

FOND DU LAC VISION & STRATEGIC PLAN

Senior & Retiree Workshop

Tuesday, April 14, 2015

On Tuesday, April 14, 2015 at 10:30 a.m., an *Envision Fond du Lac* workshop was held with seniors and retirees from the Fond du Lac area at Marian University. This workshop was part of the ongoing outreach opportunities for residents and stakeholders to publicly discuss issues facing greater Fond du Lac.

The workshop began with a brief overview of the planning process and concluded with a community discussion of issues, concerns, and ideas. The workshop included a questionnaire exercise, from which participants shared their written comments with the overall group. Participants were first asked to individually identify important issues and concerns for the region. Then, participants were organized into small groups to discuss possible solutions to solve those issues and concerns. The following is an issue-based summary of the input received during the workshop.

Note

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions received in response to these four questions. Some comments were shared with the entire group, while others were recorded privately on worksheets. It is important to note that the items identified in this summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

Issues & Concerns

Attendees were first asked to identify the most important issues facing greater Fond du Lac. Participants voiced their concerns regarding a range of issues; however, many comments centered on key themes, which are summarized by issue categories below.

Increasing Connectivity & Accessibility

Seniors and retirees identified transportation and overall accessibility within the region as a central issue. Participants noted numerous difficulties with travelling within Fond du Lac, such as the lack of weekend transit services and the absence of transit options to many parts of the community. Respondents emphasized the auto-reliance of the area, which makes travel particularly difficult for those without access to an automobile. Participants also discussed a need for increased pedestrian and bicycle pathways to improve mobility for non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians.

Promoting Centralization

In combination with a need for greater transportation options and non-motorized accessibility, workshop participants discussed the lack of centralization for major amenities and day-to-day needs. As a result, seniors and retirees are reliant on transportation to travel between disparate locations. Some respondents noted that the Forest Mall is an important locations for various needs, but is distant and difficult to access from many seniors and retired community members. Participants argued that a centralized area that included a complete variety of basic amenities, perhaps even a life-style center or senior center, would better benefit seniors and retirees in the community.

Enhancing Community Services & Resources

Workshop respondents emphasized the need for greater and more diverse resources for seniors and retirees, given the limitations placed on these individuals and the ability to become more involved in community services. This included a variety of services and programs such as access to affordable healthcare options, events and activities, and more diverse living options. In many cases, participants also highlighted the need for greater accessibility to information regarding existing services. Many felt they were unaware or unable to receive information, and stressed the need for a variety of information sources, particularly non-internet based options.

Increasing Civic Participation

Those in attendance demonstrated a desire to be better involved in the Fond du Lac community, through community services, events, and activities. This included a desire to be better connected with other members of the community, as well as a desire to have their voice and needs heard by local officials and decision makers. Participants felt that local governments should work better to address the basic needs of seniors and retirees as well as utilize their knowledge and experience as a vital resource.

Retaining Youth

Seniors and retirees discussed the status of education, including higher education opportunities, within greater Fond du Lac, which was closely linked to youth retention and attracting younger professionals to the area. Taking stock of their own status within the community, participants noted that an aging population requires new youth to support the local employment base. Those in attendance felt it is important to generate new ways to bring younger individuals to the area and retain them post-education. In addition, many respondents hoped to have greater interaction between the youth population and the senior community both for educational and social benefit.

Increasing Safety

Workshop participants highlighted a variety of safety concerns, both regarding the perception of crime and the lack of safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Linked to a need for greater accessibility, respondents called for improvements to pedestrian safety along busy streets and at crosswalks. Other felt that the changing nature of the Fond du Lac community requires an increased police presence. A few individuals noted that the region is not unsafe, but lacks a perception of safety.

Potential Solutions

After identifying a range of issues and concerns, those in attendance were broken into smaller groups and asked to explore solutions to three specific issues: transportation; access to information and services; and Downtown Fond du Lac. The following is a summary of all potential solutions sorted according to the issue they address:

Transportation

- Expand the bus system, including more routes and hours, and a larger coverage area
- Provide more accessible information, in modes other than online, regarding transportation for seniors
- Attract “Uber” or a similar ride-sharing service to the area
- Attract more taxi cabs and mini cabs
- Reinstigate the “Fish” program
- Create a program through ADVOCAP with volunteer drivers
- Provide small buses on a “call-per-need” basis for those with disabilities, including immediate pickup

Access to Information and Services

- Establish a single central location for information and services
- Establish a clearing house, other than municipal government, for community information
- Better advertise city services, activities, and events
- Develop an annual book listing all senior services and recreational opportunities to be distributed to all seniors by mail
- Construct a centralized senior center
- Host education session on resources and technology for seniors
- Encourage and create accessibility to churches and other similar resources
- Establish city-wide free access to internet/wifi
- Establish a large information center at the public library with dedicated computers and printed resources
- Couple necessary services for seniors and retirees with those services necessitated by growing immigrant populations

Downtown Fond du Lac

- Encourage residents to start shopping in the Downtown
- Support small businesses and stores
- Improve the Downtown to be a clean, safe, and desirable place to be
- Attract a grocery stores to the Downtown area
- Continue and improve Downtown development