

Report to the Minneapolis Regional Retiree Council

An affiliate of the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation

From: MRRC HOUSING COMMITTEE

June 22, 2023

Re: Results of Aging-in-Place Survey

CONTENTS

1. Purpose, timeline, research & survey design
2. Survey results & limitations
3. Summary and what's next

Research & Survey Purpose: Seniors want to age at home. (1) To find out how retirees feel about aging in place and the barriers they experience to stay in their homes, the MRRC housing committee did research and a survey. Research of senior organizations, service groups and government programs preceded the survey. Further research of programs can be ongoing. (2) We also wanted to know what real people had to say, and so we surveyed union retirees and allies. The survey is a way to understand barriers to aging in place for real people, our members, and help us prioritize policies and programs to address barriers, and also recruit new MRRC members into action.

Timeline: The housing committee proposed a survey to the MRRC executive committee in December 2022, which was approved, and a survey committee was formed in early 2023. Twelve members joined in survey training in January 2023. Members were asked to be affiliate liaisons and interviewers, and the group recruited about fifty people to interview. A written survey was used in person and by phone, and in a few cases by mail. Interviews took place in February and March 2023 and results compiled in April. A report of the housing committee to the MRRC executive committee is due in June 2023.

Survey design: The survey consisted of both yes/no and check-off questions (e.g. union retiree or not, cultural background, home owner or renter, income, felt need for support, felt isolation, assistance needed), and open-ended questions (e.g. living arrangements, financial concerns, main barriers to age in place, who to rely on). We consulted with the University of Minnesota Center for Healthy Aging and Innovation in drafting the survey. We tried to have a cross-section of MRRC members by trade union groups represented in the survey. Of 49 completed surveys, only two were by non-union members. Members of five affiliate trade groups participated. (3) Geographic distribution of the surveyed was wide but concentrated in Minneapolis and Hennepin County. (4)

Survey results & limitations: Yes/no & check-off questions. Forty-seven union and two other seniors took part, a total of 49. 84% said they wanted to age in their homes. Thirty percent said they wanted to stay in their homes from 1 to 10 years; 30% wanted to stay as long as possible or didn't know. Over half expected to age alone. The age of survey participants ranged from 60 to over 90, with three-quarters in their 70s and 80s. Eighty percent were white and 20% African American or of other cultural heritage. A total of 59 people lived in the households surveyed, of which only six of residents were under age 21. Eighty percent of the surveyed owned their home

and 56% of these were mortgage free. Six seniors surveyed were renters. Primary household income sources were Social Security (88%), Pension (73%), and Savings (49%). About 10% were still employed.

Open-ended questions, barriers to aging in place summary: Barriers reported in the interviews are perhaps the most useful data obtained. Health or health of other household member(s) was a near universal barrier, although not necessarily an immediate threat. Household maintenance (55%), housing costs & taxes (51%), can't find tech-attendant (41%), lack of other help (37%), and money worries (25%) were more significant noted barriers. Transportation, tech assistance, prescription drug costs, a handicap, and light tasks were each of lesser concern (under 20%). Most (79%) said they did not now need help to age in place, yet 86% contacted family, friends, neighbors or hired help. A large majority said they did have enough help, but over 15% said they relied on no-one, or on agencies, social workers, the VA. Fifteen percent felt isolated.

Responses cover a range of real and anticipated barriers to aging in place, but also the unique nature of barriers elder households face. Each household is in a sense unique, with singular challenges despite commonalities, and less mentioned barriers can become serious problems for seniors over time.

We did not attempt to cross-tabulate data to ferret out more insights. For example, while Social Security was a primary income source noted, we don't know how critical it is compared to other income sources, or if women or men rely on it more or on another income source. Neither do we know if men or women respondents feel more isolated in their living situation. One committee member sensed interviews with women suggested they felt more financially insecure and therefore insecure about meeting their needs for housing upkeep and rising taxes, but we can't be sure from the survey data.

Happily, a survey goal to encourage other union retirees to action is promising and elicited 24 yes responses.

Summary and what's next: The housing committee research over the past year and the survey support a strong MRRC position to support aging in place. The MRRC should consider the following conclusions and strategies going forward.

- Barriers to aging in place vary significantly from household to household.
 - Each household contains people with different physical limitations, financial challenges and skill levels as well as different maintenance needs and architectural barriers.
- Community-based organizations are best able to understand those unique barriers.
 - And help seniors navigate solutions.
- Existing state funding is fragmented and provides inadequate funding for existing community-based organizations. State funding should more robustly support existing senior focused community-based organizations and promote new ones while providing a more wholistic service delivery system.
- The MRRC membership should review the housing committee report and offer feedback.
- The 24 survey respondents interested in action need to be convened and mobilized.

- Decision-makers need to get our research and survey conclusions.
- MRRC conclusions need to be presented to the legislative task force on aging.

1 --“home” here refers to both owner & rental, although the survey was mostly of home owners. “Aging in place” is a common term used here-in for remaining in one’s own place to age.

2 – senior serving agencies we researched:

Wilder Foundation, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, Alliance Housing, All Elders Voices for Justice, AARP Minnesota, Living at Home Network, Longfellow/Seward Healthy Seniors, Rebuild Together MN, Minnesota Housing Partnership, Hennepin County Commissioner Conely, St. Joan’s senior group, Hamline Midway Elders, UofM Center for Healthy Aging and Innovation, Project for Pride in Living,

3 – The five MRRC affiliated trade groups are: Industrial Unions, Public Employees Unions, Service Employee Unions, Teacher Unions, Trades Unions.

5- COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Tim Mungavan (Chair), Tom Beer, Rita Doucet, Mary Morris, Chris Nelson, Don Hammon, SURVEYORS: Harry Grigsby, Elladean Wickstrom, Steph Wells, Terri Grina, Steve Smith

5-Geographic distribution of those surveyed

