

Commission on Aging:

FY24 Community Budget Engagement After Action Report

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Introduction

The Commission on Aging is preparing to make recommendations for the FY2023-FY2024 City of Austin Budget. The Commission on Aging asked older adults in Austin for feedback as they prepare to make recommendations, so community needs and values are recognized, and leadership comes from the community.

Reflecting on building an Age Friendly Austin, the Commissioners asked for feedback on: Outdoor and Public Places, Transportation, Housing, Aging in Place, Employment and Volunteer Opportunities, Recreational/Social Activities, Community Support and Health Services, COVID-19, and Digital Access and Inclusion.

Objective

The Age Friendly Austin Community Feedback Survey was developed to capture feedback from a wider audience and was focused on collecting feedback from older adults, those who care for older adults, and service providers for older adults.

The City of Austin Equity Office spearheaded hosting three hybrid (in-person and virtual) forums with all Joint Inclusion Commissions for all members of the Austin Community. Community Members were invited to participate in the forums to learn about the Budget Process for the City of Austin and to provide feedback as Boards and Commissions develop their recommendations for the FY2023-FY2024 City of Austin Budget. Food and interpretation services were provided at these forums and to make these events accessible they were hosted in community spaces and as previously mentioned an online option was provided for participation as well.

Methods

Age Friendly Austin Community Feedback Survey

In December 2022 the Commission on Aging finalized a Community Engagement Survey to capture the opinions of older adults ages 50 and up, service providers for older populations, and caretakers of older adults. The survey functions as a support to the Commission on Aging in developing recommendations for the FY2023-FY2024 City of Austin Budget. The survey was provided online via SurveyMonkey, as well as hardcopy surveys given out at events and community spaces.

The survey closed on February 10th, 2023 and was developed with reference to the Age Friendly Austin Plan, and with feedback from the Commission on Aging and community engagement experts within Austin Public Health (APH).



Commission on Aging Budget Community Engagement Session

The City of Austin Equity Office hosted three hybrid forums in partnership with all Joint Inclusion Commissions. These forums allowed community members to safely share their interests and concerns for 2024 City of Austin funding.

The three hybrid forums hosted were:

- East Austin Townhall, Thursday, December 15th, 2022, 12:00pm, Montopolis Recreation Center, 1200 Montopolis Dr, Austin, Texas, 78741.
- South Austin Townhall, Wednesday, January 11th, 2023, 6:30pm, Southeast Branch Library, at 5803 Nuckols Crossing Rd, Austin, Texas 78744.
- North Austin Townhall, Saturday, January 14th, 2023, 10:30 am – 12:00 pm, Asian American Resource Center, 8401 Cameron Rd, Austin, Texas 78754.

Commissioners attended these events and recorded feedback from the community. **Please see Attachment A** for notes prepared by City of Austin Equity Office staff from these three forums. A survey was provided at these events by the City of Austin Equity Office but at this time the results are unavailable.

Promotion

The community forums and survey were promoted by the Commissioners who sent notifications and reminders to their respective Council Offices, organizations, and networks. APH Staff also promoted the events and survey to partners and relevant workgroups. Other notable places the survey was shared were APH's social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), the City of Austin's NextDoor, and the City of Austin 's social media accounts.

Age Friendly Staff sent email requests, to share the survey, to the following organizations, groups, and individuals:

- AARP
- Age of Central Texas
- Aging is Cool
- Alzheimer's Association
- Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area
- ATXN
- Austin Asian Community Health Initiative
- Austin Free Net
- Austin LGBT Elder Taskforce
- Austin UP
- Central Health
- Central Texas Food Bank
- Chariot
- City of Austin EMS
- City of Austin Library
- City of Austin Parks and Recreation
- Colony Park Neighborhood Association
- Coming to Age-Travis County
- Cortez Consulting
- Dell Medical School: Population Health
- Drive a Senior
- Faith Based Community
- Family Eldercare
- Foundation Communities
- Helper Bees
- HIV Planning Council
- Meals on Wheels
- Power for Parkinson's
- SAIVA
- Senior Access
- St. David's Foundation
- Travis County HHS



- UT’s Grace Program

Discoveries

Age Friendly Austin Community Feedback Survey

Survey: **See Attachment B** (Survey was also provided in Spanish, Simplified Chinese, and Vietnamese)

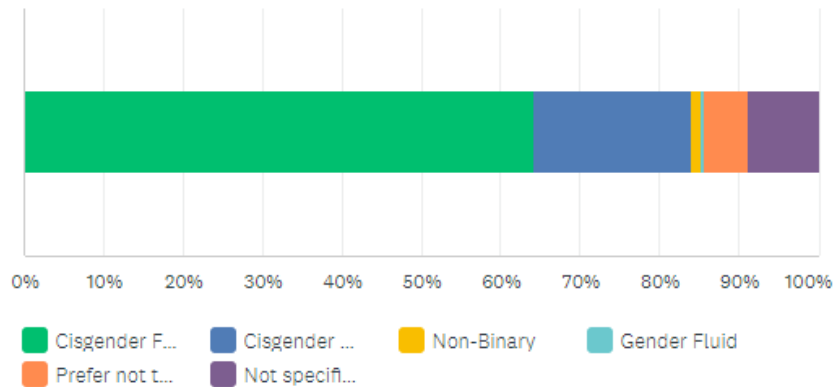
Number of responses: 527

- Breakdown of responses received.
 - *Social Media: 258 responses*
 - *Email link: 197 responses*
 - *Hard copy survey: 49 responses*
 - *NextDoor: 23 responses*

Demographics

Most respondents answered on behalf of themselves (99.1%). The rest of respondents either identified as caregivers or an agency/organization. Some organizations who responded were the North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Association, Power for Parkinson’s, and Capital City Village. The majority of participants identified their gender as either Cisgender Female or Male. All demographics questions were optional and did not have to be filled out.

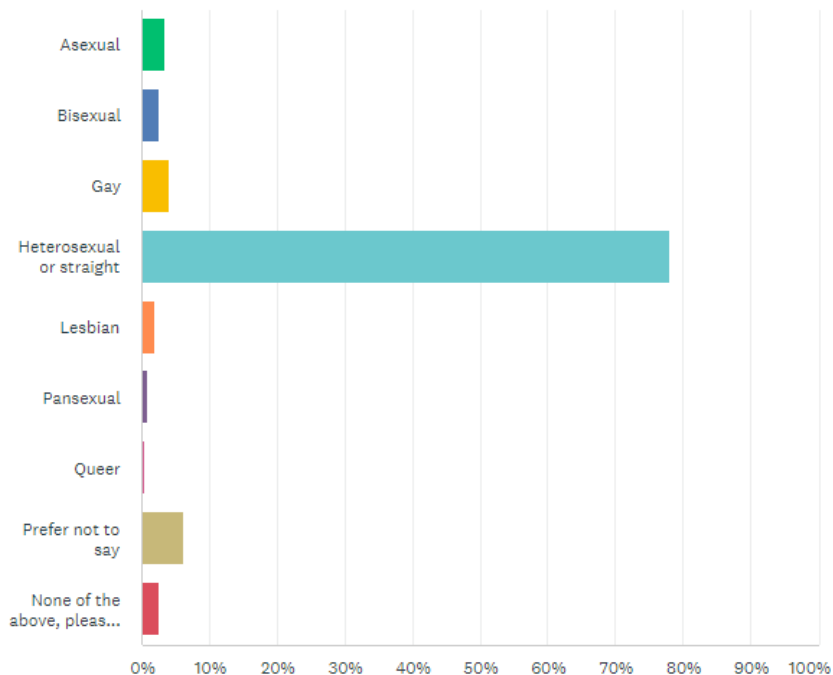
Chart 1-What is your gender identity?



Many participants identified their sexual orientation as heterosexual or straight (78%) and 13.2% of the survey respondents identified themselves as part of the LGBTQIA+ Community. No respondents identified themselves as intersex.

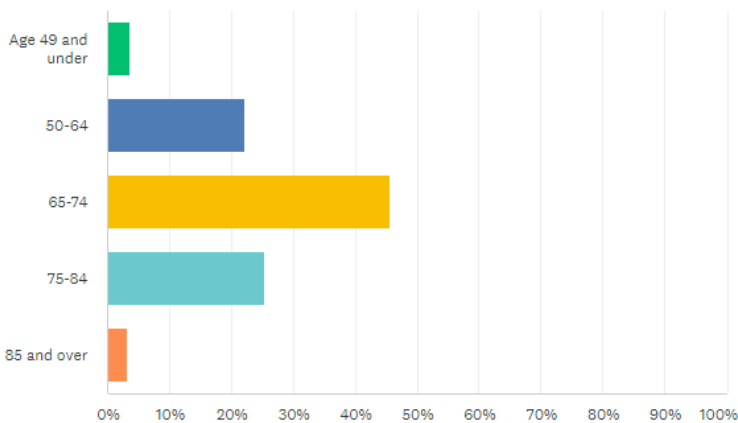


Chart 2- What is your sexual orientation?



Older adults of various ages participated, the highest being adults ages 65-74 (45.7%). With the lowest participation being from older adults age 85 and over (3.2%)

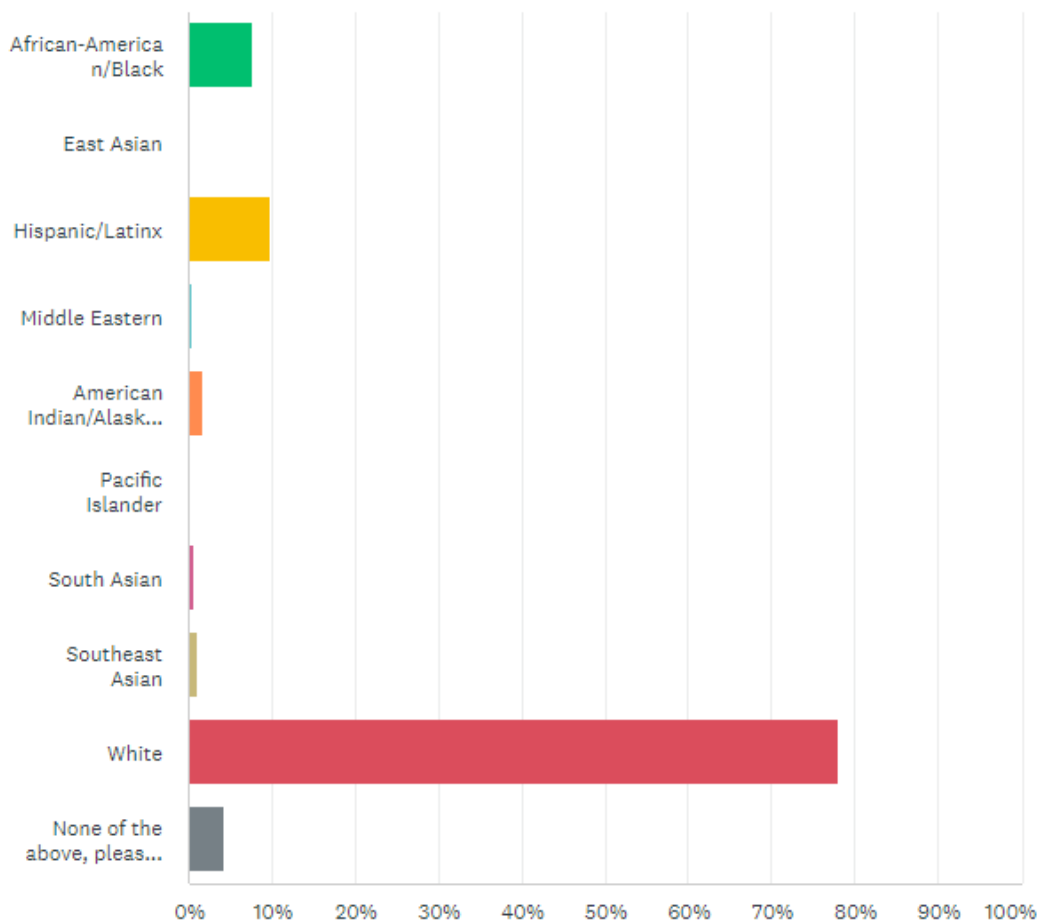
Chart 3-What Is Your Age?



Most participants identified as White (78%), followed by Hispanic/Latinx (9.8%). The survey predominantly reached White residents. However, representation was received by other racial and ethnic identities, including African American/Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Southeast Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, East Asian, and Pacific Islander.



Chart 4-What is your racial or ethnic identity?

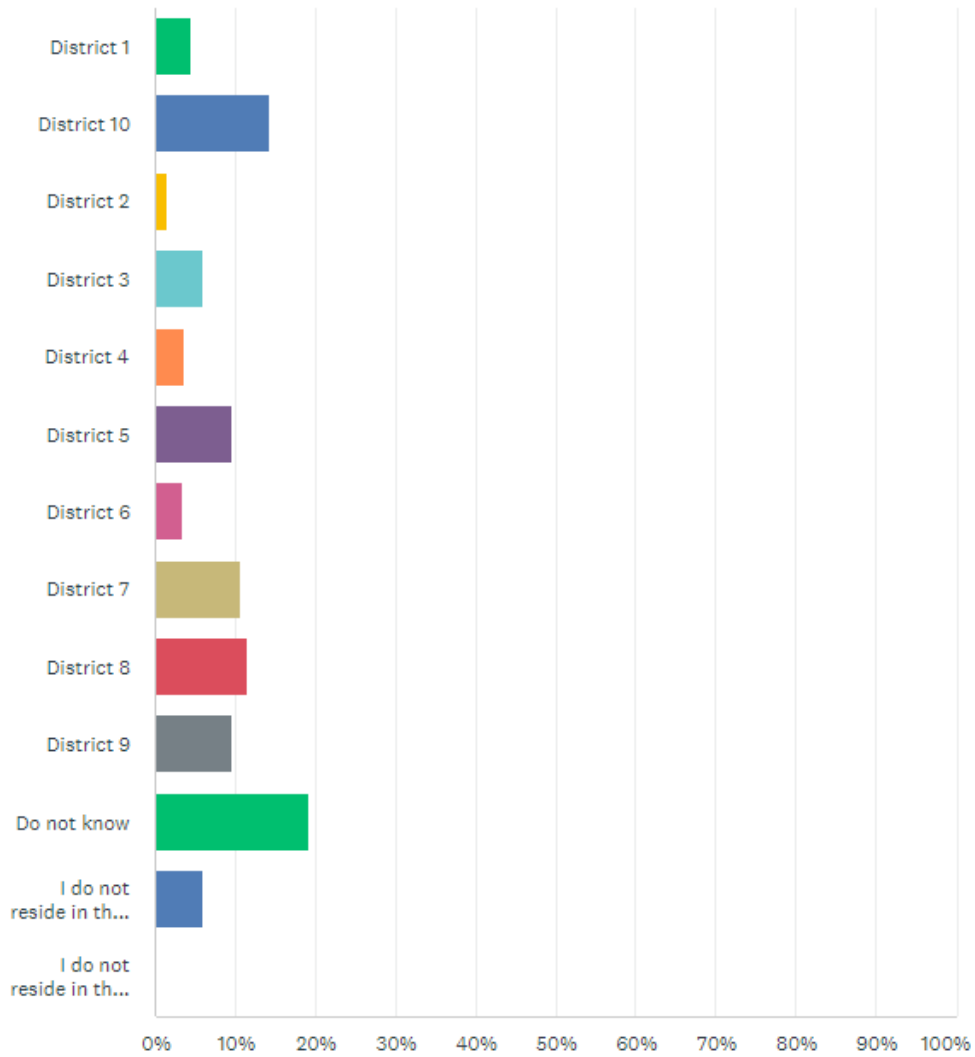


In 2021, the survey started asking if participants were living with a disability, 23.2% of participants said they were living with a disability. Of those living with a disability the top three identified disabilities were physical disability (70.6%), Deaf or hard of hearing (25.5%), and Blind or low vision (14.7%).

Survey participants came from all city council districts, including those who do not reside in the City of Austin (6%). Many respondents did not know the City Council District they resided in or the Council Person who represented them (19.3%). The district that received the most respondents was District 10, represented by Council Member Alison Alter and District 8, represented by Paige Ellis (See Chart 5).



Chart 5-What City Council District do you live in?



The top ten zipcodes of respondents were:

- 1) 78759
- 2) 78757
- 3) 78704
- 4) 78749
- 5) 78723
- 6) 78731
- 7) 78748
- 8) 78745
- 9) 78703
- 10) 78735



Outdoor and Public Places

Public places to gather — indoors and out. Green spaces, safe streets, sidewalks, outdoor seating, and accessible buildings (think elevators, stairs with railings, adequate lighting, etc).

Most respondents said they had a very easy or extremely easy experience accessing parks or recreational opportunities near their residence. However, 13% said they had either a difficult or extremely difficult time accessing parks or recreational opportunities. Most respondents did not experience barriers accessing parks or recreational opportunities. Of those who did experience barriers, the top drivers stated for why residents aren't accessing parks include safety concerns (26%), no parks or recreational opportunities near residence (12%), and no available transportation to parks or recreational opportunities (12%). Access issues also highlighted were parking (including closeness to opportunity and cost), park conditions, or too many unleashed dogs. One resident noted that, "Until Austin has a viable public transportation system, access will continue to be a problem for Seniors."

Transportation

Transit options can include walking, taking the bus, rideshare (Lyft, Uber, or Ride Austin), driving, carpooling, or Senior Transportation Services (i.e., Drive a Senior), etc.

The top five preferred modes of transportation by survey participants included personal vehicle, walking, Ride Share, CapMetro (bus), and Bicycling. Most respondents did not have issues accessing their preferred transit method. Of those that did experience barriers to their preferred transit methods, the top three reasons were: no public transit near residence (19%), safety concerns (14%), and other identified barriers specified by respondents (10%). Other identified barriers that were noted included, parking concerns, limited bike lanes and racks, heat concerns while walking, and lack of sidewalks. One resident noted, "Parking. I'd rather not drive to the park or pool, but there's no other practical way to get there. I'd much prefer public transportation, or to be able to live closer to a park. I don't feel safe after dark at bus stop. Sometimes, too, the bus driver doesn't stop, I guess because stop is not lit and he can't see me."

Housing

There are several housing opportunities for older adults such as independent living, residential care, assisted living, etc.

A majority of respondents noted living with a spouse/partner (55%), living alone (34%), and living with their children (9%). Of those living with their spouse/partner, children, or grandchildren, 28% identified themselves as being their primary caretaker. 45% of participants stated that affordability affects their housing options. Of those who noted affordability impacting their housing options, 54% said they were not experiencing unstable housing. Of those experiencing unstable housing, the top three reasons why were affordability, gentrification, and other identified reasons. Some of the reasons shared were rising property taxes, lack of rent control measures, and not being able to afford home repairs. One resident noted, "We will be leaving this city after 50 years of living here due to the extremely high taxes and increasing redevelopment of already wonderful neighborhoods. The untrammelled development is pushing low and middle income people (the teachers, nurses, construction workers, artists, musicians, etc.) out of the city. At first it was out of the city center now it's out of the city. All they're doing is creating really poorly built apartments and/or mega homes. We had hoped to age in place but Austin's development city council will not allow it." Another noted, "Affordability affects repairs and improvements."



The survey asks about aging in place. Aging in place refers to the ability to stay in your own home as you age. A majority of participants stated preferring to age in place (87%). 83% of respondents said they were currently aging in place. Of the 8% that were not aging in place, they noted reasons such as: affordability, rising property taxes, availability of independent older adult living communities, staff shortages of home health aides, mobility issues, future health concerns (like dementia), fall risk, and “affordable options are not affordable.”

*Employment and Volunteer Opportunities
Including full and part-time employment and volunteering*

Most participants were retired (62%). However, 19% were still working full time and 2% were not employed but looking for work. Of those still working or looking for work, 72% believed older adults in Austin do not have equal employment and income opportunities. Of those seeking employment or still working, 19% said they would be interested in assistance with resume writing, interview practice, and training. Most respondents said they had participated in volunteer and/or community engagement opportunities in the last 12 months (75%). A majority of respondents noted not facing barriers to volunteer and/or community engagement opportunities. However, for those who did note barriers, the biggest barriers mentioned were options closer to your residence (14%), other identified barriers (13%), and transportation services (9%). Barriers identified by the participants were parking, concerns/fear about COVID-19, technical difficulties with virtual options, ageism, ableism, mobility issues, and being homebound. A few residents noted not being able to participate due to being the primary caretaker to a spouse or parent.

*Recreational/Social
Culturally appropriate recreational and social opportunities for older adults*

76% of respondents stated they had participated in social or recreational activities in the last 12 months. Most respondents faced no issues accessing recreational or social opportunities. However, for those experiencing barriers the top barriers noted were options closer to your residence, other identified barriers, and transportation services. Of the other identified reasons, COVID-19 concerns, parking, cost, traffic, being homebound, being immunocompromised, etc. were mentioned frequently. One resident noted, “Lax COVID precautions. If people would just wear a mask, I'd feel safer.”

*Community Support & Health Services
Public Health and Health Care Services to improve health outcomes for older adults*

77% of survey participants stated they have not had difficulty accessing health services in the last 12 months. However, the services that participants did mention having difficulty accessing were dental, mental health, and specialty healthcare services. Respondents expressed not being able to access these services primarily due to cost, no available providers, and other identified barriers. Other identified barriers included long wait times for appointments, no insurance for dental and vision, and difficulties finding a primary care doctor. One resident noted, “Fall prevention classes are only offered during the day when I'm at work.”

Participants were asked where they receive their social support from. Most participants noted their friends provided them social support. Followed by their children or other family members. 9% of respondents said they did not have enough support or were experiencing social isolation. Other health and safety concerns that were mentioned were fear of COVID-19, fall risk, and not being prepared for an



emergency. Many also mentioned concerns of being targets of scams, home repairs, and the City of Austin's response to emergencies.

COVID-19 has come to the forefront of health concerns and has continued to change the climate of Austin/Travis County for almost 3 years. Survey participants noted they had been affected because they are experiencing isolation, lack of socialization or time with family and friends, loved ones dying from COVID-19, limited travel, and decreased access to healthy food. In regard to vaccinations, 69.9% of respondents have received at least 4 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. With 19% having received 3 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. The percent of those who had not received the vaccine was very low (0.6%).

Digital Access and Inclusion

Most participants have internet access in their homes (96%). However, of those who do not have access, cost was the top noted reason for not having access. Most noted having access to a technology device (98%). Yet, those who don't have access to a device stated that lack of interest, cost, and being unsure on how to use devices were the driving factors. For those who had a device, 18% noted wanting training on their devices. Most respondents who were interested in training stated that one on one training in person and group training in person would work best. Only 1% of respondents received financial assistance to access their devices.

Communication

Most participants noted the top five resources they used to stay informed were the internet/websites, television, email, radio, and social media. Newsletters, magazines, and newspapers older adults mentioned using to stay informed about resources were Austin American Statesmen, Austin Chronicle, and the Community Impact Newsletter.



There were limitations to this year's engagement due to the continuing need to balance virtual options with in-person options. The survey gained a larger response than previous years. However, survey response had minimal diverse representation, limiting the Commission's ability to identify targeted demographic trends across the eight domains of livability. Commissioners have remained active in trying to reach the community as best as they can and will continue to work towards strengthening this process. Recommendations to improve engagement for next year's budget is to make announcements at places such as local churches, neighborhood associations, and create a workgroup for survey development.

The City of Austin Budget Office has informed Boards and Commission to make recommendations that reflect equity and the City of Austin's Strategic Direction. For FY2022-2023, the Commission on Aging made 8 budget recommendations. Commission on Aging Budget Recommendations will be finalized and forwarded to the Budget Office, City Council, and applicable Departments by March 31st, 2023.



Appendix A

Quotes that capture reemerging themes:

Very concerned with the new Zilker plan and the removal of adjacent parking. In addition, oppressive parking rates (proposed to be increased even more) inhibit public access. We need more free parking not less. People do not have time to use public transit for recreation, for me to use Zilker it takes over three hours to get to/from the park. I can drive there in 15 minutes. If you truly want to address "barriers in accessing parks" you need to prioritize access for the mobility 98% of Austinites use.

Not enough parking spaces to access parks. Uneven terrain to walk or use wheelchair.

I regularly encounter reckless drivers while crossing with the light, and CapMetro made the stop at Hancock Center much less safe, making riders re-cross Red River St. to get the southbound #10 bus, marked as an unsafe pedestrian street on the Vision Zero map.

CapMetro is not feasible for many workers during months of weather extremes, for people with young children, or for those who require multiple stops.

Not all modes provide accommodation for wheelchairs, & or personal assistance while traveling, getting up and down stairs to bus, loading and unloading wheelchair / walker

Not yet [in reference to being able to age in place] but fear rent increases because no rent control measures in place in Austin.

The City makes community engagement inconvenient, then ignores the input of actual affected residents, and instead just does what it wants to do anyway. There are no obstacles to volunteering because the non-profits I volunteer with are great at community outreach and involving, respecting, and appreciating volunteers and their input. The City is not.

Some commissioners/board members are openly hostile and insulting to older Austinites. NOT Cool.

Without an adequate public transportation system, volunteer opportunities outside my neighborhood are NOT an option.

No sidewalks makes it dangerous to cross the road.

Doctors don't take Medicare or new patients. My primary care doctor retired 2 years ago and still having problems finding a PC doctor.

Thank goodness we are a couple and can drive. Getting around in this city without a personal vehicle is very challenging.

Had to drive 16 miles out of Austin to access a dermatologist, otherwise 2.5 mth wait.

City of Austin is obviously NOT prepared for weather emergencies.



Hardly any access to my peers to communal or private vegetable gardening - which increases social interaction, mental and physical health, stress relief, and access to fresh vegetables.

I'm lucky to still be as active and healthy as I am at 72 but I worry about the future.

Nowhere to safely walk in the neighborhood, having to drive to get to a place to exercise, lack of sidewalks, being the target of scams by household service providers, financial insecurity, safety being out after dark.

Loss/death of friends due to Covid which has impacted my spouse's emotional/mental health.

I will have a limited support system if my spouse passes away before I do.

Concerned that Austin isn't collecting SOGI data for any age demographic, particularly for older LGBTQ+ adults. It'll take several years of data collection before the accurate numbers of LGBTQ+ older adults will be known and even longer before services geared towards that demographic can catch up to the need. What's the hold up.

Someone needs to notice that many older adults work for a living! We need services and programs offered at various times and days, not just in the middle of the day Mon. - Fri. I find this especially so with City programs such as PARD and County programs too.

Here I am, pouring my heart out into a little box on a survey, but where else can I get heard?

Some parks aren't maintained well - after rain fall very muddy trails that could cause slip falls / branches in way not cut through and tall grass.

I have to walk 1/2 mile to the bus, no bench at the bus, bus runs only every 45 minutes (#30) to nearest park-Zilker.

Many older folks lack the ability to use digital methods - either through vision loss, shakiness/Parkinson's, or ability to keep up. Huge problem going forward. Some are also vulnerable to fraud.

