



September 6, 2018

REPORT

TO: Community Hub/Recreation Project Steering Advisory Committee

FROM: Sean Dillon, Senior Manager Business Development

RE: Seniors Focus Group Sessions – Feedback and Analysis

Background

As part of its contracted scope of work, for Community Development Services, the YMCA has committed to conducting Community Focus Group sessions. The first of these sessions, targeted at seniors, were held on Monday August 27, 2018 at the South Huron Recreation Centre, Exeter and on Thursday August 30, 2018 at the Clubhouse at Grand Cove Estates. A total of 71 people, not including Steering Committee members, took part in the Focus Groups; a sampling of 2.6% of the municipal seniors population.

Demographic Profile – Seniors 65 plus years of age

Seniors within South Huron represent a larger share of the municipal population than surrounding counties and the Ontario average at 26.3% (2,660 individuals 65+ years of age).

	South Huron	Huron County	Lambton County	Middlesex County	Perth County	Bruce County	Ontario
% 65+ years within total population	26.3%	22.7%	21.6%	16.8%	18.6%	23.6%	16.7%

Seniors within South Huron experience a significantly lower rate of occurrence of low income status at 0.8% as compared to the Ontario average rate of occurrence of 5.1%.

Statistics Canada 2017 self-reported physical activity rates, of 150 minutes/week for adults, finds that 39.4% of respondent Ontario seniors 65+ years of age reported regular completion of physical activity to the threshold standard. Extrapolated against the seniors population of South Huron this indicates that 1048 local seniors are actively and regularly engaged in health, fitness, and recreation activities. The 1048 seniors identified will not all be considered part of the local health, fitness, and recreation market as many will participate through self-directed activity that is not reliant on the provision of community facilities (although many require community infrastructure; such as roads and trails to perform their self-directed activity).

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Focus Group Feedback

The Focus Group sessions collected input on 14 points of data relevant to determining community need for health, fitness, and recreation programs along with collecting input on likely participation in programming and facilities, willingness to support a capital fundraising campaign for enhanced recreation facilities, and familiarity with the YMCA.

Feedback was collected in written form through table groups that discussed each question posed and recorded their own input. Attached at the end of this Report is the summary of responses provided, verbatim written comments and questions and copy of the presentation provided at each Focus Group.

Analysis of Feedback

Profile of Participants:

- the majority of participants identified themselves as residing in Exeter(26%), Grand Bend(21%), and Grand Cove(21%).
- 93% of participants identified themselves as year-round residents of the community.
- 66% of participants identified their level of personal physical activity as above average. This is significantly variant to the average rate of 39.4% participation in threshold levels of physical activity identified as the Ontario average. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the participants attracted to the Focus Groups were not representative of the average senior within the community but are a representative sampling of the most active seniors within the community.

Program Participation & Needs:

- Walking was identified as the top current form of physical activity performed by participants (26%). This correlates to the 13% of participants who identified a desire for a Walking Track to be included as a program/amenity of any enhanced recreational facility. Additionally, the lack of the availability of a Walking Track, winter walking hazards, and concerns about the winter ploughing of sidewalks were all cited as barriers/challenges to physical activity.
- Health and Fitness programming was identified by 14% of participants as desired to be included as a program/amenity of any enhanced recreational facility. Pickle Ball (9%) and Fitness Classes (7%) were identified as current physical activities engaged in by participants. The identification of Seniors Programs (18%) and Cardiac Fitness (11%) as current unmet community need further illustrate a desire and demand for the increased provision of Health and Fitness programming.
- In addition to physical activity; participants identified both unmet needs and a desire for social, educational, and seniors programming. 18% of participants identified the provision of seniors programming as an unmet need and 14% of participants identified both Support Groups and Nutrition/Healthy Cooking programs as an unmet need. In translating demand for these types of programs and services participants identified the inclusion of Social/Gathering Programs/Space (13%) and a Gathering Space with a Kitchen (8%) as important programs/amenities to include in any enhanced recreational facilities.
- Usage of aquatic facilities was identified as a current physical activity performed by 9% of respondents with 10 persons from the Exeter Focus Group and 8 from the Grand Cove Focus Group reporting participating. Additionally, 1 individual in the Exeter group identified participation in aquafit. The provision of aquatic facilities/programs was only identified by 2% of respondents as an unmet need while 8% cited the need to include an indoor aquatic facility in any enhanced recreational facility.

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- Only 1% of participants reported Hockey/Ice Sports as a current physical activity performed while 9% of participants identified Hockey/Skating/Ice as desired programming/amenities to be included in any enhanced recreational facilities.
- 18% of participants reported no unmet needs for programs or facilities.

Location and Travel Intention:

- Facilities and communities most accessed for current participation in physical activity were focused predominately on Exeter and Grand Cove. While a great number of individual facilities and communities were mentioned none are significant beyond the two leading locations. Further, market leakage to other communities appears to be low with Lambton Shores being the area of greatest leakage with 10 citations (Grand Bend 7, Forest 3).
- When asked the distance participants regularly travelled for physical activity the leading response was “less than a 10 minute drive” (36.9%) however, the median distance of acceptable travel appears to be 20 minutes as exactly half of respondents current travel for physical activity falls under the 20 minute mark and half fall over the 20 minute mark. The caveat to travel is the citation, as a barrier to participation, of winter road and driving conditions as an oft remarked concern from both groups. It is worth noting that the time required to travel the 24.8 km between Grand Cove Estates and the South Huron Recreation Centre, Exeter is 20 minutes exactly. Mt. Carmel is 17 minutes, and Kirkton is 15 minutes (Google Maps data). With the exception of the most southwestern area of the Municipality; all community nodes of South Huron are within a 20 minute commute to the current South Huron Recreation Centre, Exeter.

Awareness of the YMCA:

- 20% of participants identified having a previous experience with YMCA programming/membership.
- Goderich and London were the most cited locations of participants YMCA experience.

Financial Model/Participation Intentions:

- When asked about their preferred model of access for any new Health and Recreation programs/facilities and provided the options of; won't participate, membership participation, or pay per use participation 72% of participants identified an intention to access any new or enhanced programs/facilities. 22.9% preferred a membership access model while 49.1% preferred a pay as you go access model.
- When asked in a separate question about their likeliness of purchasing access, either through a membership or pay as you go model, 54% of participants indicated a likeliness to purchase access to enhanced Health and Recreation programs/facilities.
- Fee sensitivity appears to be high amongst Focus Group participants with cost of participation identified as a potential barrier to participation, the need for income support programs/subsidy identified by 4% of participants as a program/service to include in enhanced programs/facilities, and multiple verbatim comments/questions referencing concern over cost of services.

Capital Campaign Support

- When asked the likelihood of supporting a community capital fundraising campaign for new or enhanced Health and Recreation facilities 52% of participants identified they were Likely to support such a campaign. Of concern is the fact that no participants expressed they would be Very Likely to participate in a capital campaign; pointing

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to soft and qualified support for new/enhanced Health and Recreation facilities. This soft support of new/enhanced facilities is further evidenced in the verbatim comments/questions where references are made to donating depending upon what is built and where it is built.

Conclusions

1. The Focus Group participation level of 2.6% of the Municipal seniors population is not statistically sufficient to draw final conclusions however, the feedback received does point to trends of participation, need, and opinion that may be validated by other studies and future opportunities for feedback.
2. An indoor Walking Track is the most desired facility amenity and walking the most popular form of physical activity.
3. While expressed through multiple programmatic citations there is a desire and need for programming that goes beyond the base provision of Health and Fitness programming to satisfy a need for social connection. This was evidenced in the call for seniors programs, gathering spaces, and nutrition/cooking programs. The programmatic model proposed should take this into account and the design of facilities should focus on the provision of space to support these types of programs and provide for the promotion of social inclusion.
4. Cost of programs and services is a moderate to high concern of this age group. While a significantly lower than provincial and national average of low income occurrence is evident within South Huron, fee sensitivity remains a concern. Some of this concern was expressed in comparison to current rates for participation in Municipal programming. The Municipality may want to examine its current fee model and consider changes to achieve a cost recovery model, or confirm commitment to a highly subsidized fee model, prior to the launch of any new programs or facilities.
5. While 20% of participants are familiar with the YMCA, having reported a previous participation experience at a YMCA, there remains a need to educate residents about the YMCA should an operational collaboration be considered. As an example, questions received in one Focus Group illustrated a lack of knowledge of the YMCA's status as a charitable organization.
6. There appears to be adequate support for a sustainable financial/operating model for new programs/facilities based on participants identifying likely participation, through a membership or pay per use model, within new programs/facilities.
7. Support for a capital fundraising campaign is evident but soft. This is not surprising given details on what type of facility would be constructed are not currently available. As details emerge as to the programs, services, amenities, and operating model of a proposed facility this support should become more firm.
8. In both verbatim comments/questions and in the questions posed verbally at the Grand Cove Focus Group there is a sense that a new facility in Exeter would not serve Grand Cove residents and therefore dissatisfaction that one is being proposed and concern about such a facilities impact on municipal tax rates. At the same time Grand Cove participants did identify unmet program and facility needs. It is recommended that the Municipality consider the expansion of programming, in an outreach model to Grand Cove, in addition to any consideration of a centralized new Community Hub/Recreation Centre. An opportunity for partnership to satisfy these needs may exist with the Municipality of Lambton Shores who, in its recently released Draft Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, called for the creation of a Community Hub within Grand Bend.