

L.E. Phillips (Eau Claire) Senior Center

Issues & Visioning Exercise

July 2, 2009

Participants: about 10 senior citizens and 2 senior agency representatives

General Overview

This was one of two focus group meetings for senior input. This L.E. Phillips (Eau Claire) Senior Center meeting received comment from urban seniors, many concerning transportation options and safety, and the availability of affordable housing for all stages of life.

Issues, Concerns, and Suggestions

Housing

- Property taxes are too high, making it difficult for seniors to stay in their homes
- Older housing stock is not energy efficient, causing heating to be too expensive—upgrade programs are needed
- Eau Claire is over-built, especially in terms of apartments
- There is an overabundance of “senior” apartments, but not enough is accessible – updates are needed
- Nursing homes are more expensive in Eau Claire than in surrounding areas
- Assisted living housing is very expensive
- Memory and behavior problems make nursing home placement difficult
- Shortage of memory care facilities
- Respite services are needed to relieve the many care-giving spouses and family members
- Poor condition of student housing is causing a decline in property values in older neighborhoods – more enforcement of property maintenance (snow shoveling and lawn mowing, etc.) is needed

Transportation

- Bus routes need to get closer to riders – walk to stops is too long
- Volunteer driver program is needed – opportunities for creativity are out there
- Ability to get to needed services and shopping (transportation) is key factor in decision to stay in own home
- There is a huge need to get information on existing services to those who need it – marketing
- Very difficult to visit spouses in nursing homes outside of Eau Claire – regional solutions needed
- Parts of County, like Fairchild and T. Wilson areas go to other urban centers, like Wausau
- Buses are seen as a viable option when driving is no longer possible
- Decisions to drive when traffic is not heavy, parking where you don’t need to back up to get out, etc. are choices being made to continue driving

- People drive too fast and don't pay attention to pedestrians – Enforcement is needed
- Sidewalks are important and should exist within the city, and maintenance should be enforced
- Need to consider needs/abilities of seniors in traffic engineering

Utilities and Community Facilities

- Senior Center is a great asset
- Need more parking at senior center
- Parks are great, but need to be staffed in the summer (parkies) so that children are active and supervised
- A performing arts center is needed and should be developed through regional coordination
- Coordination (university, local governments, clubs, etc.) is key for the development of recreation facilities, such as ice arenas, etc.
- Accessible facilities in public parks, such as fishing piers, etc., help seniors to remain active and independent

Economic Development

- A viable downtown is very important to seniors, as well as the whole community
- A strong educational system is necessary for a good economy
- There is not enough encouragement for small businesses that provide neighborhood access to goods and services
- There needs to be more “real” intergovernmental cooperation on economic development matters. Competition between communities is counterproductive.
- There has been too much history of keeping out businesses because they would offer union wages
- Older buildings should be renovated and re-used more, instead of tearing them down
- A convention center would be good for economic development