

I. Summary of Senior Center Sub-Committee

A. Mission

The Senior Center Sub-Committee has been meeting since June, approximately 7 months. The current leases with the Northside and Southside Senior Centers expires in 2020. A resolution was passed by Common Council that no further extensions would be allowed by the Common Council. That upon the lease expiration, the buildings would be offered for \$1 or the City would sell the properties.

A Sub-Committee was to be formed to determine the capital needs needed to sustain the building. The existing analyses show \$347,000 in repairs that are required for the Harry J. Olson Center and \$256,000 for the Southside Center. Currently, the City spends approximately \$25,000 to maintain both buildings. The Senior Center Sub-Committee during its existence has broadened its scope of research to determining the best outcome for the community and its Senior Centers. The Committee consulted with numerous experts on options- from the President of the Wisconsin Senior Center Association, La Crosse County ADRC, Parks and Recreation, national research on the subject, as well as heard from existing Senior Center members.

B. Goals

The July meeting, members identified the characteristics of a solution to a positive outcome.

- A dedicated space for Seniors
- Easy Access for users
- Safe neighborhood
- Multi-purpose rooms for concurrent programs (i.e. fitness, cards, music)
- Autonomy as distinct organization
- Flexibility in design to meet changing needs of community
- Accessible by public transportation
- Adequate parking
- Kitchen for mobile meals and on-site senior centers (meals are prepared offsite by caterer)

In later meetings, this criteria was also added.

- Capital project is financially feasible
- Operation costs are sustainable long-term

B. Data Gathered

Currently, the Harry J Olson Center has 232 members- approximately 60% of its membership lives in the City of La Crosse and 40% reside in other parts of the county (mainly Onalaska and Holmen to the north). Harry J Olson believes that the general public doesn't know about them or what they offer. The Southside Senior Center believes that have approximately 200 members, we are not sure where their members are from.

The Committee learned from Mallory Maxwell (Planning Intern) and the Parks and Recreation Department that existing opportunities for Seniors to recreate in the City of La Crosse- they are numerous. They are primarily carried out by City Parks and Recreation at the Neighborhood Centers, the Senior Centers, YMCA, and the La Crosse Main Library. Some opportunities for Seniors are offered at existing facilities.

The Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers presentation was particularly informative, as was examining Eau Claire Senior Center's operating budget and offerings. Key take-away included:

1. The condition of La Crosse's Senior Centers are in poor condition as compared to our counterparts in similar-sized cities
2. Our Senior Centers operate with a significantly smaller operating budget than these counterparts (\$25,000 per year or less) and as a result also have less offerings in terms of programming.
3. There are many models for operating a Senior Center ranging from Municipal Senior Centers to Not-for-Profit, to ADRC-led Senior Centers.
4. Most operate with a range of income sources to meet their operating budget (contributions from both City and County, membership fees, corporate donors, fundraisers).
5. Some Senior Centers have begun offering café-style meals, dinners, outdoor grills versus the traditional "Senior Center meal".
6. Most offer fitness opportunities.

C. Alternatives for Discussion

This is based on the Committee's stated preferences on 10/25/2017, as well as recommendations made through the time meeting. Based on what staff heard, no one expressed an interest in the City making minimal repairs on the senior centers and then having the City continue to own the facilities long-term. Thus, this option has not been included.

1. Create a new Southside Senior Center through renovations on the existing Southside Brand Library and work with private developer to re-develop Harry J Olson Center.

- The would be adding on an addition to the existing building if feasible or demolishing/rebuilding. Currently the Branch Library is about 9,000 square feet.
- Identify a private developer to rehabilitate the Harry J Olson Center and maintain space for the Harry J Olson Seniors. Harry J Olson would be allowed to lease the space for a minimal cost (contingent on the feasibility of this plan).

2. Identify a site for one Senior Center that is a mixed-use building.

- 10,000-12,000 square feet of ground floor dedicated Senior Center space and apartments above.
- The City would examine properties it owns or purchase a property. Building owned by a private party but senior center space leased or condoed by 501c3 or public entity like City or County.
- Likely require public funds to subsidize construction and land
- Location identified to serve a regional population

3. No physical Senior Centers but more robust programing in various locations.

- Follow through with the Council's recommendation and offer the Senior Centers as they exist to entities for \$1.
- Create more robust City-wide Senior Programming at existing privately owned and publically owned facilities. Find existing space that Seniors could use.
- Options might be: Neighborhood centers, Myrick Center, Main Street Library, La Crosse Center
- Invest in robust Parks and Recreation-led Senior Center programming and marketing existing programming for Seniors occurring throughout the City.