

PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY SURVEY ON CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS

A REPORT OF SURVEY RESULTS AND COMMUNITY TRENDS

I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Recognizing a trend that the population is growing older, the Plymouth City Council created a Committee on Aging to address the issues and needs of Plymouth's aging population. The committee was given a number of responsibilities including examining the need for future activities and programs for older adults at the local level, gathering and disseminating information regarding services, activities, programs, and facilities for seniors, and to conduct a continuous program to stimulate public awareness and understanding of the needs and potential of older adults.

Another responsibility assigned to the Committee on Aging was to provide oversight for the Plymouth Senior Center. The Plymouth Senior Center is a multipurpose organization that provides a variety of services for senior adults. Services include recreational activities, health related services such as blood pressure screenings and flu vaccinations, senior noon meals, and educational opportunities including hands on workshops and a variety of guest speakers. Basic funding for the Plymouth Senior Center comes from the City of Plymouth.

In keeping with its responsibilities of examining the need for future activities and programs for older adults, coupled with a Senior Center accreditation report recommending a community assessment to determine future needs, the committee contacted the University of Wisconsin-Extension Sheboygan County Office for assistance during late 2005.

During the Committee on Aging's January 10, 2006 meeting, the development of a community-wide survey was discussed with UW-Extension. Because of the concurrent discussions in the community regarding development of a Plymouth Intergenerational Center and potential inclusion of the Plymouth Senior Center, it was the consensus of the committee that the possibility of including the Plymouth Intergenerational Coalition to participate in and co-sponsor the community-wide survey should be explored.

The Plymouth Intergenerational Coalition was formed to explore the idea of combining child care and senior facilities in order to realize the benefits of intergenerational programming, shared facility resources, expanded programs, services, and increased community involvement. The coalition has developed into a unique “grassroots” public/private partnership of organizations and individuals centered around the mission of developing an intergenerational center to serve the Plymouth/Sheboygan area. Plans are to include the Senior Center, child care center, the Head Start program, and the Family Resource Center.

After meeting with the Plymouth Intergenerational Coalition and its members during the Spring 2006, it was ultimately decided by the Committee on Aging to be the sole sponsor of the community-wide survey and develop the survey with UW-Extension to primarily address Plymouth Senior Center issues and needs.

Logistics for survey development and distribution were discussed at the committee’s May 2, 2006 meeting. During the committee’s June 6, 2006 meeting, current and future issues, needs, and concerns of the Plymouth Senior Center were identified and categorized (see Appendix A). The issues, needs, and concerns would serve as the basis from which the community-wide survey would be developed.

A first draft of the Plymouth Area Community Survey on Current and Future Needs was presented to the Committee on Aging at its August 1, 2006 meeting for review and editing. A final draft was subsequently prepared. The final version, consisting of 8 pages and 36 questions was delivered to 2,485 Plymouth residents, property owners, and businesses on September 14, 2006. Completed surveys were requested by October 2, 2006. Because of the interest generated, surveys were accepted until November 1, 2006. At that time, a total of 611 completed surveys had been returned, giving an overall response rate of 24.6%, or participation by approximately one Plymouth household out of four. The Committee on Aging reviewed final results of the survey at its November 7, 2006 meeting and also discussed demographic trends within the Plymouth community. Appendix B contains highlights of the Plymouth Area Community Survey on Current and Future Needs while the next section of this report presents demographic trends within the Plymouth community.

II. COMMUNITY TRENDS

A brief analysis of basic demographic data for the City of Plymouth is contained within this section of the report. Such information is helpful in understanding the makeup of the local population, which is important in planning for future needs. Factors such as age, education levels, income levels, employment characteristics and housing stock may influence what a community has to consider in meeting the needs of its citizens.

To gain insights regarding local trends, it is sometimes helpful to begin with national trends. Appendix C contains a profile of older Americans for the year 2005. Some highlights include the following:

- Older Americans (age 65+) numbered 36.3 million in 2004, an increase of 3.1 million or 9.3% since 1994.
- The number of Americans aged 45 to 64 – who will reach 65 over the next two decades - increased by 39% during this decade.
- About one in every eight, or 12.4 percent, of the population is an older American.
- Older women outnumber older men at 21.1 million older women to 15.2 million older men.
- About 31 percent (10.7 million) of noninstitutionalized older persons live alone (7.9 million women and 2.8 million men).
- Half of older women age 75+ live alone.
- The median income of older Americans in 2004 was \$31,102 for males and \$12,080 for females.

Although the numbers and percentages are different at the local level, it does appear that a number of the national trends, in general, are similar to trends in the Plymouth community.

Population Change

From 1970 to 2000, the population of the City of Plymouth has been steadily increasing. In fact, from 1990 to 2000, the City's population increased 14.95% compared to 8.45% for Sheboygan County and 9.65% for the State of Wisconsin during the same period (see Appendix D, Table 1).

Gender

In comparing gender data from 1990 to 2000 for the City of Plymouth (see Appendix D, Tables 2 and 2A), females increased from 3,549 in 1990 to 4,033 in 2000 or an increase of 13.6%. Another trend is the significant difference in females compared to males within the older age categories. For example, in 2000, females in the 85+ age category outnumbered males 158 to 64. While this trend is consistent with state and national trends, it does have local implications. As the population in Plymouth grows older and females, known to have a longer life expectancy, become more numerous in relation to males, this trend could impact a variety of things in the future, including services, transportation, and housing.

Population Projections

The City of Plymouth's population is projected to grow to 10,627 by the year 2025 (see Appendix D, Table 3). This is an increase of 36.6% from the 2000 census population of 7,781. For

comparison, Sheboygan County is projected to grow 15.4% and the State of Wisconsin 17.0% for the same 25-year period.

Household Type and Size

Table 4 in Appendix D shows that the number of one person households headed by a female in the City of Plymouth increased from 533 in 1990 to 597 in 2000. Similarly, one person households headed by a male increased from 272 in 1990 to 409 in 2000.

Household size in 2000 for the City of Plymouth is shown in Table 5 in Appendix D. While two person households were predominant in 2000 at 34.6%, one person households were a close second, at 30.7%.

Residence Stability/Attraction

Table 6 in Appendix D shows the residence in 1995 compared to 2000 for the City of Plymouth. A total of 4,294 persons (58.4% of Plymouth's population) lived in the same residence in 2000 as they did in 1995. Of the remaining 41.6% of Plymouth's 2000 population, 26.7%, or 1,961 persons were attracted to Plymouth from some other location in Sheboygan since 1995. This trend is also normal as older persons in the surrounding rural areas are attracted to Plymouth because of health care services, housing opportunities, etc.

Population Pyramids

Table 7 and 7A on Appendix D depict the distribution of age and gender in 1990 and 2000 for the City of Plymouth. When comparing the 1990 data to the 2000 data, it should be realized that a particular age category on the 1990 table shows up ten years later on the 2000 table.

In 1990, the data shows that those who were of pre-school or elementary age (0-9 years of age, or 1,035 children) remained in the City of Plymouth over the course of their schooling. Ten years later, when these children had aged to between 10 to 19, their total was 1,146. As is typical with many communities, the City of Plymouth saw a slight decline when teenagers reached adulthood and were able to move away to college or other opportunities. Those who were 10 to 19 in 1990 number 926. Ten years later, when those individuals were in their 20's, the number in the City of Plymouth had dropped slightly to 906, despite an overall increase in the City's population.

Although the City of Plymouth may lose some young people in their 20's, the community appears to be attractive again when individuals reach their 30's and settle down to raise families. While there were 958 people in their 20's in 1990, ten years later, the number of residents in their 30's had increased 22% to 1,169.

Plymouth residents in their 30's in 1990 (1,119) remained in the community for their 40's (1,242). Similarly, residents in their 40's in 1990 (696) remained in Plymouth for their 50's (743).

A slight decline begins when comparing Plymouth residents in their 50's in 1990 (545) to those residents in their 60's in 2000 (531). This slight declining trend also continues for the 60 to 64 age group in 1990 (272) compared to the 70 to 74 age group in 2000 (269). This trend is probably related to some retirees moving out of the community for a number of years.

It appears that Plymouth has a “magnetism” for those citizens in the 75+ age category. Not only was the number of residents aged 75+ high in 1990 (588), but that category increased 21% to 709 in 2000. The presence of housing options, services, health care, grocery stores, etc. undoubtedly all contribute to the “magnetism.”

III. SURVEY RESULTS

The Plymouth Area Community Survey on Current and Future Needs was developed to obtain opinions from Plymouth residents (property owners, renters, and businesses) regarding the current needs of older adults as well as future needs of those residents who currently don't consider themselves as “seniors.” Appendix E contains an abbreviated version of survey results, showing only numbers and percentages of responses to survey questions. Appendix F has the survey results with all written responses to survey questions listed, including comments that were written in the margins. Written responses appear as they were submitted, with no attempt by the UW-Extension Office to edit for spelling, grammar, etc.

This section of the report highlights results which are summarized by the four sections of the survey.

A. General Questions

The primary intent of this portion of the survey was to obtain opinions on how people in Plymouth define “senior,” whether they consider themselves as seniors, and if so, what interests and concerns they have, and if they don't consider themselves as seniors, what issues and concerns they anticipate they might have when they become seniors. Information was also requested regarding where one goes/would go for those interests and concerns that were identified.

Most respondents (32.6%) defined “Senior” as “on Social Security/fixed income.” The second most frequently checked response was “retired/no longer employed.” Of the 12.5% of respondents who checked “upon reaching a specific age,” the top three ages listed were “65” (37.1%), “60” (20.1%), and “70” (11.5%).

When asked “Do you consider yourself as a “senior”?,” a slight majority (49.6%) of respondents said “no” while 48.6% replied “yes”.

For those respondents who indicated they were seniors, the top concerns listed were health, transportation, health care cost, high taxes, health insurance, and finances. Their most frequently listed interests were cards, golf, and staying active and fit.

Respondents who currently did not consider themselves as seniors were asked to identify issues/concerns they thought they might have when they become seniors. The top concerns included transportation, finances, health care issues and cost, and health. The most frequently listed issues were programs/activities, travel and volunteering.

All respondents were asked where they do or would go for the interests/concerns they identified. Most respondents indicated their children (13.7%), followed by friends/neighbors (11.5%), and the Plymouth Senior Center (10.8%). Other frequent responses included local church members/religious organizations (10.5%) and the respondent's spouse (10.2%).

Summarizing the results of this section, most survey participants defined "Senior" as on Social Security/fixed income. Almost an equal number of survey participants considered themselves as seniors as those that did not. The top three concerns identified by senior survey participants were: 1. health; 2. transportation; and 3. health care cost/insurance. The top three concerns identified by non-senior survey participants they think they might have when they become seniors were: 1. transportation; 2. finances; and 3. health care cost/health issues. For these concerns, most survey participants would go to: 1. their children; 2. friends/neighbors; and 3. the Plymouth Senior Center.

B. Plymouth Senior Center

Questions within this section of the survey focused on community awareness of the Plymouth Senior Center and the programs and services it offers. The section of the survey also divided survey participants into Plymouth Senior Center users and non-users. For users, information was requested on frequency of use, type of use, input on programs/services they would like to have but not currently available, participation in the noon meal program and suggestions for improvement, location of the Plymouth Senior Center, adequacy of staffing, satisfaction with various assets of the Senior Center, willingness to pay membership fees, opportunities for volunteerism, and appropriateness of the title "Plymouth Senior Center."

Information was also requested from non-users including reasons for not using the Plymouth Senior Center, programs/services current non-seniors would utilize when they become seniors, potential for participation in the noon meal program, location of the Plymouth Senior Center, willingness to pay a membership fee, opportunities for volunteerism, and appropriateness of the title "Plymouth Senior Center."

A significant majority (90.7%) of survey participants were aware that Plymouth has a Senior Center. Of those respondents that indicated an awareness of the Senior Center, 42.9% said they "sort of" knew what the Senior Center provides/offers, while 39.4% indicated "yes" that they did know what was provided/offered.

All survey participants were asked if they used the Plymouth Senior Center within the past year. Just over three quarters said "no" (75.1%) while 22.4% said "yes." The next series of questions were focused on users of the Plymouth Senior Center, while non-user respondents were instructed to skip ahead to a section for them.

Most users indicated they frequently use (several times per week) the Senior Center, while moderate use (several times per month) were the second largest group of users.

Top programs/activities that were frequently used (several time per week) included recreational opportunities and health programs, moderately used (several times per month) were recreational opportunities and socialization, occasionally used (several times per year) included noon meal and socialization, and infrequently used (at least once per year) were noon meal and support services such as tax assistance, support groups, etc.

Senior Center users were asked to identify programs/services they would like to have available and use. Top responses included health programs (11.8%), recreational opportunities (11.1%), and socialization (10.1%).

A noon meal is provided by the Plymouth Senior Center Monday through Friday for adults 60 and older. A majority of Senior Center users responded that they do not participate in this noon meal with the primary reason cited as they eat/cook at home.

Regarding the noon meal program, Senior Center users were asked what could be offered/changed to make it better if they currently participate or attract them to participate if they currently do not. Top responses listed included better food, menu, and cook.

Regarding the location of the Plymouth Senior Center, most users indicated that it is easy to find and conveniently located.

A majority of Senior Center users felt that current staffing of the facility is adequate, although 14.9% indicated they didn't know.

Most Senior Center users either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the Plymouth Senior Center provides a welcoming environment and friendly atmosphere.

Senior Center users were asked to indicated their level of satisfaction with various aspects of the Center. Most users indicated they were "very satisfied" with the Center's location, "satisfied" with programs offered, staffing, resources/information/referrals, and atmosphere/welcoming environment, and "neutral" regarding the noon meal.

Willingness to pay a membership fee to the Plymouth Senior Center was also asked of Center users. Most said "yes, but depending upon the fee and the services provided."

Most users responded "maybe" to the question "Is the Plymouth Senior Center a worthy opportunity for you to consider volunteering your time?" The second most frequent response was "yes." Of those users respondents indicting "yes" or "maybe," most indicted they would consider assisting with meals, receptionist/telephone, or the "Friendly Visitors" program.

Regarding the appropriateness of the title "Plymouth Senior Center," most users said the title is appropriate.

The next series of questions focused on non-users of the Plymouth Senior Center. Center user respondents were directed to skip ahead to the final sections of the survey.

Non-users of the Plymouth Senior Center that were over age 60 were asked why they do not use the Center. Although most respondents checked the “other” choice and reiterated that they are not over age 60, other frequent responses in the “other” choice included “too busy” and “working.”

Current non-users under age 60 were asked what programs/services in the future would they come to a senior center for. Top responses included recreational opportunities, health programs, educational opportunities, and socialization. If those programs/services identified were offered at the Plymouth Senior Center, current non-users under age 60 were asked if they would use/participate in them. Most non-users said “maybe” while the second most frequent response was “yes.”

Most non-users of the Center said they would not participate in the noon meal program offered by the Senior Center Monday – Friday for adults 60 and older. The reason most frequently checked was “no age 60” followed by “Other,” where “eat/cook at home” was a common response.

A majority of non-users responded that the Plymouth Senior Center is easy to find and conveniently located.

Similar to Senior Center users, a majority of non-users said they would be willing to pay a membership fee depending upon the fee and the services provided.

Non-users were also asked if the Plymouth Senior Center was a worthy opportunity to consider volunteering their time. A majority of non-user respondents said “maybe” followed by “yes.” Most of those that said “yes” or “maybe” would consider assisting with meals, receptionist/telephone, or the “Friendly Visitors” program.

Regarding the appropriateness of the title “Plymouth Senior Center,” a majority of non-user respondents felt the title is appropriate.

In summarizing this portion of the survey, a majority of survey participants were aware that Plymouth has a Senior Center. Most survey participants “sort of” know what the Senior Center offers/provides. A majority of survey participants have not used the Senior Center within the past year with “not age 60” as the primary reason. Of those survey participants that have used the Senior Center, most indicated they use it frequently (several times per week). Recreational opportunities was the top activity for frequent and moderate use, while noon meal was the top activity for occasional and infrequent use of the Center. Most users and non-users of the Center that don’t participate in the noon meal program cited eat/cook at home as the reason. Most users feel the Center’s current staffing is adequate and agree or strongly agree that the Center provided a welcoming environment and friendly atmosphere. Most users and non-users indicated the Center is easy to find and conveniently located. Users and non-users also would be willing to pay

a membership fee, depending upon the fee and services provided. The title “Plymouth Senior Center” was felt to be appropriate by most users and non-users. The top programs/services Center users would like to have available included health programs, recreational opportunities, and socialization. The top programs/services current non-users would like to have available in the future included recreational opportunities, health programs, educational opportunities, and socialization.

C. Plymouth Intergenerational Center

The primary intent of this portion of the survey was to obtain opinions on support for the concept of an intergenerational center in Plymouth and the level of importance of various opportunities if they were incorporated into the Plymouth Intergenerational Center. All survey participants (Plymouth Senior Center users and non users) were asked to respond to questions in this section.

Regarding support for the concept of an intergenerational center in Plymouth, a majority of all survey participants responded “yes” (25.2%) and 23.9% stated “definitely yes.” “Maybe” was checked by 15.9% of the respondents and 13.4% said they didn’t have enough information to make an informed decision.

Survey participants were asked to indicate the level of importance of various opportunities if they were incorporated into the Plymouth Intergenerational Center. A majority of respondents (30.4%) checked “very important” in reference to the opportunity for young people and seniors to interact. Other opportunities, including opportunity to volunteer, opportunity to teach/share skills, opportunity for joint community service projects, opportunity to share resources and create synergy to maximize limited resources, and opportunity to learn issues/experiences of another generation were all checked as “important” by a majority of survey participants.

Summarizing the results of this section, a majority of survey participants support the concept of an intergenerational center in Plymouth. The top three opportunities, if they were incorporated into the Plymouth Intergenerational Center, which most survey participants identified as very important, included: 1. opportunity for young people and seniors to interact; 2. opportunity to learn issues/experiences of another generation; and 3. opportunity to share resources and create synergy to maximize limited resources.

D. Your Background/Statistical Information

The purpose of this section of the survey was to develop a profile of survey participants to broadly determine if responses were representative of the community.

Overall, most respondents were under the ages of 50 (27.0%), followed by the 50 to 59 age group (19.0%), the 65 to 74 age group (17.3%), and the 75 to 84 age group (16.5%). All age groups were represented.

Female respondents (62.2%) were almost double male respondents (35.8%). Regarding race, most respondents were white (93.0%) however, there was some representation from diverse populations including Native American Indian, Black, Hispanic, and Asian.

Just under two thirds of survey participants were married (64.3%), while 18.2% were widowed and 8.3% were divorced. Those respondents who indicated they lived alone accounted for 26.4% of survey participants, while 67.1% said they did not live alone.

In terms of easy access to transportation, most respondents (89.9%) indicated they have easy access, while 3.9% said that they did not.

A majority of respondents (81.7%) own property in the City of Plymouth while 10.1% indicated they rent, and 1.6% said they rent and own property.

Most survey participants (92.1%) considered themselves as “permanent” City of Plymouth residents. “Seasonal” was checked by 1.6% of the respondents.

Regarding length of time lived in the City of Plymouth lifetime residents and 11 to 19 years each accounted for 15.1% of survey participants, while residents of 20 to 29 years represented 12.8%, and 5 to 10 years were 11.9%.

Based on these statistics, coupled with the 24.6% overall response rate, it was the consensus that survey responses represented a good cross section of different ages, interests, and sectors throughout the City of Plymouth.

IV. CONCLUSION

Many of the community trends and survey results presented in this report will undoubtedly have an impact on future programs and services needed/desired by Plymouth residents. Aging baby boomers (born between 1946 to 1964) combined with increased life expectancies will continue producing a population with a growing percentage of Plymouth residents over age 65. More single person households, especially female, more people with declining or fixed incomes, less mobility, and a myriad of other trends will continue to require careful analysis and planning.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Sheboygan County is pleased to have assisted the City of Plymouth and its Committee on Aging in identifying the issues and needs of Plymouth’s aging population and looks forward to working with Plymouth in the future!