

Town Hall Meeting on Aging – Young at Heart

Meeting Date: February 28, 2024

Sponsoring Agency: Young at Heart

Location: InterServ Community Center 5400 King Hill Ave St. Joseph

Attendees: 66

Total Comments:

Main Topic	Comment Counts
Daily Life and Employment	84
Family Caregivers	108
Housing and Aging in Place	128
Long-Term Services and supports	111
Safety and Security	95
Transportation and Mobility	113
Whole Person Health	95
TOTAL:	734

Purpose:

The purpose of this town hall meeting hosted by the Young at Heart Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in St. Joseph, 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 would like access to more transportation options for daily tasks/appointments/activities and improved employment programs for older adults. There are concerns about age and disability discrimination in the workforce. Participants discussed how many programs encourage employment instead of opportunities to enjoy life and find another purpose, like volunteerism.
- **Family Caregivers:** Participants would like increased support and resources for family caregivers to balance work and taking care of loved ones. A concern is how to provide more in-home resources and services to help prevent caregiver fatigue and burnout, including affordable respite care options. Caregivers need more education on tools and training for caregiving. Participants also discussed how rural community needs are different than urban needs, yet they are often thrown together with urban areas in solutions.
- **Housing and Aging in Place:** Participants discussed challenges associated with limited affordable housing options, lack of accessible housing features/modifications, and inability to maintain homes. Participants would like to see universal design/modification options for homes to support aging in place. There are concerns that rural communities do not attract developers and less affordable housing is built in northwest Missouri. Participants identified as a future need more senior housing, safer communities, and funding programs for housing renovations to keep the elderly in their homes.
- **Long-Term Services and Supports:** Affordability of long-term care plans/services is a major concern for participants, including hospice end-of-life caregiving. Participants thought there are too few facilities and a limited number of trained workers in long-term care, especially in smaller towns. Participants would like to see increased funding/training/supports for in-home care providers/caregivers and to assist the elderly and families with future planning. Supporting people at home should be a priority with supports tailored to handle the different levels of care needs.
- **Safety and Security:** Participants discussed neighborhood and home safety concerns/theft risks and scams targeting older adults (financial exploitation). There are concerns about the need for better security measures both in homes and public spaces (stores, parking lots, streets, etc.). Participants also thought seniors need more education about security risks and they should be better protected against abuse/neglect.

- **Transportation and Mobility:** Participants discussed the lack of transportation options in rural areas, limitations due to mobility issues/aging process, and concerns about seniors driving that shouldn't be allowed to drive. Accessible transportation services are needed for medical appointments/activities, but participants identified issues with a lack of drivers, lack of buses, long wait times for pickup, long rides due to multiple stops, and transport vehicles are not accessible. Participants want timely and reliable transportation services always available that meet the needs of older adults.
- **Whole Person Health:** Discussions focused on the need for more accessible healthcare services/providers/resources that prioritize physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Participants want education available for the aging and caregivers on the preventive care/health screenings/benefits available to older adults. Participants also want additional socialization opportunities, programs, and events that promote overall well-being. Participants are concerned about the lack of mental health services, nutrition, and other services that supports the whole person health needs of people of different ages.

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.