

Aging Well Workgroup
Healthy Communities Coalition
Helena, MT
June 2, 2023



Dear Non-motorized Travel Advisory Council,

We wanted to reach out and thank you for the work that your advisory council does to create a livable and accessible community that encourages active transportation for community members of all ages. We saw the IR article about the 6th Ward Urban Renewal Funding and the recent walk audit requested by NMTAC and appreciate the focus on pedestrian safety as we acknowledge the impact that has for our older adults. The work is particularly important because Montana is the third-fastest-aging state in the nation. It is said by 2035, Montana will be home to more people 65+ than children for the first time ever. Our communities must adapt to serve populations to stay healthy and active longer. Planning processes should include the needs of all people regardless of age, income, physical ability, race, and other factors. Communities that are well-designed and livable for people of all ages promote health and sustained economic growth.

We wanted to take a moment to share about who we are. The Healthy Communities Coalition (HCC) is a chronic disease prevention coalition in Lewis and Clark County that has been meeting since 2012. The group is composed a variety of community organizations and members dedicated to promoting health. The coalition works together on policies, programs, environmental change, and systems change. Our mission is to work as a diverse team of health advocates to improve health and well-being in our community through education, motivation, policy development, and creative partnerships.

Aging Well is a workgroup of the HCC. The group has been meeting for four years to work on projects that can help our aging population. Current representative organizations on the Aging Well Workgroup include Lewis and Clark Public Health, AARP, Rocky's Agency on Aging, Rocky's Senior Nutrition and Transportation Program, Mountain Pacific Quality Health, Carroll College, St. Peter's Health, Alzheimer's Association, Edgewood Senior Living, Veteran Affairs, City of Helena Planning, Whitehall Library, DPHHS, and community members who care about aging and livability. If you or your colleagues would be interested in hearing more or joining us, we would welcome your involvement.

Walkability is an important issue to Aging Well because older adults are disproportionately the victims of fatal motor vehicle crashes involving pedestrians. In fact, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, the rates of pedestrian deaths in vehicle crashes per 100,000 people are highest for those aged 70 or older. Therefore, by creating accessibly built environmental structures, we can encourage active transportation and allow people to stay independent for longer.

We see value in your Inclusive and Interdisciplinary (I2) Walk Audit approach because streets should be usable by people of all ages, experiences, and abilities. Thank you for your intentional approach to making sure there is a variety of abilities present during those audits. After all, when a street is safe and accessible for someone with a disability or mobility difference, it is safe and accessible for everyone.

Thank you for keeping our aging population in mind when making recommendations to the city. We appreciate your dedication to creating a vibrant, healthy, active, and livable community.

Many thanks,

Aging Well Workgroup

<https://www.lccountymt.gov/health/health-promotion/healthy-communities-coalition.html>

Questions can be directed to:

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