

Town Hall Meeting on Aging – St. Louis

Meeting Date: March 5, 2024

Sponsoring Agency: St. Louis Area Agency on Aging

Location: O’Fallon Park Rec Complex, 4343 W. Florissant Ave STL

Attendees: 159

Total Comments:

Main Topic	Comment Counts
Daily Life and Employment	270
Family Caregivers	297
Housing and Aging in Place	330
Long-Term Services and supports	258
Safety and Security	303
Transportation and Mobility	269
Whole Person Health	257
TOTAL:	1,984

Purpose:

The purpose of this town hall meeting hosted by the St. Louis Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in St. Louis, 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 face many challenges in daily life and employment, including the need for assistance with daily tasks, transitioning between jobs, access to computer/technology training, concerns about retirement, and future job opportunities. Participants would like additional education on financial literacy to help them manage money considering the financial constraints experienced by many older adults. Lack of transportation impacts participant's ability to work and volunteer. Participants shared that many older adults want to get out of their homes but cannot leave due to transportation or costs, leading to isolation and loneliness. Participants would also like increased awareness and advocacy regarding health issues affecting the quality of life for seniors.
- **Family Caregivers:** Participants identified several challenges for family caregivers in providing care for their loved ones, including the need for respite options and support services to prevent burnout, concerns about the quality of care in nursing facilities, financial constraints of caregiving, balancing work and caregiving responsibilities, and the importance of caregiver health and well-being. Older adults and families need information and support when faced with the decision whether family is the best option for caregiving at home and when to move a loved one from home to a long-term care facility. Participants are also concerned that some caregivers experience burnout because they are caring for both their children and older parents/adults. Participants would like more focus on preventative care and services available for aging in place so that family caregivers are not needed as much in the future.
- **Housing and Aging in Place:** Participants discussed the need for affordable and accessible housing options that allow seniors to age in place comfortably. Some of the primary concerns of participants related to housing and aging in place are issues with home repairs and maintenance costs, concerns about safety/security at home or in senior housing facilities, and house modifications for functional living. Participants want to stay at home, but they need ways to modify their housing to accommodate for the needs of aging individuals and those with disabilities. Participants also want builders of new homes to use universal design to make housing accessible when built.
- **Long-Term Services and Supports:** A challenge identified by participants related to accessing long-term care services is Medicaid eligibility requirements or spend down of assets. Participants discussed the need for better workforce development in long-term care settings to address shortages of providers and long-term care staff. Participants also think that better pay for staff, state programs for training people for long-term care jobs, and additional oversight for long-term care facilities would address issues with

quality of care in nursing homes or assisted living facilities. Participants said that there's currently a lack of respect and dignity shown toward older adults needing long-term care services, a situation that will get worse as the population gets older and demand increases.

- **Safety and Security:** Participants have several concerns related to personal safety and security at home or within communities such as scams/fraud targeting seniors, inadequate street lighting/sidewalk conditions, and safe homes. Participants would like to see a greater police presence, the police should also know the community they serve, and better trained persons to meet the needs of the aging on 211 and 911 calls. Participants have trouble maintaining safety and security in their home (e.g., smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, security cameras, lighting). Participants want information and education on how to prevent scams/fraud, feeling safe inside home, neighborhood safety, and emergency preparedness plans/procedures.
- **Transportation and Mobility:** A significant challenge related to transportation options/accessibility for participants is unreliable public transit systems or limited availability. Participants discussed how the recent changes in bus routes negatively impacted many people, the need for more accessibility on buses for riders in wheelchairs, more bus stops in neighborhoods, and safer stops with curb cuts and benches. Participants talked about issues with Metro Call-A-Ride and other ride-sharing services like Uber/Lyft being perceived as unsafe, inconvenient, and unreliable. Participants also asked that Missouri focus on providing better infrastructure (sidewalks/street lighting) to accommodate the needs of the aging.
- **Whole Person Health:** A health-related challenge participants identified is how seniors can afford medications they need to be healthy. Participants also discussed mental health concerns like depression/isolation and how routine health screenings for older adults should consider mental health. Participants want older adults to have access to preventive healthcare/services beyond medical treatments (e.g., dental/vision/hearing care). There should also be consideration of addressing the social determinants of health like food insecurity/nutrition and socialization.

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.