

Town Hall Meeting on Aging – Aging Ahead

Meeting Date: March 5, 2024

Sponsoring Agency: Aging Ahead

Location: Maryland Heights Comm Center, 2300 Mckelvey Rd, Maryland Heights

Attendees: 161

Total Comments:

Main Topic	Comment Counts
Daily Life and Employment	294
Family Caregivers	303
Housing and Aging in Place	264
Long-Term Services and supports	253
Safety and Security	217
Transportation and Mobility	243
Whole Person Health	258
TOTAL:	1,832

Purpose:

The purpose of this town hall meeting hosted by the Aging Ahead Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in Maryland Heights, 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 the need for promoting age-friendly workplaces and policies, addressing age discrimination in employment, and supporting older adults in transitioning to retirement or finding new employment opportunities. Access to reliable and accessible transportation to places of employment was a concern of participants. There are concerns about the challenges seniors face keeping up with technology and the advancements of AI and technology that may replace jobs seniors may seek. Participants also discussed how older adults having difficulties navigating the healthcare system can limit access to affordable and appropriate healthcare services.
- **Family Caregivers:** Participants discussed the importance of providing physical and emotional support and resources for family caregivers to prevent burnout, including respite care options and caregiver training programs. Participants also want corporations to add benefits and flexibility to help working family caregivers. Participants want Missouri to budget funds to offer financial assistance or incentives for caregivers. Participants would also like training that prepares loved ones for the role of family caregivers and provides education on navigating the healthcare system and what resources are available.
- **Housing and Aging in Place:** A key theme identified by participants related to housing and aging in place is creating more affordable and accessible housing options for older adults, including low-income options. Housing should also be designed to meet older residents' specific needs as they age. Participants would like to know about financial aid for home modifications to ensure safety and accessibility. Participants asked for more new development with units for people with disabilities and aging to age in the community. Participants also discussed the need for developing community-based programs that support aging in place.
- **Long-Term Services and Supports:** Participants discussed expanding access to long-term care services such as in-home health care or assisted living facilities. There is also a need for better regulations to improve the quality of long-term care services through better guidelines and oversight. Participants talked about how long-term care insurance should be regulated to become more affordable. Participants would also like more affordable long-term care options through Medicaid, VA benefits, or other funding mechanisms to provide a continuum of care.
- **Safety and Security:** Participants discussed addressing elder abuse issues by implementing protective measures such as increasing public awareness about elder abuse prevention strategies, including education on scams and financial exploitation, sharing data on elder abuse, and enhanced reporting. Participants would like Missouri

to strengthen legal protections for older adults, to include ensuring older adults are protected from family and caregivers with ulterior motives who may take advantage of elders.

- **Transportation and Mobility:** Participants discussed the need for improving transportation options for older adults with limited mobility. Having access to public transportation in rural areas was identified as a challenge. Participants would like enhanced transportation options, including safe mass transit, affordable ride-sharing services, volunteer drivers, or specialized transportation services (for medical appointments, essential errands, etc.) tailored to their needs. Participants also discussed walkability and how having safe walkable communities reduces the need for costly transportation.
- **Whole Person Health:** Participants identified key themes related to whole person health including promoting mental health support among older adults by integrating mental health into routine healthcare visits. Participants thought community outreach should occur to address health issues specifically affecting older populations. Participants would like to more community centers to foster social engagement among older adults. A current need is inter-generational education programs to help the younger generation understand the needs of the aging. Participants would also like programs to address the many determinants of whole person health such as access to healthy food options and safe recreational spaces to promote overall well-being among older individuals.

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.