



City of Dallas

Office of

## **Community Care**

Senior Services

Event Report

District 1 – Join the Senior Conversation

Office of Community Care (OCC) Senior Services and Senior Affairs Commission (SAC) reintroduced the topic of Senior Listening Sessions during 2023 SAC meetings after a 4-year pause, which was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of Senior Listening Sessions is to create greater awareness of senior issues, gather data regarding senior concerns in each district, and offer information about available resources to the community.

The plan was to conduct a listening session in each council district during the year 2024 and explore as well as share ideas on how to better serve the older adults in the City of Dallas. The Office of Council Member Chad West, Senior Affairs Commissioner Teresita Delgado, and Office of Community Care Senior Services worked together to plan and execute the event. It was agreed that the session would focus on both sharing resources and gathering feedback from the community, including their concerns and suggestions for potential solutions.

### **The Event**

The District 1 'Join the Senior Conversation' took place on Thursday, November 14th, 2024, at Tyler Street Church located at 927 W. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Dallas TX 75208. The event started at 10:00 A.M. and ran till 12:00 P.M. The event was promoted via multiple outlets: Council Office mailing list, neighborhood associations, email blast to partner organizations, places of worship, apartment complexes and senior living communities, Park and Rec, Dallas Public Library, and social media sites. The SAC Commissioner shared the flyer within the community, while the Senior Services team helped spread the word through various outreach events. With support from the Council Office Staff, the Senior Services team managed the organization and coordination of the event.

The event was attended by 41 older adults and caregivers from the community. In addition to the district residents, three of the Senior Affairs Commissioners attended the event: Phyllis Lee (4), Feliz Jarvis (5, Vice Chair), and Debbie Austin (8).

The event began with an introduction from Pastor John F. Kay of Tyler Street Church, who welcomed attendees to the church and provided a brief overview of the services offered by the congregation. He mentioned that the church operates a clothing and food pantry, which is open to the community on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Pastor Kay also led the group in a prayer to open the event.

Pastor Kay introduced Council Member Chad West, who offered welcome and opening remarks. He acknowledged the community members in attendance, recognizing their role in supporting local engagement and emphasizing the importance of events like this one, which facilitate discussions and collaboration within the community. He recognized his district commissioners present at the event: Senior Affairs Commissioner Teresita Delgado and the Commission on Disabilities Commissioner Gay Revi. Before opening the floor to Commissioner Delgado, Councilmember West invited Commissioner Revi to briefly address items that are also highly relevant to older adults. The Commission on Disabilities, which advises the Mayor, City Council, and City departments on issues important to people with disabilities, recommends policies and practices to address these concerns and promotes understanding among individuals with varying disabilities to meet the needs of Dallas' diverse community.

Commissioner Revi addressed the pressing need for more accessible handicap parking spaces in the community, highlighting the challenges posed by limited parking availability. She emphasized that insufficient parking options for people with disabilities can significantly hinder their ability to access important services and public spaces. By raising awareness of this issue, she encouraged the community to consider solutions that would improve accessibility for all individuals.

Additionally, Commissioner Revi introduced the Lime Assist Program, a valuable initiative designed to enhance mobility for individuals with varying abilities. The program provides free access to shared electric vehicles, specifically scooters, which are available to riders at no cost. To use the service, riders can visit the Lime Assist website, [www.li.me](http://www.li.me), where they can select the type of vehicle they need and schedule a drop-off time. Lime then delivers the scooter directly to the rider's door, ensuring that the rider is present at the time of delivery. After the rider has finished using the scooter, Lime picks it up within 24 hours. This program helps provide greater independence and mobility for individuals with disabilities, offering a convenient and accessible transportation option.

Following Commissioner Revi's remarks, Councilmember West introduced Senior Affairs Commissioner Teresita Delgado. Commissioner Delgado took the opportunity to address several key issues that are affecting seniors both within her district and across the city of Dallas. She provided a detailed overview of the specific data related to the older adult population in District 1, shedding light on the challenges and needs of this

community. Her presentation provided valuable insights into demographic trends and highlighted the key challenges seniors are currently facing, including housing, safety, and income.

Commissioner Delgado also encouraged attendees to engage in an open dialogue by inviting them to ask questions on topics that were of particular importance to them. She emphasized the importance of hearing directly from the community in order to better understand their needs and to ensure that the solutions and policies being developed are truly reflective of those concerns. Her approach fostered a collaborative environment, allowing for a productive exchange of ideas and feedback.

## **Discussion**

The first question asked was about how to locate neighborhood associations within the district. The Council Office can provide resources, including contact information for these associations, and attendees were encouraged to reach out to the office for further details.

A key concern raised during the discussion was the issue of affordable housing and the rising cost of rent within the district. Attendees inquired about how to learn more about new affordable housing projects and the steps being taken to address these challenges. Another question was raised regarding changes to property rights and how these changes might impact housing affordability, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Councilmember West acknowledged that senior housing is a top priority throughout the City, recognizing the importance of ensuring that affordable, accessible housing options are available for older adults. He emphasized that the City is actively working on solutions to address the growing need for affordable housing, especially for seniors who may face economic or physical barriers to securing suitable homes.

Home repair was also brought up as an important topic, as maintaining older homes plays a crucial role in preserving housing stability for residents. The discussion highlighted the challenges that homeowners face in keeping up with necessary repairs, particularly for seniors on fixed incomes. The Housing and Community Development Department runs housing repair programs, which were open for applications earlier this fall. The program was announced through the Council Office newsletters as well as many other City communication channels. Attendees who have not yet signed up for the newsletter are encouraged to join the Council's mailing list to stay informed about future updates. While the home repair program is currently closed, the community will be notified when new applications are being accepted.

The group also mentioned organizations such as the Catholic Housing Initiative, which offers subsidized housing for low-income families and seniors, and the Tyler Street Tower, a facility that provides safe, affordable housing and a range of programs for senior citizens. These programs not only focus on providing secure housing but also aim to enhance the social, physical, and spiritual well-being of residents, helping to create a strong sense of community and support among seniors.

Another topic of discussion was senior activities. Commissioner Delgado emphasized the importance of seniors taking the initiative to organize programs and gather together, rather than waiting for others to bring programs to their community. She highlighted local resources such as recreation centers and libraries, which offer a variety of activities for the community, including book clubs, exercise classes, and other social and recreational opportunities. Commissioner Austin (8) also mentioned the Methodist Generations Program, further emphasizing its role in providing valuable activities and services to seniors in the community. Additionally, Commissioner Lee (4) spoke about the Active Senior Adult Program, which offers free activities to older residents at local recreation centers, providing more opportunities for seniors to engage in social and recreational activities close to home.

Finally, the issue of streets and sidewalk repairs was raised during the discussion. Many older adults expressed concerns that, in some cases, the condition of the streets seems to worsen after repairs. To help address these concerns, the community encouraged older adults to report any issues they encounter, such as potholes or uneven sidewalks, to the 311 service. By doing so, the City can track and address these issues more effectively, ensuring safer and better-maintained streets for all residents.

## **Survey**

A survey was distributed to all attendees at the beginning of the event, with 22 responses received from a total of 41 participants. Of the respondents, 32% reported hearing about the event through the City Council mailing list or from family/friends. Other sources of information included the Senior Affairs Commissioner, Tyler Street Church, social media, the library, and the Neighborhood Association.

Overall, 21 out of 22 respondents (95%) indicated they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the event, with 68% rating it as "very satisfied." Only one respondent expressed neutrality, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. While the majority felt the event was well-received, suggestions for future events included providing more information and improving facilitation. Some attendees also noted technical issues with the microphone and suggested the presence of a DART representative. One attendee commented on the start of the event, stating, "It started at 10, but no one began speaking until 10:30 AM. For those of us who work, it wasted a lot of time. Although I

loved the resources that were there, I wanted to hear the facilitators and had to leave by 10:45 AM.”

In terms of community needs, transportation was the most frequently identified concern (22%), followed by housing (18%) and home repair (13.6%). Other needs included financial assistance and counseling, legal assistance, yard and lawn care, medical services, and internet access.

When it comes to preferred communication methods regarding information and for future event, email was the most commonly requested platform, though respondents also indicated interest in TV and radio announcements, phone calls and text messages, flyers at City facilities, and social media. Demographically, 32% of respondents were aged 60-69, with additional participants from the 70-79 (five people), 80-89 (four people), and over 90 age ranges (one person). Four respondents were 59 or younger, and one person did not report their age.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the senior listening session proved to be a valuable platform for engaging the community and addressing the concerns of older adults in the district. The event successfully fostered open dialogue between residents and local representatives, allowing attendees to voice their needs and ask important questions. The overall positive feedback from participants highlighted the importance of such events in facilitating meaningful conversations and strengthening community connections. These sessions serve as an essential opportunity to gather insights and better understand the challenges faced by seniors, ensuring that their voices are heard in local decision-making processes.

The discussions also revealed a strong desire for increased access to resources and services that can improve the quality of life for older adults. Attendees expressed a clear interest in solutions related to housing, transportation, and home maintenance, reflecting broader community concerns. The event helped to identify key areas where further action and support are needed. Furthermore, the exchange of ideas underscored the community's commitment to finding collaborative solutions to enhance the well-being of seniors.

Survey results confirmed the effectiveness of the event in terms of both participant engagement and overall satisfaction. Most respondents expressed positive views about the event, indicating that it met their expectations in providing useful information and fostering a sense of community. The feedback also offered valuable suggestions for improving future events, particularly in terms of communication, facilitation, and technical aspects. These insights will be instrumental in refining future outreach efforts

and ensuring that subsequent events better address the needs of older adults while continuing to build upon the success of this session.