	Temporary Housing:Vehicle/Tent/RV	1.0%
Apartment	8%	ADU or JADU	<1%
Mobile Home	2%	Assisted Living Facility	<1%
Other:Low income housing, shelter	2%		



Colleen Arnold (MADI) Drew Bendickson (Novato Recreation Division Manager) and Council Member Ecklund at Margaret Todd Senior Center

# Great Places

## Land Use

### Envisioning New Spaces and Enhancements

- Community Center for all
- Spaces for Teens
- Revitalize Downtown
- Additions, accessibility improvements to parks, playgrounds, open spaces
- Live Music Venues
- Restore Novato Theater
- Exercise equipment in parks
- Little Free Library in Parks
- Create a central plaza
- Sensory Play Spaces
- Pollinator Gardens
- Benches downtown
- Spaces with food and entertainment
- More Public Art
- Family Entertainment
- Events for GLBTQ/GNC community
- Cultural activities
- Pool with wheelchair access
- Lights in Dogbone dog park
- Lower costs for rec activities
- More neighborhood gardens

Survey Responses  
in Comments in  
order of prevalence

# Suggested Improvements and Enhancements

## Ideas for Future Planning from the Novato Community Survey and Focus Groups

<p>Housing and Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Affordable Housing:</b> A strong and recurring theme is the need for more affordable housing, especially for seniors and younger adults.</li> <li>• <b>Senior Housing:</b> Specific requests for more single-story housing and senior housing near transportation and grocery stores.</li> <li>• <b>Density and Parking:</b> Concerns that increasing apartment complexes will lead to insufficient parking and traffic congestion.</li> <li>• <b>Redevelopment:</b> Suggestions for redeveloping areas like "The Square" with mixed-use, high-density housing and green space.</li> <li>• <b>Vacant Real Estate:</b> Frustration with the City's handling of vacant real estate and a call for proactive measures (fines, ultimatums).</li> <li>• <b>AirBnB:</b> Concerns about the impact of AirBnB rentals on neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
<p>Homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in removal of homeless encampments (specifically near the library and in public park)</li> <li>• Suggestions for cleaning up areas previously occupied by homeless encampments.</li> <li>• Protection for the homeless and near homeless</li> <li>• Concerns about usability and safety when homeless encampments are located in parks and at the library</li> </ul>
<p>Parks and Outdoor Spaces</p>	<p><b>Maintenance:</b> Complaints about terrible park maintenance, including gopher holes, broken trees, and uncollected branches.</p> <p><b>Shade:</b> A specific request for more shade at Pioneer Playground.</p> <p><b>Community Garden:</b> A suggestion for creating a community garden space.</p> <p><b>Trails:</b> Positive feedback on the Hamilton Trails and a desire for more wide, accessible trails.</p> <p><b>Spaces for Kids, Older Adults:</b> Provide exercise equipment for older adults, establish recreational places for teens and the disabled population.</p>



# A City that Works

## Transportation and Mobility

A “City that Works” for everyone must prioritize transportation, safety, and good communication. These components are essential for fostering independence, well-being, and social inclusion.

### Transportation

**Drive:** Most people (49%) drive themselves or walk (25%) daily. Some (27%) drive or walk (16%) most days. Thirty-nine percent are more likely to get a ride with a friend or family member every few weeks.

**Bike:** Only a small group of respondents use bikes. Thirteen percent ride every few weeks; 2% ride once or twice a week; 1% said they ride daily.

#### Rides:

- 3% use a volunteer driver or free ride service every few weeks.
- 21% use a paid ride every few weeks.
- 6% use medical rides every few weeks.
- <1% use medical rides one or more days a week.

#### Mobility Device (motorized, manual chair)

- While some use a device every few weeks (<1%), some use it every day (1%).



## Public Transit:

While 71% never take public transit, 21% take it every few weeks and less than 1% use it daily.



Novato SMART train

### Public Transportation

#### Survey respondents very concerned about:

- 45% lack of convenience
- 34% affordability
- 27% safety
- 13% accessibility

### Preferred Transit Providers

(Ranked by frequency of use)

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Smart Train         | 7. Marin Access      |
| 2. Uber                | 8. Golden Gate Ferry |
| 3. Golden Gate Transit | 9. Airporter         |
| 4. Marin Transit       | 10. Vivalon          |
| 5. Bus/Buses           | 11. BART             |
| 6. Lyft                |                      |



# Suggested Improvements and Enhancements

## Ideas for Future Planning from the Novato Community Survey and Focus Groups

Category	Suggestions & Responses from Survey Comments
Revive Downtown Novato	<p><b>Vacancy:</b> Concern over long-standing vacant buildings.</p> <p><b>Safety and Walkability:</b> Calls for making downtown safer for pedestrians, especially between the bus hub and Panda Express, and generally improving walkability.</p> <p><b>Attractiveness and Vibrancy:</b> Desire for more quality restaurants, small businesses, and inviting public spaces.</p> <p><b>Events and Gatherings:</b> More public gathering spaces (e.g., benches on Sherman Avenue).</p> <p><b>Grant Avenue:</b> Specific mentions of potentially closing Grant Avenue to cars or lowering the speed limit to enhance pedestrian experience and business.</p>
Roads, Sidewalks Infrastructure	<p><b>Infrastructure:</b> Several comments address the need for infrastructure improvements:</p> <p><b>Road Repair:</b> Explicit mention of needing to repave Novato Boulevard.</p> <p><b>Sidewalk Conditions:</b> Concerns about uneven sidewalks on non-main roads and the need for complete sidewalks on Novato Boulevard.</p> <p><b>Street Lighting:</b> Reports of poor street lighting on many non-main roads.</p> <p><b>Crosswalk Safety:</b> Specific concerns about crosswalk safety on Olive Avenue.</p> <p><b>Traffic Enforcement:</b> Calls for more traffic enforcement.</p>
Public Transportation:	<p><b>Improvement Needed:</b> General agreement that public transportation is awful, dirty, unsafe, and unreliable.</p> <p><b>Frequency and Routes:</b> Desire for more frequent and better public transportation options, including to locations like Margaret Todd Center and Kaiser.</p> <p><b>Senior Transportation:</b> Specific need for easily accessible and inexpensive transportation for seniors, especially those with mobility limits.</p>

# A City that Works

## Emergency Preparedness: Prioritizing Safety

How Prepared are you?	Yes	No	Somewhat
I feel prepared	41%	8%	52%
I am prepared for an evacuation	36%	17%	47%
I know the city's plans and evacuation routes	21%	51%	27%
I have arranged for friends, family, neighbors to help me evacuate	14%	69%	17%
I want help preparing a disaster kit	29%	51%	20%
I would take a preparedness class	48%	29%	23%
I am registered with Alert Marin	64%	32%	4%
I am prepared for an extended heatwave	56%	17%	27%
I am prepared for a power outage	60%	10%	30%

# A City that Works

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## Communication and Information

Seventy-two percent of residents find the way they receive information from the City of Novato is effective. Twenty-eight percent do not find it effective.

### Most commonly used channels for receiving Novato information

1. Internet on a personal computer
2. Texts
3. Social Media
4. Emails from the City
5. Word of Mouth
6. Newspapers
7. City mailings
8. Radio
9. City of Novato website
10. Internet on a public computer

### Preferred method for receiving Novato information

1. Texts
2. Emails from the City
3. Internet on a personal computer
4. City Mailing
5. Social Media
6. City of Novato website
7. Newspapers
8. Radio
9. Word of Mouth
10. Internet on a public computer



Photo Credit: Craig Solin

# A City that Works

## Sharing the County Resources

**Table: Do you know about the County Information and Assistance Phone line for older adults, adults with disabilities and family caregivers?**

This is an important County resource for accessing various services and supports. We will share this data with the County of Marin and create an action to share this important resource with residents more broadly.

Response	#	%
Yes, I have used it and it was helpful.	6	1.0
Yes, but I haven't used it.	87	15
Yes, but I did not find it helpful	7	1.0
No	481	83



ADFN leader Lauren Vreeland Long tabling at an event

# Economic Vitality

## Employment

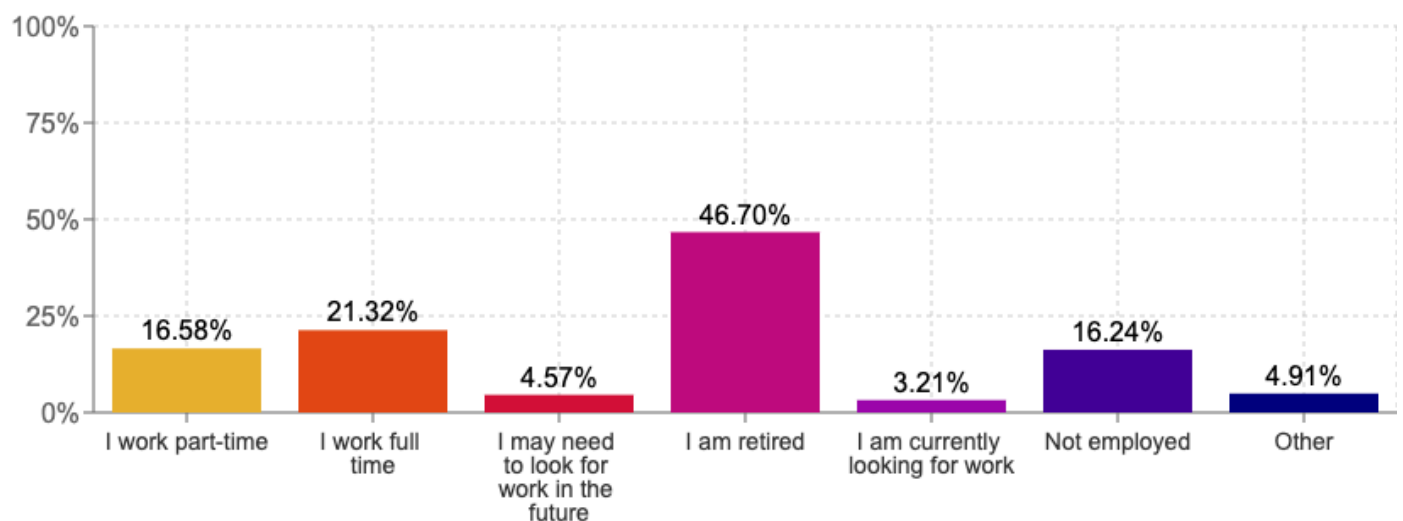
**Availability:** Twenty-five percent stated that availability of employment opportunities was either fair or good. Thirty-one percent think that the opportunities are poor. Eighteen percent said they were very good or excellent.

**Quality of opportunities:** Thirty-one percent think they are poor. Around 25% think they are fair to good. Seventeen percent think they are very good to excellent.



ADFN Fourth of July parade attendees

## Employment Status



# Economic Vitality

## Income sources

Social Security	58%
Pension/Retirement fund/Savings	53%
Employment	35%
Real Estate Income	6%
Other	5%
Family financial support	4%
SSDI and/or SSI	3%
Veteran's pension or disability compensation	3%

## Civic Participation

### Volunteer and Civic Work

Forty-two percent of residents volunteer in Novato. Forty-six percent think meaningful volunteer opportunities are very good to excellent. Thirty-two percent think the opportunities for meaningful volunteer work are good. Thirty-seven percent think there are good opportunities to attend and participate in local government or civic meetings.



# Supporting Lives and Strengthening All Futures

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## UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES

While 54% of Novato's population is non-white or mixed race, only 14% of the surveys were completed by people of color or mixed race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020. Table: Race).

**We cannot assume that the assessment data accurately represents the experience of the entire Novato Community, yet the data is still important to examine.**

a) **More information is needed from these populations** to be inclusive in community planning and to advance equal access for all residents of Novato. The Hispanic-Latine and Asian populations experience differences in aging and disability, and represent vital perspectives that must be understood to create a truly age and disability-friendly community. These two populations are projected to grow significantly in the future.

b) **To foster future inclusive planning**, it is important to diversify the Age and Disability Advisory Council so that all communities have a voice in the initiative, bringing focus to underrepresented populations.

c) **Build community partnerships** with cultural groups, local organizations and faith based groups to serve those populations.

d) **Use focus groups and public forums** to discuss aging and disability experiences.

# DISABILITY IDENTITY

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## DISABILITY AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

This survey attempted to look at disability identity through a broader lens than is typically reported through the Census or the Center for Disease Control. By asking questions focused on overall access and functional needs, those who may not consider themselves to have a disability were given the opportunity to share their access needs and how those inadequacies impact daily life.

- **19% of respondents reported they had a disability since birth, one that was acquired during their lifetime, or they aged into disability**
- **33% of residents reported some level of access and functional needs related to a disability that impacts their life**

*“ I was diagnosed with a neurodegenerative condition at age 19. While I have stayed close to my family, I have not been able to maintain relationships with able-bodied friends and acquaintances. Finding a means of making new friends in Novato that also experience struggles related to disability does not exist. “*

From Survey Respondent



Novato resident Kathryn

While a variety of functional needs were reported including vision, mobility, and cognitive, only 30% of residents reported receiving care or services to support those needs. **For those receiving services, over 56% are funded by Medicare/Medical** and 21% receive Social Security Disability Insurance. The next most common funding was private pay and/or private insurance.

*“Taking my disabled child anywhere can be very challenging. Community members glare at us daily, including at the inclusive playground. It would be nice to have large signs at the playgrounds regarding inclusion. That might help/remind parents to have conversations with their children regarding inclusion. The disabled members of our community are safer when they are a part of the community.”*



Visitors at the Novato Pioneer Park Accessible Playground

*“I currently use a walker and getting in and out of buildings is often trying. Bathrooms with accessible stalls do not usually have accessible doors to get into the actual bathroom facility.”*

*“Accessibility and Inclusion for the Disabled, including wheelchair and crosswalk safety, permit parking, more opportunities to participate in and feel welcome in events and activities, tailored programs for children and teens of special needs.”*

# BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN NOVATO

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The most commonly reported barrier faced by Novato residents was physical (19%) followed by attitudinal (13%). Among people with disabilities and/or functional challenges, 57% reported facing some sort of barrier to inclusion and access.



Novato resident Constance

*"There are very few social opportunities for my child with a disability to participate in, while my non-disabled children have several things to choose from. There is often one class offered at one time and on one day a week for people with disabilities. They need more options. Also, it's sometimes hard to go out to community events that don't think about the needs of people with disabilities. Even restaurants can be hard and people stare as if they've never seen or heard someone with a disability before. "*

Survey Respondent

## **People with disabilities were more likely to report**

- Eating Alone (48% reported "always or usually")
- "Poor" or "fair" employment opportunities (75% reported)
- Feeling food insecure (50% "always", "usually" or "sometimes")
- Acquiring a disability during their lifetime, versus being born with one (96%)

## **People with disabilities are less likely**

- To participate in Novato activities (22% want to but report they can't)
- To participate in Novato Parks and Recreation classes (19%)

# SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION

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Discrimination against people based on their age, disability, class and race was reported by respondents through the survey. **Twenty-nine percent of the population reported one or more barriers (attitudinal, physical, social inclusion and communication)**

- Ageism and Attitudes Toward Seniors:
  - Seniors treated as less competent or invisible
  - People assuming that aging individuals lack mental clarity or ability
  - Stereotyping older people, treating them as inferior
  - Social exclusion of elderly individuals, especially in community interactions
  - Ageism in employment, with assumptions made about senior workers
- Racial and Cultural Barriers:
  - Instances of racism or discrimination, including at public spaces and businesses
  - Lack of racial or cultural diversity in the community
  - Stereotypes about race and ethnicity affecting interactions in public spaces
  - Social exclusion of minority groups, such as people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities
  - Antisemitism or exclusion of Jewish individuals from some social or professional groups
  - Discriminatory attitudes or harassment from community members based on ethnicity or perceived background
- Disability and Inclusion:
  - Challenges for people with disabilities in finding accessible events or spaces
  - People with developmental disabilities facing stigma or exclusion
  - Lack of programs or activities that support people with disabilities or neuro-divergent individuals
  - Issues with physical spaces not accommodating individuals with different abilities (e.g., parks, businesses)
  - Lack of support for non-disabled children to interact with peers who have disabilities



# VETERANS

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According to the American Community Survey (ACS) the total estimated Novato Veteran population is 2,347. (2023).

Forty-two Veterans responded to the survey (7% of the survey population). The veteran survey population was 2% of the total estimated Veteran population.

While the population of Veterans in Novato has an age range of 18-75 years and over, the survey respondents of Novato's Veteran population ranged from 45 years to 90+ years of age.

- Most rate Novato as good to excellent as a place to live and want to remain there
- 81% live in a single family house
- 9 Veterans are caregivers
- 89% are retired
- 71% rate their health as good to excellent
- 20 Veterans either acquired a disability, have aged into disability or have developed some functional challenges
- **One-third of Veterans note that they experience one or more barriers living in Novato (attitudinal, social inclusion, communication and physical)**
  - Mentioned in comments:
    - Wheelchair barriers in private homes and shops
    - Poor bus transportation in Marin County
    - Sidewalk maintenance downtown sidewalk, obstructions at eateries impossible, impassable for wheelchairs and vision impaired, limited ADA parking
- Eight receive services or care assistance
- Two do not feel safe in their current living situation
- **The majority of them noted that the opportunities for employment and the quality of employment for them were poor or fair**



# HOMELESS IN NOVATO

Eight individuals who are unhoused or living in a shelter completed the survey.

## Homeless or recently housed respondents

<b>Male</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Living Situation</b>	
Shelter	2
Auto/RV	5
Tent	1
<b>Age Range</b>	
25-24	1
35-44	1
45-54	2
55-59	1
65-69	1
70-74	1
85-89	1
<b>Years in Novato</b>	
<1 Year	3
1-5	4
6-15	1

The high cost of housing is a driving force behind many cases of homelessness. While there was a 3% decrease in the total sheltered and unsheltered from 2022 to 2024, with more shelters or more affordable housing the numbers of unhoused individuals will continue to rise.

The Bay Area's homeless population has skyrocketed by 46% over the past decade. The surge coincided with a more than 20% increase in the region's median rent, which now tops \$3,000 a month, according to Zillow data.<sup>17</sup>

Along with San Rafael, Novato accounts for the highest homeless population in the county. However, unlike San Rafael, where encampments dominate, one-third of Novato's unhoused population live in RV's on Binford Rd.<sup>18</sup>

According to the 2024 Marin County Point in Time Report, 19% were aged 60+ years. The top two precipitating causes that led to homelessness were economic issues (39%) and mental health issues (20%).<sup>19</sup>

Most of our respondents say that Novato would be a good place to age, but most don't say it isn't important to stay in Novato. Finding affordable housing and stability are their main priorities.

# HOMELESS -FOCUS GROUP

**A focus group was conducted at Homeward Bound to gather the experiences and thoughts from recently unhoused individuals about living in Novato.**

The discussion focused on the challenges and experiences of living in Novato, particularly for those facing homelessness. Participants shared their personal stories, highlighting the difficulties in finding affordable housing, the lengthy and complex processes involved, and the lack of sufficient support services. They emphasized the high cost of living and the regulatory barriers that make it hard to build new affordable housing. Several mentioned the long wait times and difficulty in securing housing.

*"Well, I've been here around two and a half years, and I finally got the chance to move into a place at the end of the month by April. So being here in two and a half years, you know, doors finally opened."*

The conversation also touched on the importance of community support, with mixed experiences regarding the effectiveness of local services and shelters. Employment opportunities were discussed, with some noting the competitive job market and the need for better job training programs. Transportation in Novato was generally seen as adequate, with good access to buses and trains. The discussion underscored the need for more coordinated efforts and innovative solutions to address housing and employment challenges in the community. Several mentioned the challenge of maintaining housing once obtained, and the need for ongoing support to prevent people from becoming unhoused again.

*"If you're gonna get into housing and get kicked out, there's no reason to get housing. So they gotta have like a follow through plan to keep people in there once (you're) in there, unless (you're) messing up, doing bad drugs or whatever, if you following through in (you're) financial situation or whatever and all of that, they should find a way to keep you in your housing. That's number one."*

# CAREGIVERS

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*"There are only four kinds of people in this world: those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers. Caregiving is universal."*

## Definitions

Rosalynn Carter, Former First Lady of the United States

**A caregiver** is someone who provides assistance to another person with daily needs, encompassing tasks like bathing, dressing, feeding, transportation, and managing medications, often without being paid, and can be a family member, friend, or neighbor or a paid caregiver.

**A care recipient** is a person of any age or ability who is aging, ill or disabled, and needs ongoing assistance with everyday tasks, and personal or medical care to function on a daily basis.

## Demographics

Today, more than one in five Americans (20%) are family or friend caregivers, providing care to an adult or child with special needs at some time in the past 12 months.<sup>20</sup> A 2022 California survey stated that 26.3% of all adults 18+ years are family and friend caregivers.<sup>21</sup> Based on the National calculation, there are approximately 8,564 family or friend caregivers in Novato. In the survey:

- **136 (22%) said they are caregivers** or separately listed the people that they care for and their responsibilities. These are family or friend caregivers
- **10 (7%) do not think of themselves as caregivers**, but answered all of the questions for caregivers, including their responsibilities, challenges and tasks
- **5 are paid caregivers working for clients**, one is paid but also cares for a parent and friend/neighbor.

*The data below excludes data from formal paid caregivers where the recipient is a client.*

### Caregiver Time in Novato

65% in Novato for 16-30 years or more  
8% in Novato for 6-15 years  
16% in Novato for < 1-5 years

# CAREGIVERS

## Age of Caregivers in Novato

Years	% of caregivers	Years	% of caregivers	Years	% of caregivers
<b>18-24</b>	<1%	<b>55-59</b>	7%	<b>75-79</b>	18%
<b>25-34</b>	3%	<b>60-64</b>	7%	<b>80-84</b>	16%
<b>35-44</b>	4%	<b>65-69</b>	10%	<b>85-89</b>	5%
<b>45-54</b>	14%	<b>70-74</b>	16%	<b>90+</b>	1%

- A significant portion of caregivers in Novato are older adults.
- **The Sandwich Generation** refers to people caught between the needs of their parents or other related care recipients and those of their children. This generation is in their 40's and 50's.
- Thirty-nine percent of caregivers either have a disability or some functional challenges and or chronic health conditions that impact their life.
- Twenty-seven percent of caregivers **haven't thought about what they would do if they were unable to care for themselves**. 41% would rely on friends and family.

### Novato respondents

6% are women	9 Veterans are caregivers
27 % are men	8 people are caring for 2 people
	1 person is caring for 3 people

According to the National Alliance for Caregiving, approximately 66% of caregivers are women, while men make up the remaining 34%.<sup>22</sup>

- In Novato, 16% of self-identified caregivers **rate their health** as fair to poor. Forty percent rate it as very good to excellent
- In Novato, 76% include **self-care activities** in their schedule.

# CAREGIVERS

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**Care Recipients (142)**

Recipient ages	Number
0-15 years	15
16-22 Young Adult	6
Adult	121 adults > 22 years

**Recipient Relation to Caregiver**

Relation	#
Spouse or Partner	43
Parent	41
Friend/Neighbor	5
Other Family Member	18
Children	21
Adult (no relationship given)	14

## Caregiver Emergency Preparedness

- Fifty percent of caregivers are not prepared for an emergency. Caregivers and their care recipients often face heightened vulnerability during emergencies or disasters.
- Seventy-three percent have somewhat, or not at all, arranged with friends, family or neighbors to help in evacuation.
- Forty-nine percent are only somewhat or not at all prepared for a power outage.

## Caregivers and Communication

- Texts and emails from the City of Novato are the preferred method of information delivery for caregivers.
- Forty percent do not feel that the way they receive information from the City of Novato is effective



# CAREGIVERS

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## Activities and Community Engagement

- Seventy six percent of caregivers say they have meaningful relationships in Novato.
- Two percent of caregivers say there are meaningful activities/experiences that they want to participate in, but can't.
- While religious activities are the most frequently mentioned form of community engagement, a significant number reported that they and the person they care for have limited or no engagement due to safety concerns, mobility issues or being homebound.

*"So we have to do that, do something immediate, not just planning, but create these opportunities for people like her that otherwise are shut in unless I take her out and take her on a walk or when we go to Kaiser. That's your major activity and that's just not okay."*

*"I know that there's a person in there who is still observing things, is still aware of what's going on in her own body and her own mind, and often has plenty to communicate to me about what is going to help her and what is going to make things better for her in all sorts of ways. And I think the biggest thing that I do is just not to treat her like a child, not to treat her like a person who doesn't deserve to be listened to at her point of view considered and to absolutely demand that the people who are also giving her care do the same thing."*

- A few mentioned social activities at the Margaret Todd Senior Center
- School activities, informal outings, and specific programs for the disabled are part of the younger care recipient's life.
- Caregivers expressed a significant level of concern about social isolation and loneliness from physical limitations, sensory limitations, cognitive decline or lack of transportation for the care recipient.

# CAREGIVERS

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## CAREGIVER PROFILES

The Rosalynn Carter Institute developed 10 unique profiles or phases of caregiving along the continuum of the care journey. The Profiles in Caring are designed to serve as mile markers around which resources, needs, goals and policies concerning caregivers can be organized.

Here are the phases that the respondents identified with, choosing any that best described their situation (nine people who did not identify as a caregiver responded to this question). In order of frequency:

- 13% Managing a static illness or condition with the care recipient
- 12% Managing a decline in illness/condition with the care recipient
- 10% Managing active treatment with the care recipient
- 5% Transitioning from one phase of caregiving to another
- 5% Coping with or managing a crisis
- 5% Working on recovery towards independence with the care recipient
- 4% Adjusting to a new diagnosis
- 4% Managing a system or setting change with the care recipient
- 3% Caring for someone at the end of their life
- 3% In post-caregiving phase(e.g. care recipient recovered or deceased)

## CAREGIVER TASKS that have been challenging for me.....

Emotional challenges and stress	21%	Identifying where to find services and support	12%
Balancing work, life and social needs	19%	Lack of support and training	11%
Financial challenges	15%	Educating about, advocating for care recipients disability	10%
Relief from caregiving	15%	Access to local specialists	10%
Physical challenges (isolation)	12%	Getting an accurate and timely diagnosis	6%
Social challenges	12%		

# CAREGIVERS

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CHALLENGES FACED BY CAREGIVERS AND THEIR CARE RECIPIENTS AS MENTIONED IN THE SURVEY COMMENTS.

**Affordable Housing:** There are significant concerns about the lack of affordable housing and the increasing risk of evictions, which threaten the housing security of seniors.

**Lack of Adult Daycare:** The absence of adult daycare centers or similar programs is a major concern, as it contributes to social isolation and a lack of engaging activities for older adults with disabilities.

**Isolation and Lack of Support:** Many older adults experience social isolation due to disabilities, lack of transportation, and inadequate support systems. Caregivers often feel like they are "on an island" with limited resources and assistance.

**Caregiver Recruitment and Support:** There is a shortage of competent paid formal caregivers, particularly those who are English-speaking. Caregivers also express a need for more recognition, respite care, and better compensation or incentives.

**Communication and Information Access:** Navigating available services and resources is difficult due to a lack of a centralized information hub. Many older adults also face technology barriers, making it challenging to access online information and services.

*“As a recent recipient of caregiving I was able to find a woman (CNA) through word of mouth. She has been more than wonderful. What is important to her is childcare so she brought them with her. They have been great fun and a good diversion for me.”*

*“What I see is a lot of isolation...nobody knows her because she never came out.”*

*“So we have to do that, do something immediate, not just planning, but create these opportunities for people like her that otherwise are shut in unless I take her out and take her on a walk or when we go to Kaiser. That's your major activity and that's just not okay.”*



Novato residents Gloria and Don

# NEXT STEPS: ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

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The goal of the Novato Community Assessment process (survey, focus groups, and community engagement) was to determine the community strengths and the gaps to be addressed to make Novato a stronger and more age and disability friendly city. It is clear that overall residents love the city they live in and are looking for more opportunities to engage and to live well.

In collaboration with the City of Novato, Age and Disability Friendly Novato will work to create a 3-year action plan to address some of the issues that were highlighted throughout this assessment. Actions will align with key City documents such as the General Plan 2035, the Parks Master Plan, and the City's Strategic Plan. As ADFN is a volunteer community group, it will be critical to continue to build active members to support the sustainability of this movement ongoing.

Community engagement provided essential feedback in the goal-setting process. Critical components included community assessment, focus groups, input from caregivers, people with disabilities and their parents, older adults, and monthly input and guidance from the ADFN Advisory Committee. Through collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Department and the City Council, the strategic plan will be developed in line with the following focus areas: Living Well Together, Great Places, A City that Works, and Economic Vitality



Laughing at the Ice Cream Social

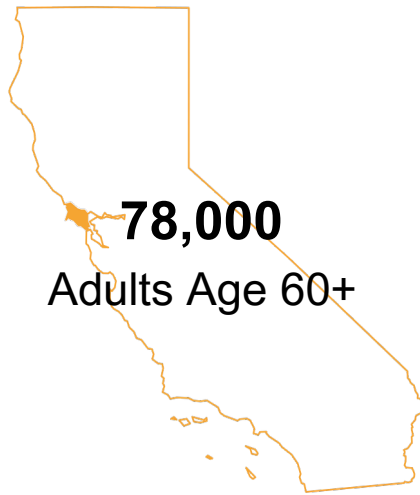
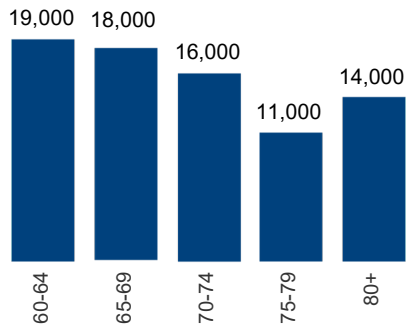


# Assessment Appendix

# Marin County

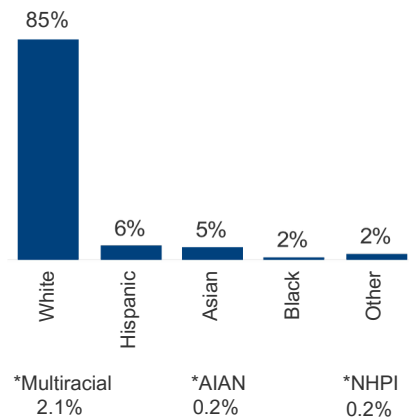
## Age Distribution

Adults Age 60+



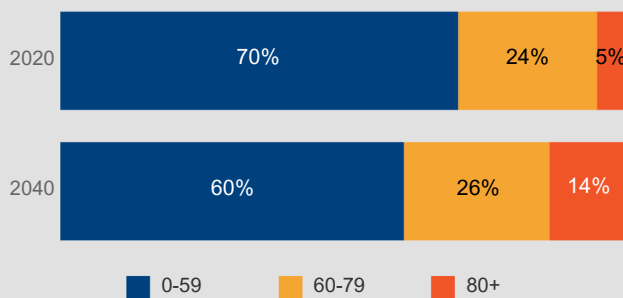
## Race/Ethnicity

Adults Age 60+



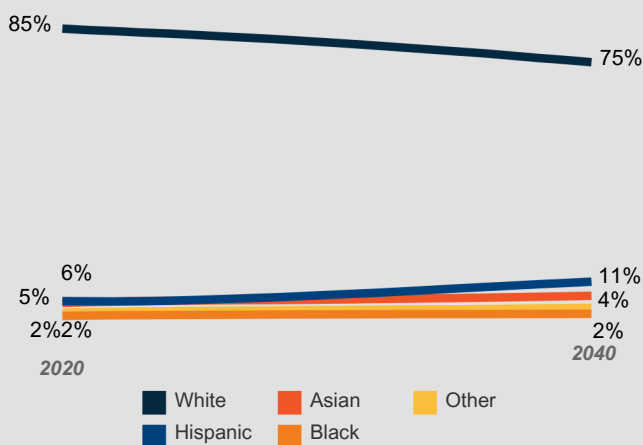
## Projected Population Shifts

### Population Share



### Race/Ethnicity

Adults Age 60+



## Social and Economic Needs



**9%**

of adults age 60+

live in poverty



Below State Average



**26%**

of adults age 60+

live alone



Above State Average



**1%**

of adults age 60+

speak English 'not at all'



Below State Average



**11%**

of adults age 65+

estimated to have Alzheimer's dementia



Near State Average



**56%**

of low-income households

are housing cost burdened



Near State Average

# Novato Survey Data

[https://bit.ly/Novato2025ADFN\\_Data](https://bit.ly/Novato2025ADFN_Data)



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Website: [agedisabilityfriendlynovato.org](http://agedisabilityfriendlynovato.org)

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