

NEWS &gt; POLITICS

## Solano County launches aging master plan



Director of the California Department of Aging Susan Demarois spoke Thursday in Solano County at the unveiling of the Solano Master Plan for Aging and Disability. (Nick McConnell/Vacaville Reporter)



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PUBLISHED: October 2, 2025 at 3:27 PM PDT

The Solano County Health and Social Services Public Health Division hosted a community meeting on Thursday to unveil its Master Plan on Aging and Disability in conjunction with the Napa/Solano Area Agency on Aging.

Speakers said the event was intended to celebrate the launch plan, share key priorities and next steps, strengthen collaboration among actors in the sector and inspire collective action to make change.

Director of County Health and social services Emery Cowan said Solano County residents are living longer than ever before, with an average life expectancy of 80 years. She also said the 60 and over population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, following county trends among age demographics across the board. Solano County has been projected by the California Department of Finance to continue to grow in diversity over the next ten years, and it is already one of the most diverse counties in the nation.

Cowan said 17,544 persons across the county above 65 are living alone, and over 75,000 households in the county have a person over 65 in them. According to the report, 12.1 percent of the unhoused individuals in shelters in the county are over 60, and 4 percent of the unsheltered population. Individuals over 55 comprised about 21.2 percent of those experiencing homelessness.

The event's guest speaker was Director of the California Department of Aging, Susan DeMarois, who has held that role since 2021. She thanked those who gathered and those who contributed to the report.

"It's just so exciting across the state, this is one of 21 local aging and disability action plans," she said.

DeMarois said the county has joined a growing movement across the state and nation, as governments realize that communities are getting older across the country. All 60 and over age groups are growing across the state in recent years, she said, as the Bay Area projected to see a 277 percent growth in its 60 and over population between 1980 and 2060. In 2020, the Bay Area had about one million more 60 and over residents than it did in 1980.

"You're a part of it, you're ahead of the curve," she said of Solano County.

DeMarois said she was pleased to see the county gathering stakeholders and ensuring that the plan does not merely sit on the shelf moving forward.

"I am just thrilled that you are taking the time to gather and celebrate this achievement together," she said.

Dr. Elizabeth Durkin from the Palliative Care at Kaiser Permanente in Vallejo said Kaiser's geriatric framework focuses primarily on mobility, medications, mental health support, complex health issues and the values and goals of the patient and their family.

"We want to give patients the right care at the right time in the right setting," she said.

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Supervisor Monica Brown said that because times are hard, neighbors in the county will have to stick together. She stressed the importance of making connections in the community and looking out for one another.

“For me, a lot of this is also that we all have to work together,” Brown said.