

Mayor's Council on African American Elders

Advocating for programs and services on behalf of older African Americans

2026 Priorities

The Mayor's Council on African American Elders (MCAAE) aims to improve the quality of life of African American elders in Seattle. We promote accessible, high quality, culturally appropriate services; we advise decision-makers and advocate for changes in policies, practices, and programs; and we educate community members on resources available.

HOUSING

In Seattle, African American households have among the highest rates of severe cost burden, with 30% of Black households paying at least half their income on housing. Seniors of color are overrepresented among older adults experiencing homelessness: while only ~7% of Seattle seniors are African American, they comprise 32% of Seattle's homeless 50+ population. These inequities stem from historic disinvestment, redlining, and rising housing costs that push older adults out of long-time neighborhoods.

MCAAE Goal: Advance equitable, senior-focused housing policies that protect older adults from displacement.
1. Support property tax reform: Advocate for expanding eligibility to property tax exemptions
2. Raise community awareness of existing discounts: Support efforts to educate and enroll older Black homeowners at risk of displacement in programs like the King County Senior Property Tax Exemptions, senior housing options, utility discounts, weatherization, and home modifications.
3. Educate policymakers: Build relationships with local elected leaders and help them understand the housing needs of older African Americans
4. Elevate community voices: Collect and share stories from older adults facing displacement to include in MCAAE advocacy messages.
5. Support exploration of rental subsidy pilot: compile case studies on older adult rental subsidy pilots in other regions and consider recommendations for Seattle.
6. Promote accessible design: Provide input on City plans and policies to encourage new development, especially missing middle housing, to be built with accessibility in mind

CAREGIVING

Across Washington State, more than 820,000 family caregivers provide unpaid care, valued at \$16.8 billion annually. Nationally, about 13% of all caregivers identify as African American and despite their vital role, African American caregivers remain underrepresented in policy discussions and often lack access to culturally responsive respite, training, and mental health support.

MCAAE Goal: Strengthen systems that support family and community caregivers, particularly within African American communities.
1. Maintain oversight of the African American Elders Program: successfully transition this suite of services, which includes some caregiver support, to a new agency
2. Support local, state, and federal policy changes: maintain relationships with organizations advancing policies that support family caregivers and collaborate when opportunities arise
3. Connect community with resources: Continue to sponsor and promote events like the African American Caregivers Forum: Legacy of Love; partner with the WA State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and organizations like AARP and Aging Wisdom to share caregiver resources with Black communities.
4. Elevate community voices: Collect caregiver stories to inform MCAAE's advocacy messages.

NUTRITION

African American older adults are more likely to experience food insecurity and diet related illnesses due to limited access to affordable and culturally relevant food. Nationally, black older adults are twice as likely to face food insecurity as white older adults. In King County food access gaps persist in areas with higher concentration of Black residents. Poor nutrition contributes to chronic health issues such as diabetes and heart disease, further impacting quality of life of black older adults

MCAAE Goal: Advance equitable access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food for African American older adults.
1. Advocate for resources: support continued City investment in Fresh Bucks and congregate meal programs
2. Provide insight and guidance on City plans: review the City's Food Equity Fund and share any relevant feedback on how to better serve African American elders.
3. Connect community with resources: Partner with organizations such as Northwest Harvest, Food Lifeline, Rainier Valley Food Bank, and Black Farmers Collective to share information on senior

nutrition programs and encourage access to culturally nourishing foods; update MCAAE website with local nutrition resources

SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

Social isolation is a major risk factor for poor health outcomes, comparable to smoking or obesity. It also significantly increases the risk of cognitive decline; isolated older adults have about a 50% higher chance of developing dementia. Black older adults experience disproportionately higher rates of isolation due to systemic inequities such as neighborhood disinvestment, health disparities, limited transportation options, and fewer culturally relevant community spaces. As a result, they also face higher rates of dementia, with an estimated 15%- 20% of Black adults age 65+ living with dementia.

MCAAE Goal: Reduce social isolation among older African Americans and increase opportunities for connection, belonging, and participation.

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| 1. Advocate for resources: Support City investments in community spaces and recreation programs that center African American older adults. |
| 2. Connect community members digitally: Work with Seattle IT and/or other organizations to expand access to free devices and skills training for African American older adults. |
| 3. Explore creative solutions: provide support and guidance on the design of a social prescribing pilot aimed at connecting older adults with social engagement activities |