



**Older Adult Perspectives on Aging with Dignity and Independence in the Sarasota Community:
Summary of Qualitative Data
May 26, 2011**

Prepared by Kathy Black, PhD, Debra Dobbs, PhD and Suzanne Gregory

The Aging with Dignity and Independence Initiative collected qualitative data from older adults, age 65 and older, via two modalities: focus groups and surveys (written and electronic). A total of 267 older persons participated in this phase of the study: focus groups (n=51); surveys (n=216). The questions were designed to reveal the local lived-experience regarding aging with dignity and independence. This study will help identify areas in which dignity and independence may be promoted throughout the community.

This summary reports on findings from both modalities. Seven focus groups were held throughout Sarasota County. Table 1 indicates the date, location, and number of attendees participating at each site and Map 1 depicts the locations of focus groups held throughout Sarasota County. Map 2 depicts the zip code location of the survey participants and Table 2 shows participant characteristics.

The thematic data is presented in the following tables:

- Table 3. Perspectives on “What Matters Most Living in This Community” (p.6)
- Table 4. Perspectives on “What’s Good About Aging in the Sarasota Community” (p.12)
- Table 5. Perspectives on “What’s Not So Good About Aging in the Sarasota Community” (p.15)
- Table 6. Perspectives on Dignity: Meaning, Challenges, Supports (p.22)
- Table 7. Perspectives on Independence: Meaning, Challenges, Supports (p.36)
- Table 8. Recommendations to Enhance Dignity and Independence (p.46)

Table 1. Focus Group Dates, Locations and Number of Participants

DATE	LOCATION	# of PARTICIPANTS
Sept 24, 2010	Sarasota Bay Club, Sarasota	10
Oct 12, 2010	Senior Friendship Centers , Sarasota	10
Oct 26, 2010	Robert L. Taylor Center, Newtown	9
Nov 1, 2010	Casa Santa Marta, Sarasota	8
Nov 3, 2010	Elsie Quirk Library, Englewood	4
Nov 5, 2010	Fruitville Library, Sarasota	5
Nov 8, 2010	Venice Library, Venice	5

Map 1. Focus Group Sites



Map 2. Survey Participation

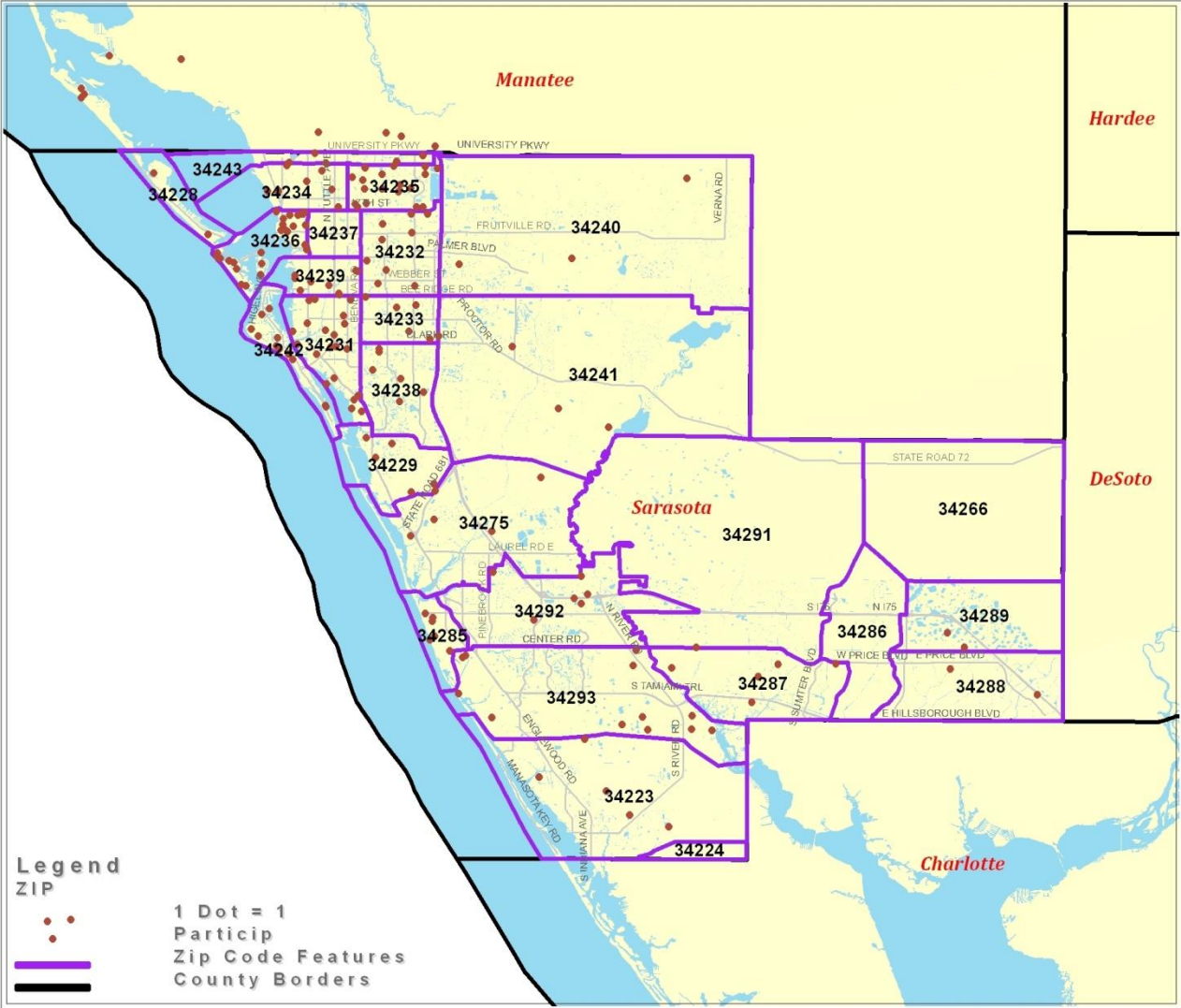


Table 2. Profile of All Participants: Focus Group (n=51) and Surveys (n=216)

Characteristics	FG # 1 n = 10	FG #2 n = 10	FG #3 n= 9	FG #4 n=8	FG #5 n= 4	FG #6 n=5	FG #7 n=5	Total N=51	Survey N= 216
<u>Age</u> (mean) (range)	86.3 (76-98)	75.1 (65-91)	76.8 (66-89)	82.3 (72-93)	76.5 (70-82)	76.6 (71-85)	79.0 (67-85)	79.4 (65-98)	75.9 (65-96)
<u>Gender (%)</u> Female	60	60	100	100	100	80	80	80	70
<u>Education (%)</u> Less than H.S.	0	10	43	29	25	0	0	15	2.2
H.S./GED	0	20	14	71	0	0	0	17	7.1
Some college	30	30	14	0	0	0	60	21	23.6
College degree	40	40	0	0	0	50	40	25	29.7
Post graduate	30	0	29	0	75	50	0	21	37.4
<u>Religious Affiliation</u> Protestant	40	50	12.5	37.5	100	40	40	42	42.1
Catholic	0	40	0	37.5	0	40	40	22	19.5
Jewish	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	11.1
No Preference	0	10	12.5	0	0	20	20	8	18.9
Other Religion	0	0	75	25	0	0	0	16	8.4
<u>Hispanic (%)</u>	12.5	10	0	12.5	0	0	0	6	0.5
<u>Race (%)</u> White	100	100	0	100	100	100	100	83	97.9
African American	0	0	87.5	0	0	0	0	15	2.1
Other	0	0	12.5	0	0	0	0	2	0

Characteristics	FG # 1 n = 10	FG #2 n = 10	FG #3 n= 9	FG #4 n=8	FG #5 n= 4	FG #6 n=5	FG #7 n=5	Total N=51	Survey N= 216
<u>Marital status</u> Married (%)	10	40	11	0	50	80	20	26	52.8
<u>Have Children (%)</u>	90	100	89	87.5	75	100	100	92	88.5
<u>Living Arrangement</u> Live with spouse	20	40	11	0	50	60	20	26	54.8
Live with other	0	20	11	0	0	0	0	6	4.8
Live alone	80	40	78	100	50	40	80	68	40.4
<u>Difficulty with ADLs (%)</u>	0	0	22	37.5	0	0	0	14	5.4
<u>Difficulty with IADLs (%)</u>	0	0	22	25	25	0	0	10	10.6
<u>Self Report Health (mean)^a (range 1-5)</u>	4.10	3.90	2.33	3.25	3.50	4.40	3.80	3.57	3.75
<u>Currently work (%)</u>	10	20	11	12.5	0	0	0	10	19.5
<u>Currently drive (%)</u>	80	100	67	57	75	100	100	82	85.3
<u>Income (%)</u> < \$13,000	0	0	56	50	0	0	0	19	6.0
\$13,001– 26,000	0	43	22	50	50	0	0	23	18.1
\$26,001 – 55,000	20	0	22	0	25	40	40	19	29.7
>\$55,000	80	57	0	0	25	60	60	39	46.2

Note: Missing on any individual items ranged from zero to three. Percentages for each item are based on those who responded.

^aSelf-report status of health ranges from 1 = poor to 5 = excellent.

Table 3. Perspectives on “What Matters Most Living in This Community”

Theme	Subthemes	Description	Examples of excerpts
Socialization and Activities	Social Activities	<p>People reported that friendships and continually connecting with others through numerous social activities was very important.</p> <p>Interaction with both other older adults as well as persons of all ages and backgrounds was specifically cited.</p>	<p><i>I just have to be involved with people.</i></p> <p><i>You need to cultivate new people in your life because you lose them awfully fast down here.</i></p> <p><i>There are so many things that you can get yourself involved in if you wish.</i></p> <p><i>Opportunities to... share a variety of friendships both young and old.</i></p> <p><i>Interaction with people of all ages.</i></p> <p><i>Sarasota is very cosmopolitan. I enjoy meeting people of different ethnic backgrounds, varying educational levels, etc.</i></p>
	Range and Convenience of Social Activities	<p>People reported the overwhelming range of social opportunities – in all areas widely available for them to engage in along with a sense of choice in options.</p>	<p><i>[Activities most cited in order of prevalence: cultural, recreation, educational, arts, volunteer, entertainment, music/symphony/opera, physical exercise/ sports, faith-related, dining, shopping, swimming/pool]</i></p> <p><i>[Attributes of activities frequently cited: opportunities, accessible, convenience, variety, diversity, quality, affordable]</i></p>
	Volunteering	<p>Volunteer activities were cited of great importance. Choice of volunteer activities provided for either continuation of previous life interests as well as new and unexpected opportunities.</p>	<p><i>I have volunteered my whole life. I am involved in a lot of children’s organizations and still volunteer.</i></p> <p><i>... the challenge of so many things that you never anticipated that you’d get into... you just never dreamed these things would come into your life.</i></p> <p><i>...serving as a volunteer... in activities which make this a better world for all human beings.</i></p>

	Leisure Time	People widely reported a sense of awareness, freedom, and the importance of “time” at this stage in their lives.	<p><i>We all like to do a lot of things we didn't have time to when (working) and doing other things.</i></p> <p><i>If I want to read, I read. I never had time for it before. My husband used to holler at me because I'd sit up at night and read. Now you don't have to worry about it. I enjoy reading!</i></p>
Health	Wholistic Concept of Health	Health as a “multi-dimensional” construct was identified as mattering most. Many spoke about “staying healthy” as a combination of physical, mental, and social activities.	<i>... my exercise program, staying mentally involved, volunteering full time, and just continuing to stay active and involved in the community. All of these things add to your health.</i>
	Physical Health	Physical health was cited as the key to maintaining their current living arrangement.	<i>Staying healthy so I can live independently.</i>
	Health Care	Healthcare was also widely reported as mattering most to the participants. Many persons identified health care providers that specialize in aging.	<p><i>Access to high quality medical care.</i></p> <p><i>Health care that ... focus is on aging and problems connected with aging.</i></p>
Mattering	Importance of personal meaning and contributing	People overwhelmingly indicated the importance of “giving back” and contributing to others in the course of the casual encounters, volunteering, and in the community.	<p><i>Pass it on. It's something you can do, speak with somebody and make them feel better. Pass that on....</i></p> <p><i>I'm a people watcher....when I see somebody glum or grouchy, I'll go up to em' and smile... when I walk away I can see them stand up straighter; they feel better. I feel like I've helped somebody else because I've had so many friends that have helped me in different ways, and I just want to pay a little back.</i></p> <p><i>A fun thing I do right now is... make quilts. We made quilts for the neonatal intensive care unit here, which serves four counties and sees close to 800 babies a year, which shocked the daylights out of me, and so I feel that's good.</i></p>

	Serving one's community	Many people further commented on the importance of contributing to the community.	<p><i>It is important to have a purpose to my living and that I am valued for my involvement.</i></p> <p><i>What matters is to feel that I continue to make a difference in the lives of others despite being retired.</i></p> <p><i>It is important to me to be able to be of service to my community.</i></p> <p><i>I want to be able to contribute in a meaningful way to the life of our community.</i></p> <p><i>What matters to me most is giving back to this community...Every day my goal is to make someone's life better in any way I can - big or small.</i></p> <p><i>Use my professional experience to enhance the lives of other older folks in my community.</i></p> <p><i>Assist others who may have temporary physical emotional issues.</i></p> <p><i>Being active and a part of the community. Being an observer is not enough.</i></p>
Independence	Autonomy Personal mobility	<p>Many cited the importance of freedom of choice as what matters most.</p> <p>Being independent was also frequently discussed in tandem with aspects of transportation and ability to participant.</p>	<p><i>If I want to join a group, I can join it, and if you don't want to, nobody says anything to you. You know, "well, you should do that" kind of a thing (which) makes you feel guilty...</i></p> <p><i>...independence and that my car is still running, and I'm able to drive.</i></p> <p><i>Continuing to be mobile (driving, walking, getting out to my volunteering jobs) getting to the store.</i></p>

Dignity	Respect	Many indicated the importance of being treated with respect.	<p><i>Being accepted as equal to others. Not as old fogie too old to think...</i></p> <p><i>That we be respected with dignity - not as ones who have already lost our minds and only as wrinkled bodies...</i></p> <p><i>Have people listen when speaking.</i></p>
Broader Community and Environment	<p>Natural Environment</p> <p>Physical Environment</p> <p>Sense of Community</p> <p>Service Environment</p>	<p>Many elements of the community's natural environment were noted as mattering most.</p> <p>Many aspects of the community's infrastructure were noted. Among the attributes, safety and security were mentioned most prominently.</p> <p>Others discussed aspects of a "sense of community" mattered most.</p> <p>Several commented on having access to needed services.</p>	<p><i>[Cited in order of prevalence: climate/ weather, beaches/gulf/water, parks]</i></p> <p><i>[Specific attributes noted include: beautiful, clean, safe, calming, relaxing, convenient, close to nature, accessible, walkable]</i></p> <p><i>Being able to get around easily and safely.</i></p> <p><i>Community is designed for safe walking and amenities are close by.</i></p> <p><i>[Specific attributes include: safety, security, clean, accessible, well-maintained, walkable, quality]</i></p> <p><i>[Specific attributes cited include: friendliness, sense of community, feeling welcome, being part of the larger community, opportunities to meet people and form supportive networks]</i></p> <p><i>What matters most to me are the availability of superior medical support and care, availability of alternative transportation opportunities...</i></p> <p><i>That there is appropriate transportation system so when I am no longer able to drive I can remain active.</i></p> <p><i>The many services that are offered to all ages and levels of income.</i></p>

Mental/ Psychological/ Spiritual Health	<p>Self- Esteem</p> <p>Positive Attitude</p> <p>Growth/ maintenance of mental/ spiritual health</p>	<p>Much of the comments here focused on maintaining one's appearance with acknowledgment of others who don't.</p> <p>People indicated the importance of positive attitudes/ affirmations as mattering most and equally identified the importance of avoiding "negative" people that could impact attitude.</p> <p>Others commented on the importance of maintaining mental / cognitive health.</p> <p>Learning was specifically cited as a key aspect of preserving mental health and spiritual growth.</p>	<p><i>Maintaining self esteem...my regular ritual... shave, shower, and get dressed.</i></p> <p><i>,, how easy it is to "let your decent habits go" when you're not gonna' see anybody so why bother combing your hair...</i></p> <p><i>Keep positive thoughts. It's all in your head as to how old you feel you are. I still feel young.</i></p> <p><i>Age is just a number.</i></p> <p><i>About negative people. I don't avoid them, I just don't encourage them. I like to surround myself with people who are very positive and outgoing...otherwise you become negative yourself... and allow that to interfere with your personality.</i></p> <p><i>...I go (to wisdom class)...I find it extremely helpful because I want to keep up with what is happening in the world so that... I don't sound like I (don't know)... you know, with the medication, finances, and all the other things that come into play as old people...</i></p> <p><i>It is important for me to have a stimulating faith community in which I can both engage in worship and grow in my faith.</i></p> <p><i>...classes that delight me and enlarge my horizons.</i></p> <p><i>That education be a priority of my life. Education at all stages of life.</i></p> <p><i>... enjoy my spiritual path...to freedom. I'm talking about the road to joy ...enlightenment.</i></p>
Maintaining Current Living Arrangement/ Lifestyle	<p>Economic security</p>	<p>Cost of living/ ability to maintain/ provide for current and future needs</p>	<p><i>Most important issue is the cost of health care and cost of drugs. Second most important issue is the general cost of living.</i></p> <p><i>In all aspects of life now, at age almost 77, my personal</i></p>

	<p>Aging in Place AND community</p>	<p>Many reported the importance of maintaining their homes. This issue was largely intertwined with the cost of living.</p>	<p><i>safety and the affordability of housing are my main concerns.</i></p> <p><i>Affordable living -- i.e. availability of low-cost options for daily needs.</i></p> <p><i>Having the ability to afford to continue to live here independently for as long as possible.</i></p> <p><i>My major concerns are... being able to live independently and comfortable options for aging in place</i></p> <p><i>Wondering where I will be able to live when my money and health require another place. If I could afford a retirement place ...But the places I have seen are VERY expensive.</i></p> <p><i>Although I still drive ... my wife does not, so transportation will eventually become an important matter for us.</i></p> <p><i>Have someone you can depend on to help you through the hard times when and if you become ill.</i></p>
	<p>Anticipating future needs</p>	<p>Some anticipated future needs of concern, particularly transportation.</p>	<p><i>As we age we lose some of our ability to do the necessary things, even little things (like changing a light bulb in a high ceiling). We worry about how we will get around as our mate continues to insist on driving when he has a near miss almost daily.</i></p> <p><i>While we are both able to drive a car now, how will we get around once aging prohibits that ability.</i></p>

Table 4. Perspectives on “What’s Good About Aging in the Sarasota Community”

Theme	Subthemes	Description	Examples of excerpts
Activities	Accessibility	Many reported on the accessibility of a wide range of activities (cultural, physical, social, etc.).	<i>Well, I just like to live where it’s convenient year round. I mean I can swim every day!</i>
	Abundance		<i>Many activities available in our age group.</i> <i>[Most cited in order of prevalence: cultural, learning/ educational, arts, libraries, Selby Gardens, orchestra, volunteering opportunities, church-related, YMCA, shopping, biking, opera, Asolo, Van Weasel, ballet, golf, concerts]</i>
	Affordability	Many commented that many activities are affordable, free, discounted, etc.	<i>Lots of free programs or inexpensive ones.</i>
Broader Community and Environment	Natural environment	Predominantly, people extolled the goodness of the area’s natural environment including climate and beaches as well as the benefits they derive. In many cases, this was contrasted with other parts of the country and areas in Florida.	<i>The “warmth” gives a sense of freedom by not having to put on boots and a hat and gloves and a scarf. I mean when I’m cold all I want to do is not do anything!</i> <i>You cannot bicycle in February in [northern state]! And you can’t be active, keep yourself moving as much as you can down here.</i> <i>Where I use to live, if I wanted to go to a “bookstore,“ ... the first thing I had to do was listen to the weather report and if it was freezing rain you didn’t go out, you stayed home. Down here there is really nothing to keep you in the house other than a rain shower in the afternoon.</i> <i>They (family) come down because it’s warm and I get to see them more because this is a great place...It brings them down, it’s a relative ‘magnet.’</i> <i>The weather is kind to aging bones.</i>
	Broader natural environmental assets	Many reported a wide range of natural beauty associated with living in the community.	<i>[Attributes cited in order of prevalence: warm weather, beaches, parks, blue skies, gardening, trees, flowers, birds, breezes]</i>

	<p>Safety</p> <p>Well - Maintained surroundings</p>	<p>Many reported the primacy of a sense of safety in the community.</p> <p>Others reported on the appearance of the community.</p>	<p><i>Safety is a key element. If one feels unsafe out in the community, ones remains home.</i></p> <p><i>I feel safe here.</i></p> <p><i>Attractive, well kept public places.</i></p>
Aging Community	<p>Social connections with other “older” people</p>	<p>People widely reported that they really appreciate and feel an immediate connection and acceptance with others due to relocation, age, and shared life experiences.</p> <p>Particular attributes of older adults are especially appreciated.</p>	<p><i>I think one of the best things about Sarasota is...most of us came from somewhere else. There are very few native Sarasotans.</i></p> <p><i>I like living in a community of “like ages” people, all seniors, so we understand each other...</i></p> <p><i>A lot of our friends are our own age. Very seldom in these communities (are people) 80-85. There are many, many people around that you have a lot in common with.</i></p> <p><i>... I’m nothing spectacular, I’m just a woman, but I had a career and (was connected with others at that time). But when you retire, it’s your community and where you volunteer. And there is so much support in this town... because everybody goes through it.</i></p> <p><i>We are not alone.</i></p> <p><i>...there are so many of ones’ contemporaries in the community that they understand where one is coming from.</i></p> <p><i>...you do not feel old because nearly everyone else also has gray hair, wrinkles, and some sort of ailments. Sometimes, at 69, I am the youngest in the group.</i></p> <p><i>I have some great role models in this community who are in their 80s.</i></p> <p><i>Having active people my age...</i></p> <p><i>[Qualities mentioned include: active, vibrant, educated, intelligent, interested, upbeat, experienced, friendly]</i></p>

	<p>Appreciation of age diversity in community.</p> <p>Broader sense of “progressive” aging community</p>	<p>Others indicated the importance of living in community with persons of all ages.</p> <p>Many commented on the current and future of the community’s aging demographics.</p>	<p><i>There is a good mix of young and old. This is necessary to keep us in the older portion of the population- active and current.</i></p> <p><i>Sarasota is a role model of what other cities and towns could be for a maturing population.</i></p> <p><i>Sarasota is known for its aged and proud of it.</i></p> <p><i>What I think is good right now is the number of people interested in creating a vital, vibrant aging community.</i></p> <p><i>There are so many of us, we can’t be ignored!</i></p> <p><i>We are talking about this topic.</i></p>
<p>Services and Accommodations</p>	<p>Healthcare</p> <p>Aging-related</p> <p>Residential options</p>	<p>People commented on the high quality health care and medical providers.</p> <p>Many appreciated the wide range of services pertaining to health as well as specialization in geriatrics.</p> <p>Others indicated the wide variety of aging services available in the community.</p> <p>Some noted a sense of “security” in knowing the availability of services to support aging.</p> <p>Others indicated the availability of alternative and assistive living options</p>	<p><i>I had to get my hip redone and picked Sarasota over the [well-known hospital in another state] where I also have a home.</i></p> <p><i>[Cited in order of prevalence: hospitals, doctors, paramedics, fire and ambulance, emergency care, Hospice, visiting nurses, alternative health options].</i></p> <p><i>I am blessed by living in a community also committed to human services (for older adults)</i></p> <p><i>The abundant resources that are available to (help) seniors.</i></p> <p><i>Most important, knowing that senior services are in place even though I have no need for them now.</i></p> <p><i>...many nice assisted living facilities are available...</i></p>

	Transportation	including ALFs and over 55 age communities. Some commented on positive elements and benefits of transportation in Sarasota.	<p><i>Reasonably safe and efficient road and street networks. Affordable mass transit...</i></p> <p><i>You don't have to give up things you enjoy, just because you're old, which tends to happen if you live in the suburbs and are dependent on your car for everything.</i></p> <p><i>[Most cited in order of prevalence: walkability/ sidewalks, airports, well lit streets, SCAT bus availability, straight roads, easy parking, well marked highways]</i></p>
--	----------------	--	---

Table 5. Perspectives on “What’s Not So Good/Most Serious About Aging in the Sarasota Community”

Themes	Subthemes	Description	Examples of Excerpts
Transportation	Public Transportation	Many reported issues with public transportation. Although many indicated specific issues experienced, others also reported “perceptions” of public transportation.	<p><i>Public transportation is absolutely abysmal for a city this size. It's horrible, and for years they never had public transportation on Sunday when people have leisure time to use it. I think that is a huge, huge minus.</i></p> <p><i>Using SCAT bus system is not an option-- I could not get to a bus stop and could not wait in the heat.</i></p> <p><i>I live 2.5 miles from the nearest SCAT stop.</i></p> <p><i>Public transportation is ugly. Only the desperate use it.</i></p> <p><i>[Specific public transportation issues included: lack of affordable, adequate transportation (especially for wheelchair bound), limited bus routes, no transport at night, no benches or shade at stops, lack of handicapped parking spaces, lack of parking downtown]</i></p>
	Traffic	Traffic/ driving issues were also reported as a negative, unsafe, and impacting mobility.	<p><i>...it's getting so crowded, traffic is so bad.</i></p> <p><i>Drivers in control of a vehicle well past their ability to drive safely; streets</i></p>

		<p>Some of the issues were specific to pedestrians.</p>	<p><i>clogged with drivers unprepared about where they are going, thus criss-cross lanes often WITHOUT SIGNALS.</i></p> <p><i>I am afraid of I-75. I was used to maximum speeds on the highways of 55mph, with people going 60-65 when traffic permitted. Here it seems as if 80-85 is the norm and I don't feel comfortable for myself and in view of my lack of trust in the other drivers' attention spans. I have cut myself off voluntarily from activities in St. Pete and Tampa, etc because of this.</i></p> <p><i>[Specific traffic issues included: congestion, increased traffic during season, aggressive drivers, distracted drivers, poor driving habits, people impatient with older drivers, frequent lane changing, not able to read road signs, changed traffic patterns]</i></p> <p><i>I was crossing the street on Osprey, by Morton's. Now there is like a 10 mile speed limit through there ...The person saw me y and stopped, and the car behind him honked and honked... I hate when they do that...</i></p> <p><i>[Specific pedestrian traffic issues included: deep curbs, speeding cars, too brief time to cross streets, unsafe cross walks (especially at 41), red light runners, lack of sidewalks both sides of the street]</i></p>
<p>Personal Circumstances</p>	<p>Financial insecurity</p>	<p>Many people reported issues regarding the affordability of living in Sarasota and difficulties in managing at this time.</p>	<p><i>The rising costs of living here when you are on a fixed income/pension/social security, etc. The current depressed real estate market keeps individuals trapped in houses that can't be sold without taking a loss. Increased taxes/financial juggling.</i></p> <p><i>Because of the economic troubles at this time.....job opportunities are scarce and some of us must continue to work in order to sustain ourselves.</i></p> <p><i>[Specifically cited includes: depressed housing market, rising prices for food and gas, being on a fixed income, making ends meet, needing a job, increases to home insurance, expensive health insurance, expensive medical and medication costs, ongoing caregiving costs, taxes and hidden user fees, living within savings, cost of activities, cost of living, trying to make ends meet, inflation, can't afford repairs to home, expensive assisted living facilities]</i></p>

	Changes to informal network of family/friends	Many indicated missing family and friends due to geographical distance and the difficulty of forming new networks.	<i>I miss my friends up north. Those friendships were built over 50 years as we raised families, worked on school/church./community projects together, and experienced both joyous and sad times together. It's harder to make new friends at this stage of life. Acquaintances yes; solid friendships- not so easy.</i>
	Health-related	Many persons reported that their health status impacts their ability to interact in the community.	<i>The most serious problem I face daily is my inability to hear well. Hearing on the phone is a real problem and people don't talk to me as much since my hearing has become worse.</i> <i>[Specifically cited includes: pain limiting ability to get out, health conditions affecting mobility and ambulation (arthritis), fear of falling, maintaining fitness]</i>
Future Fears/ Concerns	Loss of driving / car	Many reported concerns about what will happen when they lose ability to drive.	<i>I am concerned about what happens when I shouldn't be driving any more.</i> <i>I worry about becoming isolated.</i>
	Outliving finances	Many participants spoke about whether they will be able to afford to age as they intended.	<i>...the economy has affected all of us... it's harder and harder to survive financially and live a comfortable life. I think that's another really scary thing. You know, they didn't expect us to live as long as we're living so what you thought was going to be a great retirement package was great until you hit a certain age. I don't think they expected anybody to live past 80.</i> <i>The most serious problem I face is economic insecurity. It weighs heavily upon me that I have worked all my adult (and teen) life, have lived frugally and have made saving a way of life, but with medical costs out of control I have no guarantee that I will outlive my savings</i>
	Living longer		<i>... as we get older I think we get more and more afraid of the things that can happen to you. You feel that... now that we are living longer and longer....</i>
	Future caregiving needs	People expressed multiple concerns about growing older alone and future caregiving needs for self and spouse.	<i>..because we're alone. We know we have to be responsible for every aspect of our lives that nobody else is going to do it for us... I don't know that somebody else would....</i> <i>I guess the biggest fear I have is if something happened, who's gonna' take care of me? But right now, I put it aside. Who's gonna' step in and say,</i>

	Dependency	Others discussed explicit fears about their future.	<p><i>okay, this is what you need to do. Because there might come a time that I need somebody to do that. Are they gonna' be there or who's gonna' be there?</i></p> <p><i>My greatest concern is being able to take care of myself w/out depending on others</i></p>
	Loss of control		<p><i>My most serious problem is the fact that my wife and I are getting older and our health is going downhill....</i></p> <p><i>I'm afraid of somebody taking control of my life at a certain time.</i></p> <p><i>One of my concerns would be that I end up in a nursing home. I do have a little fear that if I get older they (family) might try to take care of everything.</i></p>
	Multifaceted issues	Many of the concerns described represented several implications for older adults.	<p><i>My financial advisor says I got three more years to live. But when you lose a spouse, it cuts your income in half at least. You know each of them has a pension and social security, and that money's gone. You have to reassess how you are using your monies.</i></p> <p><i>Most serious problem I face is dealing with an aging spouse with health problems - cost of care becomes a factor and issues related to caretaking.</i></p>
	Maintaining mental and emotional health	<p>Others reported concerns about maintaining mental health and dealing with losses.</p> <p>Others reported difficulties in interacting with others presenting with mental health needs or characteristics.</p>	<p><i>The most serious problem in my daily life is ...the loss that comes as friends and family become ill and die.</i></p> <p><i>How to relate to people with memory loss and those suffering (physical, mental, grief).</i></p>

Ageism	Disrespectful Attitudes and Behaviors	<p>Many reported instances of ageist behaviors and attitudes. In many cases, people reported that others presumed the older person was incompetent.</p> <p>Others specified communication that caused the older adult to feel mistreated or disregarded.</p> <p>Many reported experiences of automatically being treated as if they had memory or sensory problems.</p>	<p><i>My most serious problem is trying to make people understand that because I'm 91, I'm not a moron. It seems to be a major problem. And now when they (call) and say to me "Oh Mrs. (X) I see you are 91" I say "yes I'm 91 and how old are you? They immediately think that you're not functioning.</i></p> <p><i>I mentioned something (to my doctor) that was bothering me, and he said to me, "Well what do you expect at your age?" That was no way (tone) for him to say it. I've had it happen many times, "Ohhhhh, a person of your age."</i></p> <p><i>I don't like the fact that the doctors are always saying "at your age" etc., like what else do you expect?</i></p> <p><i>I have experienced ageism when going to doctor and dentist appointments. The girls at the front desks and nurses often call me "honey" or "sweety" and I reply, "I am not your honey." It is very offensive to me and others that I have talked to because is it not only insulting, it is infantilizing an elderly person.</i></p> <p><i>(persons who interact with older adults) are making an assumption that because people are in their 80's, they think their minds are gone or hard of hearing.... Don't you find that a patronizing attitude? They talk down to (older adults)... can be demeaning to you if you're older....</i></p>
Aging in Place	Services and support	Many reported difficulty in maintaining their home and accessing safe and competent support to remain at home.	<p><i>I would like to know where I can get a handy man that I can trust to come into my home and do things we no longer can do.</i></p> <p><i>Finding competent people to make home repairs.</i></p> <p><i>[Specifically cited included: yard, housekeeping, vacuuming, cleaning rain gutters, hanging curtains]</i></p>
Societal Issues	Complaints at all levels of government	Several people complained about various levels of government.	<p><i>Getting caught in a government system and unable to escape because no one in the government has the authority to waive the rule, regulation, law, etc in which you are entrapped.</i></p> <p><i>...political gridlock on national and state levels...</i></p>

	Social and economic disparities	Others reported dislike of social / economic disparities in their community.	<p><i>The gulf between the wealthy elderly and those on social security... At the condo where I live, (some) just hanging on and (another) in foreclosure because he had to borrow to pay medical bills. Their peers are redecorating their units and taking cruises!</i></p> <p><i>Concern that the "haves" have too much and the "have nots" are slipping further behind.</i></p>
Personal Safety Concerns	Neighborhood Drug Violence	Others addressed concerns about criminal activity. (This theme was exclusively noted at the Newtown and Mid-Town sites.)	<p><i>Well there's a gang of kids over here and you know what they're doing. I say (to police) can't you ride through the neighborhood and see? The minute they come through, the crowd scatters.</i></p> <p><i>There's a lot of shooting going in this part of the town, North County area.</i></p>
	Fear of retaliation	Some indicated concern about reporting crime. (This theme was noted exclusively at Newtown site)	<p><i>Because you don't want to be pulled into this and people don't care, so I think I'll just keep my mouth shut.</i></p> <p><i>...I'm afraid.... I don't want nobody to come and shoot me or nothing like that. We got to get away from fear, and I think this is a lot of our problem here in Newtown, fear. We are afraid to speak up. If somebody else tell on him, that's nobody but a tattle tale. You know, hey, this is what we all supposed to do.</i></p>
	Aggressive Panhandlers	Others indicated that panhandlers aggressively approach them for money and it has led to strategies to avoid this experience. (This theme was reported exclusively at the Newtown and Midtown sites.)	<p><i>I have been approached on multiple occasions in (several local sites). Just last week a young girl wanted me to roll down my window, fairly late at night. I refused....</i></p> <p><i>You'd be surprised about the creative stories they come up with.</i></p>
	Sense of vulnerability	Some recognized that their age and subsequent limitations can make them an easy target. (This theme was noted exclusively at Newtown site and Midtown sites.)	<p><i>Need to plan to avoid. Don't do out at night. Don't go in the parking lot.</i></p> <p><i>I'm like Cinderella, when I go out I have to make sure I'm home before dark.</i></p> <p><i>You feel nervous... you know you aren't going to let anybody get (anything). You also got to realize that you're not physically able... you can't run. You can't fight back because I can hardly move my arms, much less fight back. But you know it's a thought in the back of your mind all</i></p>

		Changing neighborhood	<p><i>the time whether you want to think about it or not.</i></p> <p><i>Crime. Older people are very vulnerable.</i></p> <p><i>...I feel less confident about walking the streets early and late as I have for the past ten years.</i></p> <p><i>Being fearful of crime here on the north trail.</i></p>
Unscrupulous Practices	<p>Exploitive business dealings</p> <p>Phone solicitation/scams</p> <p>Stolen Identity</p>	<p>Participants indicated that they are frequently taken advantage of when obtaining services- for the home, yard, car, financial services, and healthcare.</p> <p>Participants at almost all sites identified calls to their home as suspicious and problematic.</p> <p>One participant noted a very difficult experience in which her identity was stolen</p>	<p><i>Overcharged for tasks. People think you're older and they overcharge you for doing the yard.</i></p> <p><i>Misdirected advice, often well meaning; frequently based on advisors' own needs, not mine...</i></p> <p><i>Healthcare providers too aggressive for business.</i></p> <p><i>There's somebody everyday trying to steal, and you don't need to talk to everybody. I monitor my calls, and if I don't know them, hang up.</i></p> <p><i>Another problem is having to be so cautious about scammers and people out to take advantage of an older person.</i></p> <p><i>It was a big hassle. I think they stole it from a gas station where I used my card.</i></p>
Climate	Sun/ Humidity	Many participants reported that the warm weather was problematic.	<p><i>...the heat. You have to learn to deal with it. It's like an oven.</i></p> <p><i>The doctor told me I need to walk but when I get out in the heat I can't breathe.</i></p>

Table 6. Perspectives on Dignity: Meaning, Challenges, Supports

Theme	Subthemes	Description	Examples of excerpts
Autonomy	Self-direction	Overwhelmingly, dignity was described as self-direction and personal choices. Many people indicated aspects of both being able to express choice/ as well as have options without influence of others.	<i>I can do whatever I want when I want to do it.</i> <i>Living alone is nice because if I want to stay up till 11 o'clock okay, and if I want to stay up and watch television until 2:30 in the morning, and, if I sleep until 12 noon, that's fine....</i> <i>Each time I make a decision that comes from my whole life of moral choices and I stick by my innermost beliefs, I feel dignity.</i> <i>Dignity, to me, means ...not having to bow to someone else's version of ... what I should do.</i> <i>Dignity means being treated as the competent, intelligent person I am. It means having someone ask what I would like rather than tell me what I need. It means having choices and having a voice.</i>
	Self reliance	Many spoke about others who are able to manage themselves as an aspect of one's dignity. This was referenced in terms of all areas of daily living / decision-making.	<i>I want to continue to do everything possible for myself, or to have choices about who does it and how.</i>
	Self sufficiency		<i>I don't think we pay enough attention, our society maybe, but I think there's a middle stratum that are easily, people who are probably aging with dignity, but all on their own, completely alone, but can't get out, can't take part in things yet they are allowing themselves... to maintain.</i> <i>Being self-sufficient and not becoming a burden on or dependent on others.</i> <i>Being able to control your everyday functions.</i> <i>...means being able to take care of my own personal needs.</i>
Interactions with Others	Respectful treatment of self and others	Many people reported that dignity is expressed as respectful treatment of self, appropriately recognizing one's age.	<i>Privacy. Respect. Being treated like an adult, and not a child again.</i> <i>A lot of self-respect comes from the way others treat you.</i> <i>(dignity) means not having people raise their voice when they speak to you.</i>

	Ageism	<p>Many persons reported that ageist behaviors belie dignity.</p> <p>Several people commented on mistreatment as the result of limited understanding and tolerance by others.</p> <p>Many people identified the importance of dignified treatment of others as an aspect of one's own dignity.</p>	<p><i>I don't like it when people call you honey and dear and this new term, girlfriend. You know, somebody that you haven't known, do you want them to say they're your girlfriend?</i></p> <p><i>I will tell you something that bothers me.... When I pick up the phone and... the other person (calls me by my first name).</i></p> <p><i>We need to earn the treatment we expect by also treating others well - as the Golden Rule reminds us.</i></p> <p><i>It means being treated like a person and not be talked to like a baby. Have you ever noticed how many caregivers use tones and words like they are talking to a young child or infant? Terms such as "sweetie" or "honey" show a lack of respect. Also, many talk about the person to others in the room as if the elder person wasn't even there.</i></p> <p><i>Maybe it's easier to define what the opposite of dignity is: being the object of condescension, derision, lack of empathy, lack of respect and appreciation, dislike, disgust, pity -- attitudes felt, expressed and/or exhibited by others who in one sense or another have control of a situation that you do not.</i></p> <p><i>...not being talked to as if one were an imbecile.</i></p> <p><i>Being treated civilly (includes training of "younger" folks to change when communicating and relating to elders (vision, hearing, clearer speaking, physical limitations, etc.) and maybe elders being more tolerant. Being treated as a person who has lived life which for younger folks is yet to be lived. That all people (regardless of age, gender, race, etc. etc.) be honored ...</i></p> <p><i>Making people feel important. You have something to contribute. You can feel it, you can feel that way, and that's how we maintain it...</i></p> <p><i>Some people...don't have anybody to talk to, so you spend a little time conversing with them and it makes you feel good...dignity is being able to not only accept something given to you or people talking, but being able to give it back to somebody else.</i></p> <p><i>Treat others like you wish to be treated.</i></p>
--	--------	--	---

			<p><i>...dignity is mainly when you're ... talking to somebody, you want to treat that person as a person and not consider the color of his hair, or skin, or sex, or whatever.</i></p> <p><i>Is being real. I think kindness and dignity go pretty hand in hand. I think giving respect is terribly important part of being recognized. Giving respect, not just accepting it but providing it.</i></p> <p><i>Generally I find if I observe and support the dignity and independence of others in my life/community, it is returned to me.</i></p>
Sense of self	<p>Self pride</p> <p>Self worth</p> <p>Inherent worth</p> <p>Earned worth</p>	<p>Closely aligned with autonomy, people identified aspects of self which represented dignity.</p> <p>Many people reported dignity in both personal and universal terms - in that all persons require basic human and physical needs. Many further commented that needs should be met unconditionally.</p> <p>Many persons indicated that older age is particularly deserving of respect by others.</p>	<p><i>I think dignity has a lot to do, at least personally, with still learning and still being proud of accomplishment in your life... just because you're old doesn't mean that you can't add accomplishments in your life!</i></p> <p><i>Pride. I would say your pride and you want to keep it to yourself. That you don't want nobody to take that away from ya'. And you feel like you still have that.</i></p> <p><i>Dignity means pride in oneself...accomplishments and abilities at every stage of one's life.</i></p> <p><i>Dignity is your own sense of self-worth.</i></p> <p><i>Dignity means being able to live a lifestyle that provides the essentials of food, shelter, medical, and spiritual AND having quality connections with people that respect and value one another.</i></p> <p><i>...simply means the ability to age gracefully with caring help available despite the possible lack of funds to meet the costs.</i></p> <p><i>Dignity is being recognized as a full adult who is due respect, whatever the physical condition or appearance.</i></p> <p><i>One should not have to beg for help.</i></p> <p><i>Not having to go without the things you need to survive from day to day: transportation, getting to the Doctor visits, going to the store.</i></p> <p><i>Being respected, and treated as a resource for the years we have lived and experience/wisdom we have gained.</i></p>

	Acceptance	Some persons defined dignity as a complete acceptance of self, while others identified it as acceptance by others.	<p><i>Dignity to me is the ability to accept my flaws, my physical problems and deal with them.</i></p> <p><i>Dignity an elusive term...to me it means being accepted as a total, competent human being.</i></p> <p><i>It is nice to be respected, but more important to be comfortable in your own skin.</i></p> <p><i>People accept other people not as equals because we are different, but as one human to another human.</i></p> <p><i>I don't believe anyone can give you dignity. You give yourself dignity. What people or communities can do is give you respect and acceptance.</i></p>
Presentation of Self	Self- behavior and appearance	People indicated that dignity is exhibited via presentation of self.	<p><i>The way I conduct myself, the way I carry myself, my morals... so appearance is part of my dignity.</i></p> <p><i>Acting my age and portraying my maturity to other people... you have to have a pattern to govern your actions...</i></p> <p><i>[Attributes specifically cited include: manners, behavior, grooming, keeping self in shape, pride in appearance, clean, dressed well]</i></p>
	Preservation of public self	Many people reported that dignity results from managing one's public persona.	<p><i>To me dignity means I can always keep my head up.</i></p> <p><i>The ability to "hold your head up high" no matter what the circumstances.</i></p> <p><i>...take the high road in spite of the circumstances they find themselves in at the time...</i></p>

Quality of Life	Dying Experience	<p>Many persons reported aspects of dignity throughout end of life decision-making.</p>	<p><i>It means having the means to live without pain all the way to death.</i></p> <p><i>Knowing I won't die slowly and trying one means after another to give me days with no quality of life.</i></p> <p><i>I am a member of three dying with dignity organizations...I believe in physician assisted suicide...Dignity to me, in aging, means ability to have some quality of life.....not to have to have "diapers" be changed by someone, have someone do everything for me. My intention for self delivery (active euthanasia) when I deem it necessary increases with each experience of visiting in nursing facilities.</i></p> <p><i>...being able to make decisions for myself such as accessing or choosing not to access intensive medical care.</i></p>
------------------------	------------------	---	--

CHALLENGES TO DIGNITY

CHALLENGES TO DIGNITY			
Health Problems	Conditions impacting self care and self esteem	<p>While many people expressed that they have never experienced any “great” challenges to their dignity thus far, others described a variety of health conditions that impacted their dignity</p> <p>Others reported that sensory deficits in vision and hearing impact their dignity, via interaction with their environment.</p>	<p><i>I had rectal cancer, and the business of trying to clean yourself up when you...live in a perpetual state of diarrhea... there's no dignity to that at all...</i></p> <p><i>Not being able to take care of myself. Number one (challenge to dignity)</i></p> <p><i>The loss of my arms. I can't fix my hair. I like to do things for myself...but it's too painful, even driving. So losing the ability of things I love.</i></p> <p><i>If we are blessed with good health, we can maintain our dignity...with Alzheimer's and Parkinson disease... or completely deaf and it's very, very difficult to communicate. So if you're unfortunate enough to have one of those things, you're dependent on somebody else. It's a fact of life.</i></p> <p><i>Illness is the greatest challenge to dignity...</i></p> <p><i>Inability to drive at night (due to poor eyesight).</i></p> <p><i>I don't hear that well and I have hearing aids, which don't work really well... that's a problem. When you hear people talk and you can't hear them you know.</i></p>

		Some commented on how dementia impacts dignity.	<p><i>When I was diagnosed with Alzheimer's... I believe in bringing things out in the open, so I told everybody... so everybody knows I have it. If I had to do it over again, I'd tell ... just a few of my close friends. Because people look at you differently... you just aren't looked on as capable anymore...</i></p> <p><i>...it's unfortunate that people who get dementia... don't know what (embarrassing behavior) they are doing.</i></p> <p><i>[Specifically cited includes: dementia, cancer, hearing loss, macular degeneration, incontinence, falls, hip fracture, diabetes, stroke, inability to perform sexually]</i></p>
Ageism	Disregard by others	Many reported experiences of negative attitudes solely on the basis of age- impacting dignity.	<p><i>I think we've all experienced it, whether we are conscious of it all of the time or not, is when you get to a certain age bracket, and I'm a "young" kid (age 73) compared to most of these guys, but people do look at you as if "it's time for you to be on the shelf," or worse yet, "You're taking up space."</i></p> <p><i>Ageism is alive and active Many people see either wrinkles, gray hair, or frailties and respond in a dismissive manner.</i></p> <p><i>As I get older some folks treat me as less intelligent because I take more time to make decisions or actions. I do this because I know my reaction time has changed.</i></p> <p><i>...occasional ageism surprises/angers me. I want to say, "Hey, I've had a lot of life experiences; there are a few tips I could give you. My opinion is worth something."</i></p> <p><i>If I tell someone that I didn't understand what they said and when they repeat it they shout it at me. That is a threat to my dignity.</i></p>

	Over involved Children Lack of availability of family caregivers	Those working with older people acknowledge the family as challenging to dignity as well.	<p><i>I worked where people would be applying for specific items that would be of benefit to them, and the (adult) daughter or son would come in with the parents and they'd start talking as if the parents didn't exist... so I refused to talk to the children and I would always talk to the parents... a sense of being disregarded.</i></p> <p><i>there is a sense that ... older person has dignity because (family) knows and loves that person. But here many of the people are alone and don't have resources. I don't think they can retain a sense of dignity because there's nobody there who really knows them and loves them. It's a lot of strangers who have come from somewhere else... if one reaches the point where they can no longer (live independently). Not having anyone here can be very difficult. I think we all know people who were living independently and getting older and something happened.... where did they go? Back to their family, where someone could care for them and know about them.</i></p>
Economic insecurity	Inability to afford / maintain self growing old	Many commented that dignity is predicated on financial means.	<p><i>I know if you have no money ... I don't know that you have a sense of your own dignity.</i></p> <p><i>...when you don't have the wherewithal to provide...there is a certain amount of dignity connected with that... we have people now that are feeling so insecure that it's transferring to their sense of well-being... the rug's pulled out from under you.</i></p>
Settings and Impact	People and Places Consequences	<p>People reported a range of personnel and settings in which their dignity was impacted.</p> <p>People reported the ways in which the factors impacting dignity affected them.</p>	<p><i>Doctors can be difficult, because some of them forget that the patient needs time to assimilate knowledge, and don't have any structure in their office to help with that.</i></p> <p><i>There is one situation where dignity is really threatened... that is when you are undressed and undergoing a physical exam and the doctor engages in conversation with nurses and/or other assistants as if you were just a piece of meat on the chopping block.</i></p> <p><i>Although I do resent being called "guy", when my husband and I are in restaurants by the wait staff. For instance, "What would you "guys" like for dinner?"</i></p> <p><i>[Specifically cited include: hospital, workplace, doctor's office, restaurants]</i></p> <p><i>I had a hip replacement and for a few days had to rely on others Very difficult to make that adjustment even for a few days.</i></p> <p><i>[Specifically cited include: embarrassment, forced retirement, loss of income, unable to resume regular activities, unable to attend cherished events, unable to remain at home, unable to participate in conversations, forced dependency on others, having to adjust to others' schedules for meals, self-doubting, frightened, anxious]</i></p>

SUPPORTS TO DIGNITY

<p>Informal Supports</p>	<p>Friends</p>	<p>Many reported that friends helped them maintain their dignity during difficult life course circumstances.</p>	<p><i>I lost my husband, it will be three years in April and it was so devastating. It was really traumatic and I'm not the kind of person that joins groups to hear about other people's problems so I just cope by staying really involved with the people and the things that we were involved in.</i></p>
	<p>Aspects and Benefits</p>	<p>Aspects of friendships noted included both other older adults in which one could relate – as well as younger people.</p>	<p><i>I have many close friends and we are all pretty similar in our life's experiences and we all support one another.</i></p> <p><i>...enjoying the company of others and opportunities to interact with those both older and younger than me.</i></p> <p><i>I believe interacting with people younger than myself helps to keep my mind sharp and makes me feel younger.</i></p>
	<p>Neighborhood and neighbors</p>	<p>Many reported that their neighbors/ neighborhood play a role in supporting dignity.</p> <p>Many indicated the ways in which friends and neighbors were supportive via personal and tangible qualities.</p>	<p><i>My former neighbor has taken on the responsibility of seeing that I get to doctors and such when I must go, or bringing items from my home</i></p> <p><i>Neighbors keeping in touch on a regular basis</i></p> <p><i>[Specifically cited residential locations include: Plymouth Harbor, Kobernick House, The Pines, Pelican Cove]</i></p> <p><i>I have friends whose smile, gentle pat on the shoulder (touch is so important), bit of gossip make life real for me. My E-mail friends keep me posted with personal information... The contacts keep me up on everything</i></p> <p><i>Most of my good friends in my whole life have been older than me. I used many of those as my role models.</i></p> <p><i>There are some people that understand my problem and will ask me if I could hear what was said and if I couldn't, would very kindly repeat it for me. Not too many people will do this.</i></p> <p><i>...small group of sensitive and empathetic people.</i></p>

	<p>Meaning and Contribution</p>	<p>Many people reported the primacy of staying active by paid work and volunteering in professional- related activities including work and other venues that utilize their leadership and skills.</p> <p>Of particular note was teaching.</p> <p>Recognition of one's efforts was also highly noted.</p> <p>Others reported that volunteer and other activities performed to help other people also supported their dignity.</p>	<p><i>Having a job within my profession enhances my feeling of dignity... Unable to find work, I donate my time ...where my skills can be utilized. The respect and recognition I feel there helps a lot.</i></p> <p><i>Being a part of organizations with a purpose and contributing to worthy projects is a major factor e.g. being and feeling useful.</i></p> <p><i>My volunteer work which uses my skills rather than be busy work, etc.</i></p> <p><i>I feel that continuing to teach enhances my life.</i></p> <p><i>Places that appreciate the experience and "wisdom" I have.</i></p> <p><i>When I visit friends ... and can help them, I feel dignified. I feel as I am "giving back" for all the blessings hitherto received.</i></p> <p><i>My dignity ... enhanced when I feel I am making a contribution to helping others.</i></p> <p><i>Right now there are people who are dependent upon me for assistance... I believe this impacts my own self-esteem and dignity.</i></p> <p><i>My mentoring with Big Brothers/Big Sisters is both my "grandma" fix since our grandchildren are not close by. It is something I much enjoy and feel I am contributing something positive to the child I mentor.</i></p> <p><i>My hobby is raising potential Guide Dogs for the blind... The challenge involved in raising, training and socializing these dogs gives me pride in something that I can do well. It keeps me active and out and about. The social interaction with the others volunteering ...provides friendships with people I would never have met. The satisfaction of seeing "my dog" paired with a loving blind person is something wonderful. That person's appreciation is a great boost to my "dignity."</i></p>
--	---------------------------------	--	--

Religion	Church Spiritual beliefs	Some identified that the church has helped them to maintain their dignity.	<p><i>It helps me. That's number one.</i></p> <p><i>...my church... makes a lot of difference. I've praised God</i></p> <p><i>...my very spirit, and spiritual being...</i></p> <p><i>Trusting God, and taking time to pray was major, as was the loving encouragement... and my belief that I could yet help, encourage others...</i></p>
Organizations	Services Support groups Personnel	Others commented that organizations have provided assistance that supported dignity in times of needed support as well as other activities and personnel that help maintain dignity.	<p><i>... Services available for older people, to make them aware of (supports to help maintain dignity and independence).</i></p> <p><i>As a person ages they become more reliant on others, neighbors, friends and family. If a person is able through simple modifications to remain independent they will feel much more self-reliant.</i></p> <p><i>A lot of resources to help cancer survivors.</i></p> <p><i>There are a lot of places you go the staff is there for the money, or you know, it's a job. You know they don't care about how you feel or if you're not feeling good... they do (only) what they absolutely have to do.</i></p> <p><i>My doctor always listens carefully to me, and includes me in any decisions about treatment options.</i></p> <p><i>[Specifically cited include: chaplain, doctor, psychiatrist, rehab staff, PUBLIX baggers, Ringling Museum]</i></p>
Aging	Stronger sense of self	Many persons reported that aging positively impacts their sense of dignity.	<p><i>I think aging increases dignity.</i></p> <p><i>It helps it grow as I get more centered in my core of inner beliefs and life...</i></p> <p><i>I'm more dignified now than I ever have been in my life.</i></p>

Table 7. Perspectives on Independence: Meaning, Challenges, Supports

Theme	Subthemes	Description	Examples of excerpts
Self reliance	Not relying on help for driving.	Transportation was mentioned as a key to independence.	<i>I mean take my car keys away and I'd be lost.</i> <i>So I got my license...I got my independence. I got my life.</i> <i>American culture I guess. Is it? It's the automobile. . . . you know for what you're paying for that car you could call a Yellow Cab for whatever you want to do. But we're all so used to having a car immediately.</i>
		Limiting the amount of driving to go long distances back home to visit family.	<i>We are driving less. Limits our trips to go back home, very frequent flyers now.</i> <i>It's just beginning and I don't like what I see for the future. I don't drive as much or as far. My world is getting smaller.</i>
	Activities of Daily Living	The ability to perform own personal care activities was a common theme to independence.	<i>Independence means the ability to dress self, feed self, bathe self.</i>
	Not relying on help for maintaining the house (cooking housework, managing finances) from formal sources	Maintaining one's household without having to pay someone to do it. Reluctance to have formal help was related to invasion of privacy.	<i>He's organizing it and he's got a housekeeper now who's coming in, and it has not been easy for him to give up... He's an in-charge person... And I think it's hard for a lot of men... A lot of women too. A lot of women are in charge... Well, privacy, you know, people who clean the house before the cleaning lady comes over.</i>
	Not relying on family	For many the fact they did not have to rely on family for material or financial support was an indication of independence.	<i>Not having to rely on my children to send me money or saying I am poor, send me money, or take me in to live.</i> <i>Well, I love my children, but I would not want to live with any of them. Well, the trouble is, we have our ways and they have theirs... And they think their way is the way you have to do it.</i>
	Financial independence	Financial independence emerged as a subtheme for self	<i>It's easy to have independence if you have enough money [that's] the way it is.</i>

		reliance.	<i>The loss of physical, mental and financial independence, which in turn can lead to loss of control, choices, respect, appreciation.</i>
Making Own Decisions	Decisions about living arrangements Decisions about activities Children not making decisions	Decision making was a dominant theme, including the ability to make autonomous decisions related to living arrangements, activities and predominantly the fear of children making decisions for them.	<i>Privacy and living in my own apartment is important to maintaining my independence.</i> <i>I hope I never have to move to an assisted living facility.</i> <i>I suspect by limiting personal activities, what can be done, when it can be done.</i> <i>I have the freedom to sit out on the patio if I want and if I want to join a group I can join it. No guilt for doing what you want to do.</i> <i>I do have a little fear that if I get older they [my kids] might try to take care of everything, I mean, say "this is what your gonna do."</i>
Activities and Social Life	Individual and Social Interests Helping others Activities in relation to health and chronological age.	Independence gives you the freedom to choose activities you desire with others whom you have a common relationship bond. Independence also means the ability to help others in the form of volunteering or caregiving. Active involvement despite chronological age	<i>Independence means the ability to take part in any and all aspects of one's community.</i> <i>I have tons of friends I didn't know I had . . . There are so many things that you can get yourself involved in if you wish.</i> <i>I went to [a Midwestern state] this year and I did 3000 miles. I went around and visited with all my relatives... All the kin folk... I think it's independence</i> <i>I'd say many of the volunteer jobs that I'm doing, I feel welcome and I feel valued.</i> <i>I'm independent, and the reason I'm here is because we only have one daughter, me and my wife. I lost her six or seven years ago.... your wife.... I lost my wife many years ago, so I'm taking care of my family. I'm a baby-sitter for my great grandchildren, and that's gonna keep me busy.</i> <i>Our health does remain good, probably the most important factor. Luck of the draw for a while (I have some friends in their 80s who are role models of energy, enthusiasm, and involvement in and enjoyment of life);</i>

CHALLENGES TO INDEPENDENCE

<p>Declining health and disability</p>	<p>Loss of Mobility</p> <p>Sensory Deficits</p> <p>Comorbidity</p>	<p>Declining health and disability was the dominant theme to challenges. This results in perceptions of being inferior and having to ask others for help. Some would not cope well with the decline in health. It also results in the loss of social networks and friendships.</p>	<p><i>Can't walk, can't see, can't hear, wearing hearing aids, I am wearing glasses, I have few teeth missing. Lost a lot of things that I had, you know.</i></p> <p><i>...less able to be independent and less able to be an equal in life situations...</i></p> <p><i>The inability to take care of oneself, forgetfulness, possibly some mobility or health problems. Need others to help you fill your needs.</i></p> <p><i>Fortunately I have lots of self esteem now, but if someone needed to bathe me or wipe my rear end, I would lose it quickly. Again time for the Diprovan. I've seen too much to want to just hang around.</i></p> <p><i>Lose your independence and some friends. sometimes not able to participate in activities as easily</i></p> <p><i>(Referring to scooter)They say I bump into this and that, and they don't realize how bad that makes me feel because I'm doing my best. I would like to get out of the chair and let them drive it and see what they can do, it's not so easy. It does make me very upset, and so this has hurt my independence... Yeah, it's another thing that makes you feel... It's too bad.</i></p> <p>[Specifically cited health conditions include arthritis, loss of mobility, general weakness, broken bones, fractured hip, recovery from surgery, cancer, dementia, Parkinsons, stroke, paralysis, loss of eye sight, depression, heart disease, knee injury, diabetes, and incontinence].</p>
<p>Loss</p>	<p>Loss due to death of a spouse</p>	<p>Death of a spouse or friend was central to adapting to what once was an interdependent relationship.</p>	<p><i>The death of a spouse is such a social change because you're used to socializing as a couple, and all of a sudden you're thrown into a world, and probably at the time, at least for me it was true, of really isolating because of his death. So I was not only alone,</i></p>

	Decline in health	to maintain independence.	<i>extremely healthy, she's gonna make it to 110, and every time he says that, I think if the money runs out at 97, I'm not sure what I'm gonna do.</i>
	Technological changes	Some feared they would be left behind in a constantly changing technological society.	<i>As long as we don't run out of money, aging does not affect our independence.</i> <i>With the constant changes in the social institutions, corporations, knowledge and technology, others seem to be running faster while I am slowing down, thus independence is being slowly eroded away.</i>
Availability of Services/ Amenities	Lack of Transportation Services Lack of informal support to those socially isolated	Lack of services available specific to transportation, informal support to those who are socially isolated and lack of affordable housing for those of all ages were mentioned.	<i>Without accessible public transportation, many people will live in isolation more, because they won't know who to ask, fear of rejection, and desire not to bother others. This will increase mental illness and physical decline.</i> <i>Our transportation system is inadequate, absolutely abysmal for a city this size.</i>
Physical Environment	Unaccommodating environment for pedestrians	Roadways are not accommodating to pedestrians as well as housing is not in close proximity to services and amenities.	<i>On Livingstone (a narrow street with barely enough room for cars to pass each other) there is now a SCAT bus going down it, overgrown bushes extending into the road, and no sidewalk. [Pedestrians] are forced up into yards on what could really be an ideal walker-friendly area.</i> <i>It really kind of bugs me that there are so few condos in Sarasota where you can easily walk to grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants etc. I'm worried about what will happen when I can no longer drive.</i> <i>Need a car to get to most things in Sarasota.</i>
Service Related Barriers	Inability to access information about services Lack of Financial Resources for Help	The inability to access information about services and having resources to pay for services are perceived as challenges to maintaining independence.	<i>Not knowing where to go for help would be a barrier to independence.</i> <i>Not having sufficient resources to pay for needed help would also be a barrier.</i>

SUPPORTS TO INDEPENDENCE

<p>Organization Related</p>	<p>Transportation Organizations</p> <p>Health Care Organizations</p> <p>Faith Based Organizations</p> <p>Aging Services Related Organizations</p>	<p>There were a number of organizations mentioned that supported people in their ability to be independent – those included transportation, health care, faith based, and aging related organizations.</p>	<p><i>Some assistance, you can't get around, be able to drive us someplace, SCAT involved... and they're great... and sometimes if you have enough money, too, you can get drivers, but I think there should be some public conveyance for them, for us.</i></p> <p><i>He died at home and it was nice for him. It was hard for me, but nice for him . . . Hospice today, is just a Godsend.</i></p> <p><i>Jewish Family and Children's Service. They have a program called SOS, Senior Outreach Services, They pick them up at their homes, people that are shut-in, once or twice a week they do this, bring them to the agency. . sometimes it's their only sociability of the week.</i></p> <p><i>That balancing class at the Senior Friendship Center. . . . I had a nasty fall where I couldn't walk and I broke [bones], and so now I feel easier about walking.</i></p> <p>[Specifically cited in order of prevalence: Senior Friendship Center, churches, Meals on Wheels, Senior Living Centers such as Plymouth Harbor, Pines of Sarasota, Pelican Cove and the Cedars, SCAT and ITN for transportation, Home Owners Association, Hospices, Hospitals and Doctors, Sierra Club, Alcoholics Anonymous, Fitness Centers, Women's Resource Center, Singles Groups, YMCA, Ringling Brother's Museum, Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, Community Pool, Clothing Stores for shopping, and Sarasota Downtown Community Improvement District].</p>
<p>Active/Healthy Aging</p>	<p>Exercise</p>	<p>Within this theme there were subthemes such exercising and keeping mind active to improve memory; and community involvement such as volunteering and participating in community organizations.</p>	<p><i>Work hard as you can and stay healthy. Exercise and keep exercising. If you're walking, keep walking. You've got to work at it to keep independent.... To be occupied, to be involved....</i></p> <p><i>I am not as physically able as in the past, but try to stay as active as possible through yoga and aerobic exercise.</i></p>

	<p>Civic Engagement/ Community Involvement</p> <p>Cognitive Aging</p>		<p><i>I haven't really had any problems in this area, however, because I'm still working and am in the company of people of all ages, I have a great deal of confidence and I know a great many people so I stay connected. I know what's going on in the world and thankfully, I'm very active.</i></p> <p><i>Volunteer if you can, if you're able to....And keep in touch with friends... Get up in the morning and don't wallow in the doldrums. If you don't feel happy, get up, get out, and do something</i></p> <p><i>Keep your mind as sharp as you can, and do all kinds of things. Don't just [sit] in front of the TV... Keep your brain working. You know, challenge yourself.</i></p> <p><i>I do the puzzle every morning. I do the cryptogram every morning. And if I don't do it, it's like something I forgot to do today. But it's one way to get that brain working for the day. I do it every morning, the Cryptogram.</i></p> <p><i>[Specifically cited in order of prevalence: volunteering and church activities, spending time with family, exercise, reading, leisure activities outdoors such as golf, swimming, tennis, camping, and going to the beach, attend art and cultural events and educational seminars, spend time at the Senior Friendship Center, travel, go to the movies, dining, shopping, attend school, and still working]</i></p>
Attitude	<p>Maintain Positive Attitude</p> <p>Assertiveness</p>	<p>Many attributed attitudes such as being positive, assertive, and having a sense of humor to their ability to support independence.</p>	<p><i>It is important to know that asking for help when needed is a positive thing.</i></p> <p><i>My friend asked, why do people always come to open the door for you when you go in? They never do that for me." And I said, "Well, it's your face. You never smile."And then, you know, that's very true. . .you know, if they think you're a big old grump they're not gonna.</i></p> <p><i>You know with people who live in my community... here in the Friendship Center.... I don't think you should wait to be asked, you should go out and jump in... yes... don't wait for somebody</i></p>

	<p>Humor as a Coping Mechanism in the face of challenges to independence</p> <p>Adaptability</p>	<p>As a person ages, it is important to adapt to the new situation in which one finds themselves</p>	<p><i>to ask you out...</i></p> <p><i>The Arthur brothers takes a lot out of all of us. Do you know who the Arthur brothers are? Arthur and Ritus. [laughter] Arthritis. I think he's attacked all of us.</i></p> <p><i>I have learned to laugh at what I cannot do, and being with "like" friends we laugh at ourselves.</i></p> <p><i>Aging is a process of adaptation in daily living and acceptance of changes. They are not always negative - some changes can be positive. Of course mobility changes and sleep patterns and other physical characteristics - but adaptation is the key.</i></p>
Social Relationships	<p>Reliance on Others for Help</p> <p>Family Relationships</p> <p>Kindred Spiritedness of Community Members</p> <p>Social Support</p>	<p>The most dominant theme within social relationships was allowing others to help us with our daily needs.</p> <p>Other social relationship subthemes were related to family relationships, kindred spiritedness of community members, and the social support for those going through life transitions.</p>	<p><i>We have to allow others to help us do the things we used to do for ourselves with ease.</i></p> <p><i>Loss of being able to do what I used to do. I now hire some gardening and housekeeping help for the things I now can't do.</i></p> <p><i>I've been blessed. I have a family that's a close-knit family, that's always here, or I'm always there, and that's a good thing, that's a plus.</i></p> <p><i>I think my kids, my family, has kept me involved... Yeah, that helps a lot</i></p> <p><i>The people that we've met are the same sort of adventuresome, that you would go off from where you lived for so long and go someplace different.</i></p> <p><i>The thing that helped me the most was the support group [after my wife's death].</i></p>
Planning for the Future	<p>Financial Planning</p> <p>Living Arrangements</p>	<p>Planning for the future subthemes included financial planning, alternative living arrangements in the event you</p>	<p><i>I have long term care insurance so that I will not be a burden on my children.</i></p> <p><i>Have a sound financial plan, and a backup plan it sounds like...</i></p>

	Loss of a Spouse	can no longer remain independently in your own home or living arrangement where you can adapt to physical decline, and planning for the loss of a spouse.	<p><i>\$500,000 house all your life, when you make it, and now you can come to understand; do you need the \$500,000 house. Sell it and move into something affordable and your money will last much longer.</i></p> <p><i>It is interesting that when we did buy our condo, one of the things my husband was looking for, it's located such that you can walk to Walgreens, you can get to the church, you can go bowling.</i></p> <p><i>I do all of our finances on the computer. I'm trying to get my wife into that, so we have our book of knowledge that I've got to put everything into. . . I'm saying that you start preparing for these things, and it is very difficult to do that even.</i></p>
	End of Life Decision-making	Advance care planning for end of life decisions was important to maintaining independence.	<p><i>Ability to maintain self respect and some degree of independence, and ability to make own choices regarding quality of living and end of life.</i></p>
Spirituality/Religion	<p>Spirituality and beliefs in God</p> <p>Organized Religion for worship</p>	<p>Many attribute their ability to be independent and age well to their religion, God and spirituality.</p>	<p><i>As of now I've had lots goin' on around me, but I don't feel... so far God took care and protects me.</i></p> <p><i>I stay active. I go to church, when I leave here I go to church. Tuesday and Friday we go to church.</i></p>

	<p>Empathy for Others</p> <p>Assertiveness</p> <p>Maintain Sense of Humor</p> <p>Pride in Appearance</p>	<p>subthemes emerged: being positive, empathetic, and assertive, maintaining sense of humor and having pride in appearance.</p>	<p><i>the grumpy ones. I really don't want to be around grumpy people.</i></p> <p><i>I think if anyone should be empathetic to somebody's frailties or disabilities we older people should be. But I have seen lots of incidences where I don't think that's true.</i></p> <p><i>I'd say take charge. I'm a great believer if you have a problem, solve it. Don't let it fester. Call the plumber, call the doctor, whatever. Get a grip on it.</i></p> <p><i>It is most important for the elderly to take the initiative to interact with people. They can't just sit back and expect people to do everything for them without reciprocating.</i></p> <p><i>...maintaining a sense of humor. . . when a bag of flour opens in the middle of the floor and spreads all over, people should be able to laugh at it...</i></p> <p><i>Keep up your appearance... Oh, yeah. That's a big one... Not let yourself sit around in pajamas, although we'd like to sometimes...and not bother to put on makeup.</i></p>
<p>Active and Healthy Aging</p>	<p>Individual Growth</p> <p>Maintain Healthy Eating Habits, Regular Physical Activity and Social Relationships.</p> <p>Lead a Spiritually Meaningful Life</p>	<p>Ways to participate in Civic Engagement, continuing to grow and learn new things were recommendations.</p> <p>To maintain healthy habits such as eating healthy, regular physical activity and social relationships and lead a spiritually meaningful life are all subthemes recommended to maintain dignity and independence.</p>	<p><i>Challenge yourself, try something new.</i></p> <p><i>...whole issue of goal setting... just keep setting goals for yourself to achieve, it makes you feel strong.</i></p> <p><i>Good eating and exercise, stay away from the TV generally, enjoy the outdoors, keep your mind active, care for others, commit to the welfare of others through some sort of volunteer endeavor.</i></p> <p><i>Stay physically active . . .stay active. . . and take good care of your body. . . take good care of your body.</i></p> <p><i>Friends and family are most important The church... yeah... it helps me... that's number one.</i></p>

		are more pedestrian friendly. A number of comments related to providing more shade at bus stops.	<i>coffee or to play cards, exercise or enjoy the company of friends. Too many older citizens end up being isolated.</i>
		Improvement of amenities for those who are handicapped.	<i>Plant a lot more trees along all sidewalks. If you want people to walk and bicycle more here, we have to have shade!</i> <i>Bus benches and sun shelters should be a top priority.</i> <i>Make public places easily accessible to handicapped.</i> <i>More handicapped parking places are needed at [some of these businesses].</i>
	Housing	Recommendations to increase ways for seniors to remain in their own homes or have affordable housing options within Sarasota if they have to move.	<i>Provide low income grants or loan programs for adding Universal Design/Aging in Place features to people's homes.</i> <i>Provide more affordable housing.</i> <i>Help us be more active, ask the park district to create programs, age appropriate, for us. If we are strong and agile we will be less likely to fall.</i>
	Accessibility to Socialization and Services.	Provision of affordable programs and opportunities to promote healthy aging and socialization were recommended.	<i>Provide exciting, financially accessible, physical, mental and social opportunities which encourage use of physical energy, demand varying degrees of mental acuity and provide social interaction.</i>
		A needs assessment of those who are socially isolated is one recommendation to get an accurate picture.	<i>Survey the many aging who are shut in because of lack of transportation, mobility, and supportive cohorts. This would result in a more accurate picture of the actual state of the aging in Sarasota. There is a legion of people out there who are living in quiet, isolated desperation & have no voice to be heard.</i>
	Decrease Crime in Neighborhood (specific to Newtown area).	Ways to decrease crime in the Newtown area were mentioned such as increased police protection , increased	<i>More police protection in the area is needed.</i> <i>I think that we in the community [need to] co-operate with the police department in order to tell them what's going on in our</i>

		communication with, and better appreciation of law enforcement.	<i>neighborhood. You think, you hear people say, "You saw something, why didn't you say anything?" . . . How you going to get them and correct what's going on around your neighborhood if you don't say something?</i>
Innovative Service Development	Development of Aging Services in the Community	<p>Utilization of older adults to provide needed services was a dominant subtheme.</p> <p>Recommendations for ways to connect older adults to needed services and using neighbors as a way to meet service needs.</p> <p>Many commented on the benefits to both older adults and others in matched exchanges.</p>	<p><i>Utilize their talents.</i></p> <p><i>Give people something to do - make them feel important - there's a "job" for everyone.</i></p> <p><i>Provide jobs - be they part time, flex time or volunteer time...ways for people to feel they still make a difference and to pick up a few extra bucks to keep their finances afloat. . . People as they age must feel that there is a reason to get up and to live that day.</i></p> <p><i>I think it would be a very nice kind of thing in neighborhoods if they began this in neighborhoods. Some kind of community, like the Community Foundation ... sort of matching people, needs with rides.</i></p> <p><i>I think that there should be an agency here that could match needs with people who can provide simple services for others who are aged. . . do some yard work, take them to the shopping and hairdresser, wherever, to the doctor, come in and do some light housekeeping, or whatever. Or maybe a big spring cleaning, which would be nice.</i></p> <p><i>Isn't there an Angie's List? They have it in Tampa. Wouldn't it be nice to give some young person in the community, and there are a lot of young families where I think the Mom is there...kids gone half day. I think a lot of these gals would love to take someone out shopping in the morning and take them home, or come in and do some housecleaning... I think a lot of them would be thrilled to get extra money where they don't have to dress up, just walk down four houses... we don't utilize our neighborhoods.</i></p>

	<p>Increase Awareness About Services.</p> <p>Consideration of assistance / support for those not typically targeted for services.</p>	<p>Others commented on logistics and concerns with matching people.</p> <p>Others suggested ways to increase knowledge of services.</p> <p>Many indicated the need for help in interacting with organizations and bureaucracies regarding bills and services.</p>	<p><i>...young families could pick up some extra money (by providing transportation).</i></p> <p><i>...somebody has to vet these people and that would be a nice community service.</i></p> <p><i>...one of the obstacles for older people because they feel so vulnerable and bringing somebody in, how do I screen them? How do I know they're trustworthy? And I think that's one of the things that blocks acceptance of help.... It empowers you if you can pay somebody a small amount, but if you are asking someone as a favor it undermines you.</i></p> <p><i>Provide at reasonable cost, with security, for housekeeping and yard care. We are so fearful of being taken advantage of.</i></p> <p><i>... volunteer ambassadors that go to people instead of waiting for them to read about it. Maybe through some kind of organization, it could be a volunteer job. I'm going on the streets, I'm going to tell this person that he might want to look into this and also go to different communities... to speak at this community, tell them there's such a thing as SFC...</i></p> <p><i>The first thing that can be done is to have ALL the facilities in the community....independent, ALF, Skilled Nursing, Memory Care have representatives come together in a seminar to explain what they have to offer, to give costs, NOT to sell themselves, but to explain. . . People need INFORMATION brought to them.....the elderly should not have to schlepp around town seeing information.</i></p> <p><i>...I'm talking about a doctor bill. I'm talking about Medicare. I'm talking about somebody to be there to help. Once you hit a stone wall, then somebody's got to help you pick that up, because they just talk around ya', put you on hold, and never call you back.</i></p> <p><i>A lot of people ...don't know what to do about their medical bills or long term care and things like that.</i></p>
--	---	---	--

		<p>Recommendations were made on ways to inform others about services and events that are aging related.</p>	<p><i>Though people often resist change in their ways of living and interacting, diversity training (in its many dimensions) is practical, albeit slow for many. This requires all who publicly interact with others (e.g., employees, managers, government workers) be given or at least offered training and insight.</i></p> <p><i>Teach people what happens as one ages -- there is a kit that allows others to experience "aging eye sight", arthritis, and other problems that we have as we age. I think that all businesses need to train their employees with the problems that older folks have. [The Senior Friendship Center] owns several of these kits.</i></p> <p><i>I have personally observed (on several occasions) that older frail adults are not always treated respectfully in doctor's offices and other medical facilities. A "dignity awareness" campaign aimed at the clerical staff in medical facilities might be a very good idea.</i></p> <p><i>Employees who interact with the elderly should always call them Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Dr. Of course if they become very close to them, that is different. Then they can ask if they would like to be called by their first name.</i></p> <p><i>There's a lot of thing seniors can find out if they get involved in Senior Friendship Center.</i></p> <p><i>I wish there were a centralized clearing house that listed activities, churches that are having suppers on specific nights. I wish there were an electronic bulletin board or something like that.</i></p> <p><i>If budget permits and deed restricted communities permit, I think a printed listing of all services available delivered door to door would be a great opportunity for so many people who have already lost their ability to be involved, ask for help, offer to help others, etc.</i></p> <p><i>At the hospital level and the physician's office gather the social data to address what needs these elderly patients may have.</i></p>
--	--	---	---

	<p>Communication of Available Services and Events for Seniors</p> <p>Focus on the Topic of Aging</p> <p>The Role of Organizations and Programs in the</p>	<p>Many identified issues with current forms of outreach/ public knowledge of available services.</p> <p>Others commented on the issues in deciphering information about services that are presented in the community.</p> <p>A community effort to continue to focus on the topic of aging was mentioned.</p> <p>Faith organizations were mentioned as important</p>	<p><i>Develop a group of volunteers at various facilities to come up with a plan to work with connection and communication with these individuals.</i></p> <p><i>...I have found a lot of information that I have also passed on to others... you'll be surprised at what's available to you, but you got to get out there and ask for it.</i></p> <p><i>Something that is lacking here, that's social service. A lot of people don't know what to do about their medical bills or long term care, things like that. Every new person who comes should be with an older resident here, or have a committee here, or somebody in charge, to inform them of everything we have to offer here.</i></p> <p><i>...I don't understand why (we) aren't aware...but still people don't seem to be aware...</i></p> <p><i>There's a lot of things that people don't know about.</i></p> <p><i>We have a lot of seminars and people come and talk with us. (in reference to a VA benefit seminar). . . you have to be in a specific (low income) category to take advantage of it.... You have to be able to be malleable enough to discern (the benefit from the sales pitch). You can apply for the military thing on your own.</i></p> <p><i>Continue to focus on the topic of aging and create community alternatives that reflect the needs and best thinking in this area. I feel that Sarasota is the perfect place to consciously develop a community about aging with dignity and independence. Continue SCOPE's work in this area, and engage business/developers/investors to be a cutting edge community to both utilize the strengths and develop alternatives for the aging population in Sarasota. Include a social marketing piece that promotes pro-elder attitudes and creates a sense of awareness and pride in what Sarasota represents in this area.</i></p> <p><i>Jewish Family and Children Services have a program called Senior Outreach Services. They pick them up at their homes,</i></p>
--	---	---	---

	<p>Socialization of Isolated Older Adults</p>	<p>resources for socially isolated older adults.</p> <p>The Senior Friendship Center, Meals on Wheels and other programs can and do play a role in the socialization of isolated older adults.</p>	<p><i>people that are shut-in, once or twice a week they do this, bring them to the agency and they sit around a table like this and talk and have like a group therapy, and sometimes it's their only sociability of the week, and then we give them lunch.</i></p> <p><i>What if some of the churches that have church suppers...If there was a way that you could say, okay there's gonna' be a church supper in your neighborhood. We've got a bus that's gonna' pick you up and take you there whether you're part of that church or not.</i></p> <p><i>Support the work of the Senior Friendship Center, Meals on Wheels and informal groups that can meet the needs of isolated seniors in their immediate communities.</i></p>
--	---	--	--