

Livability In The 'Burg

A Community Conversation

Summary of Age-Friendly City Listening Session #1 *February 11, 2017 – Sunshine Center – Downtown St. Petersburg*

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- Top concerns on safety in parks: Homeless people, more sidewalks, sidewalks uneven or in bad repair, better lighting, more places to sit, more shade, speeders.
- Top concerns on building accessibility: More parking for disabled, more curb cuts, more sidewalks, long waits for elevator.
- Top recommendations to make things better: Overall, make city more bike-friendly. Provide more bike parking places, more bike lanes downtown and away from downtown, separate pedestrian and bike trails/walks, provide more information on parks and public facilities.

Transportation

- Top modes of transportation: Majority use car, a few walk for short trips, bike or call friends. None use public transit. A few have tried ferry to Tampa.
- Top concerns for traffic signage: Well-illuminated signs with larger fonts, trim limbs that block signals and signage, cyclists and pedestrians obey traffic laws, drivers respect crosswalk markings, lower speed limits near parks.
- Top recommendations to make things better: Motor scooter parking facilities, golf cart shuttles, more bike lanes, safer crosswalks with push-button controls; park & ride, express bus service, provide seniors transport to medical appointments, properly maintain crossings, restore red light cameras, more frequent and accessible bus service, extra bus service for special events, small and frequent buses operating after 10 p.m.

Housing

- Top concerns of seniors wanting to stay in current home: Gentrification, housing insecurity due to deteriorating homes, transient residents, unfair landlords, bad neighbors, criminal activity, noise, uncivil behavior, vagrancy, lack of affordable housing options, missing sidewalks or in disrepair, speeding cars, poor street lighting, flooding, desire for safe and convenient transportation.
- Top concerns about not staying in current home: Knowing when to move; accessibility to jobs, affordability, high-end construction dominates market, accessibility to essential services, use exercise and food as “medicine” to maintain mind and mobility.
- Top recommendations for best housing outcomes for seniors: Free home maintenance services for those on fixed incomes; low-income housing assistance for all who need it; provide multi-generational housing, provide aging-in-place services like Neighbors Helping Seniors, Neighborhood Senior Watch, Meals on Wheels, daily check-in calls, life-alert services; partner with Healthy St. Pete, impose 1% quota for new housing to be reserved as affordable units for seniors; more info on reverse mortgages, offer more smoking cessation services and ban smoking in parks, require landlords to make ADA changes, offer more diabetes and mental health education.

Community Support and Health Services

- Top reasons for remaining in own homes: Convenience, proximity to family, friends, church, stores and services, work, transportation. Stress of moving, loss of independence, affordability, fear of institutions, uncertainty about quality of care.
- Top concerns on home health services: More info needed – unsure of what’s available, affordability, insurance acceptance. Want resources for caregivers, better education for doctors on role and referrals; more info on healthy lifestyle as preventative strategy, more overall funding of community health facilities; more meetings at Parks & Rec sites, a central clearing house for all info; elected officials to champion Medicare/Medicaid expansion; younger family members do more to help.
- Top concerns on health care professionals and specialists: Accessibility issues due to location, affordability, insurance acceptance; specialists not informed on other specialists; better case management among specialists and primary-care doctor; access latest technology; info on caliber of providers; lack of on-call physicians and dentists; unaffordable insurance rates.
- Top concerns on professionals who speak a variety of languages: English should be primary, and translators should be provided. Ask volunteer agencies to provide.

Social Inclusion, Civic Participation, Employment

- Top concerns on flexible job opportunities and social inclusion: Not many substantive jobs and wages too low, stigma of retraining, inconvenient location of jobs, employer flexibility lacking, lack of knowledge of jobs and training for over 55, older workers not valued as much as younger.
- Top challenges for older adults to participate in decision-making bodies: Proper motivation, not convenient, inadequate notification of meetings, inconvenience of day/night meetings, lack of transportation, too much emphasis on computers for those not online, limited volunteer opportunities.
- Top recommendations for social inclusion and civic participation: Move meetings around, provide more events for middle-age adults and for under-21s, do more to welcome new arrivals, make events affordable, do more to promote YMCA offerings, provide more info through neighborhood associations.