

Town Hall Meeting on Aging – MARC

Meeting Date: March 1, 2024

Sponsoring Agency: Mid America Regional Council/Shepards Cener KC (MARC)

Location: Kauffman Foundation Center, 4801 Rockhill Rd Kansas City

Attendees: 162

Total Comments:

Main Topic	Comment Counts
Daily Life and Employment	293
Family Caregivers	301
Housing and Aging in Place	317
Long-Term Services and supports	290
Safety and Security	286
Transportation and Mobility	295
Whole Person Health	308
TOTAL:	2,090

Purpose:

The purpose of this town hall meeting hosted by the MARC Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in Kansas City, Missouri was to gather input from older adults, caregivers, and other stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities of aging in Missouri. The feedback will be used to inform the development of a state Master Plan for Aging (MPA), which aims to improve the quality of life for all generations of Missourians as they age.

The focus of discussions during the town hall centered on the overarching goal of Missouri’s MPA that all Missourians, regardless of age or ability, will have access to person-centered programs and services necessary to help them age in their environment of choice in a safe and healthy manner.

Key Themes/Challenges/Identified Needs by Topic:

The town hall meetings consisted of a brief presentation on the Master Plan for Aging initiative, followed by facilitated discussions on seven main topics: daily life and employment, family caregivers, housing and aging in place, long-term services and supports, safety and security, transportation and mobility, and whole person health. The key themes, challenges, and identified needs from the discussions are summarized below:

- **Daily Life and Employment:** Participants identified challenges related to transportation, balancing caregiving responsibilities and work, ageism in the workplace, uncertainty about future employment, social isolation, and access to information/resources. The current needs discussed by participants include affordable housing, opportunities to volunteer, and extra income. Participants believe older adults have something to offer but it is difficult to find employment and there are concerns that the additional income will reduce SNAP, housing assistance, etc. Future needs include better accessibility in housing and transportation, increased technology literacy among older adults, workforce accommodations, and improved support for family caregivers.
- **Family Caregivers:** Participants discussed financial burdens faced by family caregivers, lack of support services (rural vs. urban areas), emotional stress and burnout, “sandwich generation” lacking support, and the need for respite care as challenges faced by caregivers. Participants want better training and support for caregivers, more affordable in-home care options, access to mental health resources, respite services for caregivers, and recognition of the valuable role that caregivers play. Future needs include improved policies to support family caregivers financially and formal programs to help support family caregivers.
- **Housing and Aging in Place:** Key challenges identified by participants are affordability of housing options for older adults, lack of accessible housing designs, property tax increases affecting seniors' ability to stay in their homes, and limited availability of senior care centers and aging services in rural areas. Participants discussed current needs including more affordable housing options with universal design features that promote aging in place. Participants want to also see Missouri in the future address property tax issues affecting seniors' ability to remain in their homes and developing intergenerational living models.
- **Long-Term Services and Supports:** Challenges include limited access to long-term care facilities or home-based care services, high costs of insurance and long-term care, and workforce shortages in the long-term care industry. Current needs identified by participants include improving staffing and wages in long-term care facilities, expanding home-based long-term care options, and simplifying the process of accessing Medicaid and other support programs. Future needs should involve addressing the affordability of long-term care insurance, increasing funding for community-based services, and implementing person-centered approaches to care.
- **Safety and Security:** Challenges include scams targeting older adults, social isolation leading to vulnerability, lack of safety measures in senior living facilities or homes,

access to in-home safety and security mechanisms, and concerns about personal safety when out in the community. Participants identified current needs involving education on recognizing and preventing scams, improving safety measures in housing facilities, enhancing neighborhood watch programs or community policing efforts, and providing public safety resources, and threat training so older adults have a plan. Future needs include strengthening cybersecurity measures to protect older adults from online scams and fostering safer communities through increased awareness and collaboration.

- **Transportation and Mobility:** Key challenges are limited access to affordable transportation options especially for medical appointments or daily activities like grocery shopping, insufficient public transportation infrastructure particularly in rural areas, and difficulties with using modern technology platforms like ride-sharing apps. Participants identified current needs including improved accessibility in transportation options through door-to-door versus curb services, expanded public transportation routes, and accessible vehicles equipped to accommodate mobility aids. Future needs involve developing more comprehensive transportation systems that meet the needs of older adults, increasing the availability and affordability of transportation services in suburbs and rural areas, volunteer programs to help older adults get around, and providing technology training to older adults to help them navigate transportation apps and platforms.
- **Whole Person Health:** Challenges identified by participants include limited access to healthcare services, lack of mental health support for older adults, and inadequate attention to nutritional and social determinants of health. Current needs involve integrating physical and mental healthcare services, expanding access to preventative care, addressing social isolation through community engagement programs, and promoting holistic approaches to health that consider all aspects of a person's well-being. Participants would like future consideration for increased funding for senior healthcare programs, improved collaboration between healthcare providers and community organizations/services, and greater emphasis on preventive care measures for older adults.

Next Steps:

The town hall meeting is one of several ways to provide input for Missouri's Master Plan for Aging. Other methods will include online surveys, focus groups, and written submissions. The feedback collected from various sources will be analyzed and synthesized by the Master Plan for Aging Advisory Council and Sub Committees, which consists of representatives from state agencies, local governments, and community organizations. The Advisory Council and Sub Committees will develop a draft Master Plan for Aging by the end of 2025. The goal is to create a 10-year framework that supports senior communities and empowers older adults and individuals with disabilities to live safely and independently in their chosen environment.

For more information on the Master Plan for Aging, please visit [the official website](#) or contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at 573-526-4542 or MoStatePlanonAging@health.mo.gov.

Thank you for your participation and contribution to this important initiative.