

# Talking 'Bout My Generation Survey Results

## Executive Summary

### Fall 2017

## The Survey & Focus Groups

In June of 2017 a survey titled *Talking 'Bout My Generation* was sent to residents in the City of Waconia. All residents who receive a utility bill were sent a survey (and a return envelope) along with their bill. The survey was also dropped off at multi-tenant buildings in town, available on our website, and promoted through our newsletter.

The Talking 'Bout My Generation Survey asked 21 questions ranging from key demographic data (household ages; how long respondents have lived in Waconia; types of housing) to more detailed questions regarding community involvement, Waconia's growth, community businesses and services, and transportation.

Some key demographic information from the survey includes:

- 902 surveys were received back by the City of Waconia (20% response rate)
- The average household size of survey respondents is 2.5 people
- When filling out the survey, respondents selected their age group. It is, as follows:
  - 17 – 36 years old: 11% of respondents
  - 37 – 52 years old: 26.3% of respondents
  - 53 – 71 years old: 36.1% of respondents
  - 72+ years old: 25.1% of respondents
- 31% of respondents have lived in Waconia for 20+ years
- 68.3% of survey respondents live in single family homes; 35% of survey respondents over the age of 72 live in an apartment designated for seniors

Following the results of the survey, the Commission on Aging identified six areas they wanted to spend more time focusing on. These areas were:

- Communication and Inclusion
- Community Involvement and Events
- Activities and Gathering Spaces
- Downtown
- Community Character
- Transportation

Three focus groups were conducted during the months of August and September. The focus groups dove deeper into the topic areas above and allowed residents the opportunity to provide more details as to what they are looking for in the future as Waconia grows.

## Results

Several areas and themes stood out following the focus groups, which coincided well with some of the themes that arose from the survey responses.

- **Communication:** Residents (specifically seniors) are looking for information as to what is happening around town. Survey respondents and focus group attendees stated that there isn't just one resource that

identifies what is going on during the week each week. Respondents and attendees emphasized that they all look for information differently; many mentioned that email is a great way for communication, while some of the senior community stated they don't look to the website and email for information. Based on feedback received, it sounds like many residents receive the Waconia Patriot, however do not feel that it adequately advertises what is happening in the community.

- **Transportation:** While 93% of all survey respondents said they have transportation necessary to get around outside of Waconia, only 82% of those who are 72+ responded favorably to the same question. Additionally, 21% of all respondents said that improved transportation will help improve their household's connections to the community. There also seemed to be a great deal of interest from the focus groups that a new mode of transportation within the City of Waconia would be welcome. Many people identified that while they have transportation now, they fear transportation will become an issue as they age.
- **Gathering Space/Community Center:** 73% of survey respondents stated that they would be supportive of the City building or renovating a building to serve as a community gathering space. There were various comments in the survey, as well as in the focus groups, as to what this building could potentially be used for. Some of the more popular responses included weddings, rental space, party rentals, senior activities, arts and crafts, birthday parties, cards, exercise classes, senior center, teen center, and kids' activities. There are varying degrees of opinion as to what type of structure is desired and what is needed in the community – some don't believe anything needs to be built; some would like to see a senior center; and others would like to see a multi-purpose community center.
- **Other:** Additional areas that were brought up include the desire to maintain and/or revitalize downtown, keep Waconia's community character and small town charm, and the importance of community events.

## Next Steps

It is important to continue to have these conversations with our residents and business community. There are several talking points and conversation starters available to use as conversation starters:

- What is important for you to see as Waconia grows and develops? What will keep you in town?
- How will you / your business / club / school / city / church plan for our aging residents?
- How can the Commission on Aging be of service as you / your business / club / school / city / church creates new opportunities, programs, etc.
- Of the six themes identified, what is most important to you, as a Waconia resident?

When looking at the top three themes, there are some immediate action items the Commission on Aging can work on.

- **Communication:** The Commission on Aging and City of Waconia can attempt to serve as the middle ground in terms of communicating events. The Commission on Aging will consider development of a senior newsletter or calendar used to promote events designed for seniors within the community.
- **Transportation:** The Commission on Aging will start to look at WeCab as a potential transportation alternative. The Commission will host a kick-off meeting targeting business and community partners, as well as residents, to attempt to solicit volunteers for the program. It is required to have volunteers signed up before WeCab will expand their service area to Waconia.
- **Gathering Space/Community Center:** Continue conversations/feedback about the need for a gathering place or community center in Waconia and what exactly it would entail.