

Aging in Issaquah: Community Engagement Findings

Community Input on Supporting Issaquah's Seniors

7/1/2016



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Feedback in Focus: Thank You Issaquah Seniors

By Fred Butler

People of all ages choose Issaquah to invest their future, thanks to our strong sense of community, breathtaking natural backdrop and outstanding quality of life.

And whether they are longtime residents or new arrivals, seniors make up a significant portion of our growing community.

More than 7,000 seniors call Issaquah home – an increase of more than 5 percent since 2010.

To best serve these customers, the City has spent the past several months reaching out to the community to assess senior needs, interests and talents.

It's clear that our senior population mirrors our larger community – it's a diverse group of citizens with varying ideas and feedback.

However, some common themes were clear: information access, transportation and affordable housing are priorities.

More details are included in this report. Thank you to the hundreds of community members who participated in our assessment process, from attending open houses to filling out our survey. Your feedback is extremely valuable as we move forward.

Our next steps are to build on this work by reaching out to service providers, as well as conducting research on best practices. Recommendations to guide the City's future work and ongoing investment in seniors are expected in October.

Moving forward, we are committed to working with our community's engaged and growing senior population to explore new opportunities.

Our vision remains clear – ensuring every senior in Issaquah has access to community resources and services.

Thank you.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The City of Issaquah embarked on engagement with the community around issues of aging in order to better understand the needs and aspirations of our senior community members. This work is a first step in a renewed focus on senior services with the following goals:

1. All seniors in the Issaquah community have the ability to meet their basic physical, mental, economic, and social needs, and the opportunity to enhance their quality of life.
2. All seniors in the Issaquah community have access to community resources and services.

Process

Engagement activities were held over several months and included a survey, 6 focus groups, and 2 community workshops. Some activities were targeted to individuals age 55 and over while others sought participation from the broader community. It is important to note that both the survey and community workshops were open to the public. Participants self-selected to participate in these engagement opportunities and thus were not a representative sample of Issaquah’s senior citizens. The focus groups were used to capture input from particular senior groups in order to increase the diversity of participants. Valuable information and feedback was collected throughout the process across all three platforms.

321	<i>Survey Responses</i>
104	<i>Workshop Participants</i>
55	<i>Focus Group Participants</i>
<hr/>	
480	<i>Total Participants</i>

Findings

Many topics and ideas were raised by community members, demonstrating the diverse needs and aspirations of our seniors. Key topic areas included access to information on resources, transportation services, and affordable housing.

Access to Information & Resources Centralized, comprehensive, and accessible information on resources and services available via several modes including but not limited to a facility, printed and online resource guide, non-emergency help line, and ombudsman.

Affordable Housing & Housing Options Affordable housing for low and moderate income seniors as well as increased housing options like co-housing and accessory dwelling units.

Transportation Improved safety, mobility, walkability, traffic mitigation efforts, and services like defensive driving classes for seniors and shuttle service to key destinations like the pharmacy, post office, and grocery stores.

Next Steps

A number of organizations, businesses, and groups currently work to address several of these needs, as well as more broadly serve seniors in the community. Engaging with these service providers and groups is an important next step along with research and site visits to regional programs. The City will draw on the rich content from engagement work, research, and visits to develop recommendations for ongoing and future investments to support seniors. Specifically, recommendations for 2017 programming and investments are expected in October.

CITY PLANNING & PRIORITIES

Purpose

In early 2016, the City embarked on a plan to improve its investment in senior services by focusing on three major areas of work: (1) Engagement and Communication, (2) Programs and Services, and (3) Planning and Administration. In April – June of 2016, City staff focused on engaging the community around issues of aging to better understand the needs and aspirations of our senior members.

As part of the larger reinvestment plan, engagement efforts and findings will help the City to achieve its goals and objectives for supporting seniors in the community.

Goals

1. All seniors in the Issaquah community have the ability to meet their basic physical, mental, economic, and social needs, and the opportunity to enhance their quality of life.
2. All seniors in the Issaquah community have access to community resources and services.

Objectives

1. Continue Provision of existing health, human, and social services for Issaquah's seniors in 2016.
2. Increase understanding of service needs, use, and barriers.
3. Position programs and services for ongoing improvement in quality, selection, and accessibility.
4. Engage seniors to identify goals and objectives to ground future programming.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Senior Population Profile and Trends

The aging population within Issaquah represents diverse people with different needs and capabilities. Issaquah's senior population has grown by over 5% since 2010 to a total of over 7,000. Over that same time period, the number of seniors aged 65 and over who have fallen below the poverty level within the last 12 months has grown by 65%.ⁱ Seniors living below the poverty line face increased economic insecurity and may experience greater barriers to maintaining and improving their well-being.

City Services

The City has a long history of supporting its seniors through direct services and both in-kind and financial support for area programs providing direct services. Direct services from the City include low income senior discounts for utilities and programming at the Community Center and Julius Boehm Pool. City Human Services and General Fund grants support health and human services provided by area nonprofits including transportation assistance, meals, and referrals.

Ongoing Issaquah Community Center (ICC) Programs

Gold Membership Pass
 Fitness Room
 Indoor Track
 Everyway Fitness
 Personal Training
 Small Group Personal Training
 Aerobics & Conditioning
 Tai Chi Chuan
 Yoga
 Pickleball Drop-In
 Tennis & Friends Age 50+
 Fit to the Core – Deep (Pool)
 Deep water Running (Pool)
 Liquid Intervals – Deep (Pool)
 Arthritis Foundation Exercise (Pool)
 Scholarship

ICC Programs Launched in Spring 2016

Trips & Special Events
 Lunch Club
 Issaquah Walks
 Health Screening Event

Area Service Providers & Programs

Issaquah and the surrounding region have a wealth of agencies, networks, businesses, and faith communities that serve and enhance quality of life for Issaquah seniors. The incomplete list below helps to illustrate the diversity of organizations. Additional outreach to organizations to access their knowledge of local services is an important next step for the City ahead of developing recommendations for 2017 programming and investments.

Aegis of Issaquah
 Bridge Disability Ministries
 Catholic Community Services (Meals Program)
 Chinese Information and Service Center
 Congregations for the Homeless
 Eastside Friends of Seniors
 Eastside Legal Assistance Program
 Elder and Adult Day Service
 Encompass Northwest (Kinship Care Support)
 HealthPoint
 HERO House
 Issaquah Community Services
 Issaquah Food and Clothing Bank

Issaquah Nourishing Network
 Issaquah Nursing & Rehabilitation Center
 Issaquah Valley Seniors
 King County Bar Association
 Life Enrichment Options
 NAMI Eastside
 Providence Point
 Sound Generations (formerly Senior Services)
 St. Vincent de Paul
 Swedish
 The Sophia Way
 Timber Ridge
 University House

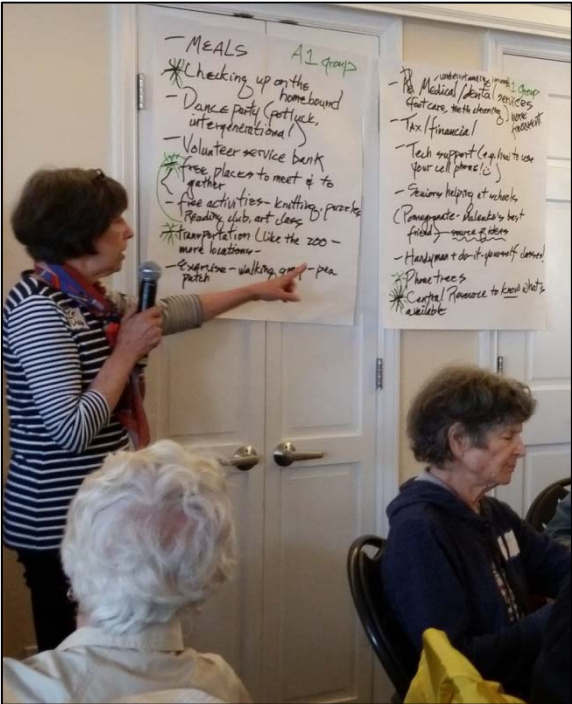
ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Approach

Engagement activities were held over several months and in that time the City heard from hundreds of community members. Activities included a survey, 2 community workshops, and 6 focus groups. This mix of engagement activities was selected to capture different types of feedback and create different opportunities for sharing input.

The survey provided the lightest and also most specific tool for collecting input while the community workshops were the most time intensive for participants, were openly structured, and broadest in content covered. The focus groups were similarly time intensive but provided a greater balance of structure and flexibility for content.

321	<i>Survey Responses</i>
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<hr/>	
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The survey and focus groups were targeted to individuals age 55 and over while the community workshops sought participation from the broader community. The six focus groups included three groups of residents from local low-income housing developments for seniors, a group of participants from an arthritis swimming class, a group of Latina seniors, and a group of participants from a local discussion group. This approach was taken to provide the greatest opportunity for input directly from seniors while also creating a forum to hear concerns and ideas from the broader community and creating opportunities to hear from diverse groups.

Limitations

It is important to note that the participants were not a statistically-based representative sample of Issaquah’s senior citizens. The City heard from individuals who largely self-selected to participate in this process rather than a random sample of seniors. This does create limitations for generalizing the findings. These limitations due to engagement approach were anticipated and weighed against resources, timeliness of the work, and an objective to create opportunities for dialogue with members of the community. Including focus groups helped to mitigate some of the limitations by including diverse community groups.

Over the course of the engagement process, the City heard from a subset of the senior population who skews slightly older. The median age of participants was in the 70 – 74 year age range while the median age of Issaquah seniors is in the 65 – 69 range.

Figure 1. Comparison of representation by age

Age	% of Overall Issaquah Senior Resident Population ⁱⁱ	% of Overall Participants
54 or younger	-	1%
55 - 59	25%	8%
60 - 64	19%	13%
65 - 69	16%	20%
70 - 74	11%	21%
75 - 79	9%	16%
80 - 84	7%	9%
85 and older	14%	6%
Not Provided	-	7%

Additionally, limited demographic information from the surveys shows that the City likely heard from a smaller proportion of the population that identify as Asian or Black or African American than we would expect to see in the community (see Figure 1). Omitted information limits the interpretation of this data though (provision of demographic data was voluntary for participants).

Figure 2. Comparison of representation by race

Race	Issaquah Senior Residents ⁱⁱⁱ	Survey Respondents
White	88%	76%
Asian	9%	3%
Black or African American	2%	0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0%	<1%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0%	<1%
Other Race / Not Provided*	<1%	19%
Two or More Races	<1%	<1%

This non-representative sample means that additional needs and alternative perspectives—beyond those identified in the engagement activities—exist in our community.

FINDINGS: TOPIC AREAS, ASPIRATIONS AND IDEAS

Survey respondents and participants in the workshops and focus groups generously shared their experiences, thoughts, aspirations, and ideas for the community with a clear focus on aging. Each engagement activity had its own orientation and focus as well as target audience, and the results help to fill important gaps in understanding and knowledge. The survey focused on current programming and facilities accessed, barriers, and desired programming, services or classes. The focus groups concentrated on what it is about current programs and activities that works well and what

improvements could be made as well as personal aspirations for aging well. Finally, the community workshops used a more open format to discuss and generate ideas about “What might our community look like to support you as you age?”

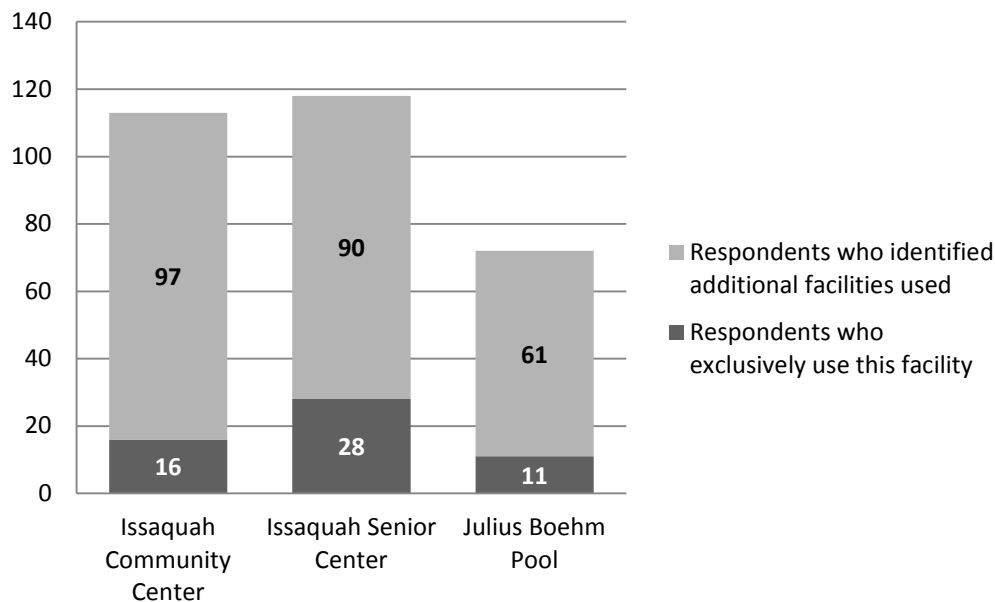
Current Access & Barriers

The survey and focus groups helped to identify programming and facilities currently utilized by participants as well as a number of barriers and areas for improvement. Survey questions particularly focused on three facilities in downtown Issaquah providing a range of social, recreational and health services: Issaquah Community Center, Issaquah Senior Center, and Julius Boehm Pool. These facilities were called out for their central location and facility-based senior programs.

Facilities

The survey results show utilization of these facilities varied considerably. Thirty percent of respondents did not participate in activities at any of the three facilities while only 4 percent used all three. An additional 23 percent use some selective combination of the facilities while 17 percent use one of the three exclusively. Forty-four percent of respondents identified alternative facilities used for similar purposes including: personal gyms, senior residential community facilities, Redmond Senior Center, Blakely Hall, Issaquah Library, Tukwila Community Center, YMCA, and places of worship.

Figure 3. Facility utilization by survey respondents



The top barriers to accessing programming at the three specified locations in Issaquah were identified as cost, timing, access to recreation and programming elsewhere, not feeling ‘senior enough’, lack of interesting programming, and limited mobility.

Services & Activities

Forty-three percent of respondents shared that they do not access the services and activities listed below in Issaquah regardless of the facility. The categories with 100 or more respondents indicating local participation were Physical Activity and Fitness, Social Interests and Activities, and Arts and Culture. The next tier of categories had 72-77 respondents indicating participation: Day Trips, Volunteering, Health Services, and Food and Nutrition programs. Educational activities and services

were also popular. More than one third of respondents access these activities on a weekly basis. Nearly 1 in 5 accesses them daily.

- Arts and Culture
- Educational Opportunities
- Physical Activity and Fitness
- Computer and Technology Services
- Health Services
- Legal Assistance
- Social Interests and Activities
- Transportation Services
- Volunteering
- Day Trips
- Other (identified by respondent)

When asked what is preventing them from accessing these or other services locally, the top four reasons provided were that services do not match needs or interests, inconvenient hours, cost or affordability of programs, and limited transportation access or options. Similarly, focus group participants identified cost and transportation as concerns for accessing services. Some focus groups also raised language barriers as an issue in accessing facilities and programs.

Aspirations & Ideas

Participants across the survey, focus groups, and community workshops identified an array of personal goals and aspirations, areas of need, and ideas for services and programming. Participants across platforms were directed to share input and ideas with a greater emphasis on capturing as many areas of interest as possible. Only in select circumstances, namely the community workshops, were participants directed to take the additional step of narrowing topics generated in their table groups to one idea or topic about which the group felt mostly strongly.

Personal aspirations often focused on maintaining or building independence, staying healthy or improving health, finding opportunities to volunteer, and continuing to learn. Ideas covered social services, accessibility, events, and beyond. Concerns, issues of interest, and ideas were much more diverse. The list below demonstrates the range of ideas generated at the workshops for events, program types and services.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Walking Group | Time Bank | Dance Parties |
| Guided Tours | Off-leash Areas for Pets | Community Potluck |
| Field Trips | Additional Night Out Events | Educational Classes |
| Arts & Craft Classes | Safety Workshops from the Fire Dept. | Book Clubs |
| Cards & Games | Self-Defense Workshops | Senior Education Center |
| Employment Assistance | Emergency Preparedness for Seniors | Community Meals |
| Support Groups | Foot Care | Discussion Groups |
| P-Patches | Medical Services | Friendly Gathering Place |
| Free Nurse Advisor | User-Friendly Trails for all Abilities | Overnight Trips |
| Caregiver Support | Health Seminars | Senior Discounts |
| End of Life Planning Services | Social Worker for Seniors | Neighborhood Gatherings |
| Medical Supplies | Check-In Service for Home-Bound | Intergenerational Activities |
| Street Improvements | Travel Lectures | Dental Services |
| Tax & Financial Assistance | Property Tax Rate Changes | Open House Events |
| Community Bulletin Boards | More Benches along Sidewalks | Tool Library |

Several broader areas of interest were consistently raised by groups and called out as a topic with strong support for action (i.e. identified by numerous groups when brainstorming and selected as a topic for group report out). The three topic areas raised most often were access to information and resources (highlighted in 9 group report outs), affordable housing (7 groups), and transportation (4 groups).

Access to Information & Resources

Participants consistently called for centralized, comprehensive, and accessible information on resources and services available in the community. The issue and related ideas were highlighted in a number of group report outs at the community workshops and also called out in less direct ways by survey respondents and focus group participants who expressed frustration with finding events and activities locally. Preferences for how to access information varied and highlight a need for multiple mediums and access points for information. Ideas generated by participants include a senior resource guide in hard copy and online, a non-emergency helpline, and an ombudsman.

Affordable Housing & Housing Options

Focus group and workshop participants called out affordable housing for low and moderate income seniors as well as increased housing options for seniors as issues of significant interest. Ideas included co-housing, accessory dwelling units, and regulation changes to support more housing options.

Transportation

Transportation was consistently raised as a barrier to accessing services and programs and also as a broader issue of safety and mobility. Participants called for improved walkability, traffic mitigation efforts, and services like defensive driving classes for seniors and shuttle service to key destinations like the pharmacy, post office, and grocery stores.

Additional Areas of Interest

Several other broad areas of interest can be gleaned from specific suggestions about programs and events. These categories include social connections and activities, aging well, and supportive services. The issue of where to locate programs and services and having a gathering place for seniors was also raised by numerous groups with some calling for support of existing locations like the Issaquah Senior Center and others providing less specific guidance about a particular facility.

Social Connections & Activities

Specific needs and interests varied, but participants consistently called for additional programming to provide activities and opportunities for socializing. Activities like tours and field trips, gardening, volunteer opportunities, and book clubs were shared across workshops and focus groups. More interests specific to the community like a “Welcome to Issaquah” group and toolkit also emerged.

Aging Well

Health and wellbeing were common threads through discussion of needs, programs, and services. Interests included nutrition, fitness classes, foot care, pain management, support groups, and memory care.

Supportive Services

Some participants identified supportive services like legal assistance, tax preparation, case management, and check-ins for home-bound seniors as unmet needs in the community.

NEXT STEPS

The information and feedback gained through these engagement activities provides an essential input to the City's planning for ongoing and future investments in supporting the community's seniors. Additional information gained from outreach to service providers, research on best practices, and site visits to senior programming in the region will also inform planning efforts. Recommendations for programming, policy, and other investments and supports for seniors are expected in October, 2016. Engagement is expected to continue throughout this process at a less intense level.

Endnotes

ⁱ 2014 American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimate.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.