

Aging Your Way

2014



Toolkit



Senior Services
Promoting the well-being of older adults

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Aging Your Way

Toolkit

Introduction

Aging Your Way was conceived at Senior Services in 2009 by Denise Klein, Executive Director and Joanne Donohue, Vice President.

It began as an initiative that has morphed into a movement throughout King County, which is the Greater Seattle Area in Washington State.

Who are we?

Senior Services is a nonprofit that serves people age 60+, people with disabilities, and those who care for them. Our key programs include six Senior Centers, adult day health, food programs like Meals on Wheels and community dining, information and assistance phone lines and resource database, transportation, wellness, caregiver support and minor home repair. We have a broad revenue base that includes government, United Way, earned income, service fees and private donations.

Why did we start this initiative?

To better plan for our future programs, we wanted to learn what the next aging generation, Baby Boomers, will want and need to support them.

So we decided to ask them. We knew a simple survey wouldn't be enough, and we knew that asking the current seniors through our vast network of services wouldn't tell us what the future seniors would want.

So - what did we do?

This Community Transformation Toolkit will show you.

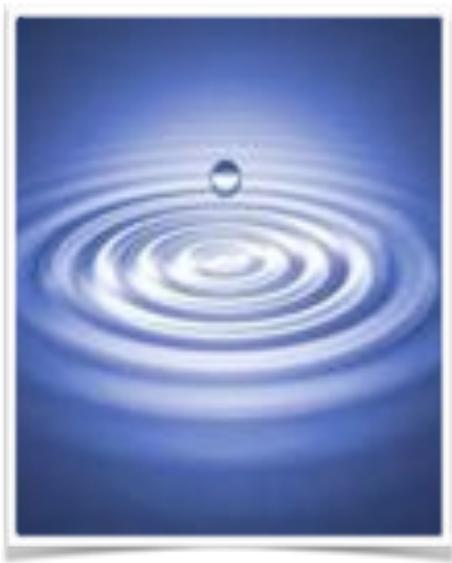
We love doing this work and we love that we've been asked to share how we did it so other communities can transform also!

Overview

“It started a ripple that is becoming a community movement”

In short, we asked Boomers to envision what their communities would need to look like to support them as they age. Then we supported them in projects to transform their visions to reality.

First we spoke with 100 stakeholders to get buy-in on our initiative.



We used classic community organizing techniques to engage the community at 12 neighborhood events that we called Gatherings. Each Gathering was attended by about 65 people, with 700 people attending a gathering over a year and a half.

We hired a professional facilitator for each Gathering to motivate the Boomers in envisioning the kind of community that would support them as they age. We asked them to brainstorm concrete projects that would help make their visions reality. We supported the action projects. Two years later we held a Summit attended by 250 people to further the work.

But by far the most important thing we did was to let the community lead. We didn't start with an agenda.

Letting the community lead with their agenda isn't necessarily in the playbook that we are familiar with as a service-providing organization.

We're more used to:

- Being accountable to government via contracts for services we are providing
- Thinking of our clients as a service population
- Telling elected officials about the needs in the community and asking for more government funding
- Hanging out with other people from the aging network
- Doing needs assessments, sending out surveys, collecting data, making graphs

We “just said no” to all of that. We wanted to shift to being more accountable to community than government; to leading from behind, and to successfully crossing silos and sectors, socio-economic, racial, cultural and identity “boundaries” to reach the folks in their own neighborhoods. You'll see very few statistics, and no pie charts. They talked. We listened. Then we supported them in getting what they envisioned their communities could look like.

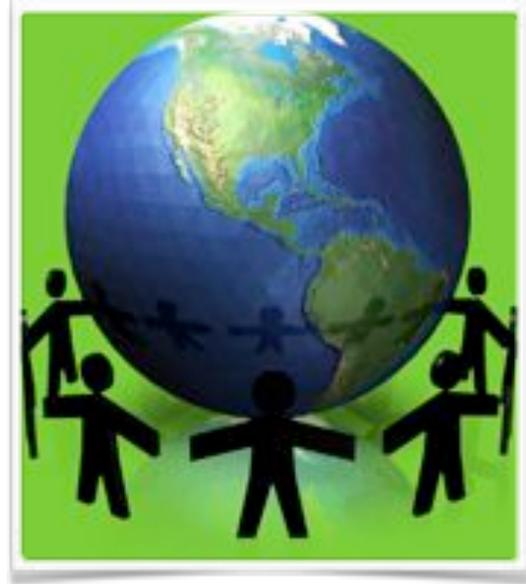
Step 1: Leave Your Office

“In order to do community organizing, you’ll need to go to the community”

Build your stakeholder base, contacts and allies. How did we do that? Over about six months, we met in person with people in the Greater Seattle area, most of whom we already knew.

We met with people from social services, transportation, healthcare, housing, churches, sustainability groups, walkability groups and higher education and many more. We talked with people who head up agencies that serve communities of color and the LGBT community. We asked them how to reach people from all socioeconomic, racial, cultural, genders and gender-identities that are in their community.

We told them we wanted to reach Boomer-aged folks to find out what they want their communities to look like to support them as they age. We needed to know what kinds of things will we, as Senior Services, need to gear up for to serve this next aging generation.



We asked:

- Has anything like this been done in your area before?
- How involved were previous efforts?
- Are there reports, studies or surveys we could review?
- How can we reach Boomers in your community?
- What challenges do you think we might encounter?
- Can you refer us to others who might be interested?
- Is this an initiative you could support?

The last one was the most important. Because we were asking if they could support us coming out to their communities and engaging people in conversation.

During those six months, two of us spoke with about 100 people. They were from government, business, nonprofits; some were general community members, whether working or not.

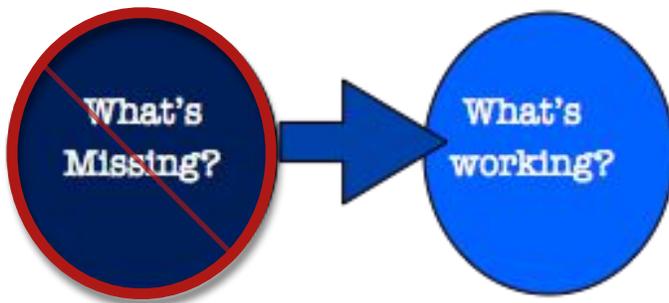
Step 2: Focus on Strengths & Aspirations

“We had to shift our thinking”

We did our homework; we reviewed the stats that were available about Boomers. We looked at studies about what Boomers were saying about their futures. We could assume Boomers in our area might think similarly. But we didn't want to front-load the conversation or overlay any preconceived agendas. We wanted to let them lead the conversation. Also, if the community gets the idea they are being led, they often lose interest and of course -- they won't own the result.

So we took the approach of simply being the convener. We arranged for space to bring Boomer-aged folks into the room right in the communities where they lived. And we focused on strengths and aspirations.

We wanted to spend most of the time talking about what people see as their ideal community rather than what's wrong with things now. We had to shift our thinking; from what's missing to what is working in our communities. If you've been to a city council meeting, you know that often people get their three minutes to complain and then end with, “What are YOU going to do about it?”



For many reasons, government resources are not going to fill the bill so we are going to have to leverage what we can from our communities. That doesn't work if all you see is needs. Rather than focusing on the half empty part of the glass - what people don't have or can't do - we decided to focus on the half full part. Plus, there are often so many needs; we let them decide where to start.

Focusing on what works is much more motivating and likely to generate action than focusing on what doesn't work or what's wrong. This is how you get community involvement in your initiative. You get them thinking about what they can do and what they can offer, not about what they don't like or don't want or what is wrong.

We learned there are incredible strengths in every community just waiting to be tapped.

This community development philosophy or approach is called “Asset Based Community Development” or ABCD. We started out using that term, but found it confused folks (too much jargon, or they thought of assets as only money.) We dropped all jargon during our Gatherings, because it was about what the community could dream up and do for themselves.

Step 3: Use the Right Facilitator

*“A good facilitator sets the stage and tone for the day
but doesn’t tell the group “what to think”.”*



The “strengths/aspirations” approach requires that the facilitator embody that philosophy. If the facilitator is looking for a “product” that is the natural end to the discussion, it won’t work. Because, honestly, we had no idea what would come out of the gatherings (if anything.)

We hired a local facilitator and consultant whose life work is to inspire and motivate community to transform. His name is Jim Diers and he works domestically and internationally. Please visit:

www.neighborpower.org

If he’s not available, we recommend that you lead the facilitator through your “nonagenda agenda,” which means you’ll need to clarify that whatever the community comes up with is appropriate and the key is to get them to talk about what they can offer and what they care about making happen. A good facilitator sets the stage and tone for the day but doesn’t tell the group “what to think.”

For example, Jim began each evening with a motivational talk about what communities can do when they focus on strengths. He doesn’t speak in statistics, he tells stories, because people respond to stories. He explains why it’s counterproductive to label people by what they don’t have (unemployed, disabled, homeless). He gives several examples of what communities have accomplished. He shows lots of before and after photos and action shots, rather than a left brain-orientated, text-heavy PowerPoint. This gets the group thinking positively and inspires in them the confidence to believe that if other communities can make changes (large and small), they can do it, too.

Then he stands back and lets them envision what might be possible; what could their community look like? What’s within reach? What do YOU care about?

Step 4: Hold a Gathering

To hold a gathering, there are four components:



Step Four: Hold a Gathering

A. Community Organizing



Identify a geographic area to focus on first. For example, we worked throughout King County, which has about 2,000,000 people. We held 12 Gatherings throughout the County, with six in Seattle proper. We looked at the naturally occurring segments of the city, where neighborhoods break due to freeways, waterways, huge hills, etc. The first community we organized, Southeast Seattle, is known for being one of the nation's most diverse zip codes, 98118.

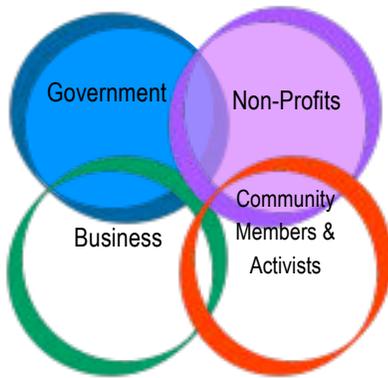
To begin, we went back to the original group of stakeholders we spoke with and told them we were ready to organize our first gathering. We asked if they could connect us¹ with Boomer-aged folks who either lived in, or worked for businesses, agencies, nonprofits or government programs that served SE Seattle. We emphasized that we wanted to be connected with people representing all silos and sectors, races, cultures, LGBTQ orientations, genders and faiths.

And when we say we crossed silos, we mean those circles that are defined by our industry or field. You know how it is – we hold conferences for our industry – like “the healthcare industry.” And when we go to another type of training, like a leadership course, we often find our friends in the healthcare silo and all sit together. We run in the same closed circles and yet most of the challenges that we face today require multi-sector and-multi disciplinary approaches.



To make sure we avoided this, we reached out to, and engaged Boomers from as many fields as we could: Transportation, healthcare, housing, churches, libraries, parks, urban planners, neighborhood activists, crime prevention, emergency preparedness, sustainability organizations, architects and the arts.

Why? Because community doesn't think in silos. Community thinks much more holistically.



We also wanted to make sure all sectors were represented, so at each of the 12 events and our Summit, we engaged people from each of the sectors that you're all familiar with: Government, nonprofits, business and general community members and activists.

This work is similar to original stakeholder organizing we did except this time we would be inviting people to actually show up at a Gathering. And as we organized, we asked the same questions as we did to the stakeholders, including two more, "What are the community-driven projects/programs you already have in your neighborhood? What cool stuff are you already doing?"

In general, we found it takes one person about 2 months at 20 hours a week to organize one gathering where you get 65-70 people to attend. You're assuring the participants are people who know why they're attending the gathering, and are not there just for the free meal or to "have a discussion about aging." They are there to envision, create and get involved.



Work with the willing – if a community isn't interested or you can't get connected – move on to another one that expressed interest in your initial stakeholder meetings.

To be most effective, use a contact management system like ACT or Salesforce. It is tough trying to manage all the contacts, numbers and emails addresses using Excel. We tried that. Plus with the specialized software, you can send email blasts for reminders and thank yous.



Cesar Chavez's answer to the question, "What is the secret to success in organizing?" was, "The only way I know how to organize people is to talk to one person, then talk to another person, then talk to another person...."

TIPS:

- ▶ **Investment of at least 2 months, 20 hours/week**
- ▶ **Work with the willing**
- ▶ **Consider using ACT or Sales Force**

Step Four: Hold a Gathering

B. Event Planning (logistics)²

1. *Secure a venue (hopefully donated) and a date*

We used community centers, senior centers, churches, even a museum. If you can get the venue for free³-all the better. Ask your stakeholders for great venues in the area. Things to look for⁴:

- Tables and chairs that are provided. Round tables that seat 6-8 are best; tables that seat 10 tend to be too large to hear across the table when the room gets loud.
- Enough for 60-70 people plus an area for the food tables and reception table
- Wheelchair accessibility
- Free parking
- Easy access on bus routes or walkable/bikeable
- Centrally located in that community

2. *Develop a flyer*

We went almost completely paperless.

- We emailed flyers to each contact and asked them to email them to their distribution lists. We were focusing on Boomers, remembers, not seniors.
- We also printed very few flyers (25-50?) to take with us when we presented at neighborhood associations or Rotaries, etc.
- We didn't post them at grocery stores, coffee shops or libraries, because we were looking for folks who we were reaching out to - folks who knew what they were getting into, rather than the general public who might come just for the free meal.
- We used the Sample Gathering Flyer⁵ (available in the appendix).

3. *Find a food vendor*

- We purchased wraps, sandwiches or pizzas in all cases, from a local vendor in the community so they could get some recognition (ask your stakeholders who they recommend.)
- We asked Starbucks⁶ to donate coffee, tea, cups, sugar, stir sticks, etc. They always did.
- We bought cookies and sometimes fruit at Costco to supplement the entree.

4. *Engage volunteers*

There were three of us planning and producing the majority of these 12 events, helped by 3-4 volunteers⁷ at each one.

- ☑ You'll need to provide set-up, break-down and clean-up at most community venues.
- ☑ While the meeting is progressing, you will need people to replenish food tables, put out cookies, and to distribute additional flip chart paper or markers.
- ☑ The volunteers need to be able to lift heavy tables⁸ and chairs and/or organize food buffet lines.

5. *Have a registration process*

It is best to have an electronic registration process and a number to call. You will want these folks' email and phone to send reminders or follow up, as well as to call in case of snow or other cancellation. It works better if people know they have been invited personally and fully expect to come to the meeting to work, rather than to "drop in." It is a full evening experience (and perhaps a year-long project involvement after that!) If they RSVP by registering themselves, they are more likely to show up. And...it's free!

6. *Secure their participation*

When they registered, we sent an automated email thank you response confirming the date, time, location and parking information. Then we contacted them three more times before the gathering:

- ☑ We sent them a "seedlings" (see below) about a week prior to the event.
- ☑ We emailed them 3-4 days prior to the event with directions, bus and parking information
- ☑ We phoned them 1-2 days prior⁹ to tell them to get there early to park, get through registration, find a good seat, get through the buffet line and to find friends and associates to chat with.

Seedlings

As we organized in an area, we asked about current programs and projects, especially community-driven ones. We asked, "What cool stuff is going on in your community?" so we could showcase those to get their creative juices flowing about other kinds of projects they could bring up at the Gathering. To help plant the seeds of creativity, we prepared a "Seedling" document¹⁰ specific to each neighborhood/community in which we held a Gathering. Examples are in the appendix. These were examples of actual projects that are usually community-driven such as park clean-ups, timebanks, villages, walkability enhancements, pea patches and community dining.



Step Four: Hold a Gathering

C. Agenda

The night of the event, have a registration/reception table where they will sign in, get their name tags and direct them to the food tables. We prepared name tags with a mail-merge ahead of time with their first name in a huge font and their last name in a smaller font – we left off all titles and organizations).

Have volunteers help with the food and beverages and set-up so you can focus on meeting people, connecting with those you contacted, making them feel welcome.

A sample agenda¹¹ (see appendix for timing) is described below.

I. Welcome and Ice Breaker

Recommend spending 5 minutes max on this. We asked our Executive Director¹² to open each meeting by briefly thanking everyone who helped us put on the evening and then lead us in an exercise¹³. The exercise was to help people personalize their aging process because it's often tough to get Boomers to think about it.

II. Inspire

Our Facilitator inspired them to understand that by identifying people's strengths, assets, and talents, they set the stage to do just about anything. If we label people by what they can't do, or we spend the evening talking about what's missing, we've created limits and we are less likely to move forward. He has many stories with slides of community-led transformations. He uses an exercise that asks people to identify their talents or skills (of any kind – doesn't have to be work related) to a partner and then share with the large group.

III. Dream

How did we get Boomers to engage? After all, we were asking them to talk about aging – not a juicy topic for most of them. We had to choose a question that would unleash the most creative visioning. We wanted to make it personal. The question that framed this all-important segment of the evening was, **“What would your community have to look like to support YOU as YOU age?”**

This leading question opened up possibilities. We didn't ask them what was missing or what the city hadn't delivered on. We didn't ask what they don't have or what they don't want, or what should be fixed. We

asked them to envision what they will want. By asking it this way, we got people to open up to anything: what features would their community have, what would their daily life be like in their ideal community – how would they get around, what would be available to them?

They had two sheets of flip chart paper and colored markers, and we encouraged them to draw if they wanted. Almost all of them did. They often drew community features and amenities.

Group Reports

Each round table shared with the large group what they had drawn (or listed). What features would their community embrace or add that would cause people to stay as they aged, to enjoy as they aged and to enjoy now?

This segment was fascinating. Some folks focused on physical changes: like adding a pea patch, a pocket park, green belts, adding lighting, cleaning up the vacant lot, adding art on the streets and in parks, adding bike paths, water fountains and bird baths. Others talked about connecting with their communities via neighborhood potlucks, phone trees, villages, World Dance Parties. They talked about transportation including neighborhood shuttles that would take people to bus stops, shopping, friends' houses, appointments. They dreamed about local economies like timebanks, tool-sharing, art studio-sharing. They drew in community bumping places and plazas, but usually left out the senior centers in favor of “community for all” types of programs and structures. Boomers are not excited about segregating seniors.



Motivate

Our Facilitator spent time motivating through more stories and slides of 5-6 community-led projects. The projects he showcased were done without zoning changes, city permits, grants or a “five year study.” They were community-driven changes that made neighborhoods safer, more walkable, more interesting, cohesive, connected and age-friendly (for all ages). He emphasized that visions are important; but, there are lots of city-planned and community-requested projects listed in many reports filed in drawers at every city hall. He asked the participants to go from vision to action.

Brainstorm

We asked the groups to go back to the drawing paper and brainstorm concrete projects that could make the dreams reality. They worked in their groups again to come up with real actions they could take in a short period of time, without city money or bulldozers.

Project Listing

We had individuals stand up and tell us about the project they came up with. This is where you get people engaged in actually making change. If you ask people to identify a concrete action they care about, you are more likely to get action. They came up with actions that would move their communities closer to the visions they had drawn earlier in the evening. As they raised their hands and explained the project, we listed one project per flip chart page. Sometimes they had to clarify what they meant by the project, but it was a quick list, with no judgment or development at this time.

Once everyone had a chance to tell about their project (usually about 8-10 projects were generated), we gave the respective flip chart page to the project creator and asked that person to stand and hold it up. We quickly reviewed all 8-10 projects again, this time adding, “If you like the idea of starting a timebank, go stand next to Raul. If you might like to work on designing a walking map for your area, go to Susan’s table. If you could get behind developing a graffiti clean-up team, go over to Jeane.” We decided against the “vote with your dot or post-it note” procedure, because the point wasn’t to come to a consensus, it was to get them to take a stand and start some action.

At this point, some people got a little nervous about commitment, and “had to leave early.” Those who stayed were clearly organized in action team groups, around a concrete project or idea they cared about. They met with their project action team¹⁴ hopefuls and exchanged phone numbers and emails. We collected those lists at the end of the evening.

Evaluation Forms and Closing

We had simple evaluation forms¹⁵ (see appendix). We thanked them and closed the evening.

Step Four: Hold a Gathering

D. Follow Up¹⁶

Within two to four business days of the Gathering, we:



Sent a thank you card¹⁷ to all who attended, including the names and contact information of the Action Team Leaders.

Sent each Action Team members the contact information for their team¹⁴, including the leader and told them we'd be happy to help organizing their first meeting time, date and location.

Within two-three weeks of the Gathering we:



Wrote up the notes for the evening including major themes (not Board Meeting-type notes, just a summary of the themes and action ideas). Wrote up the results of the evaluations for our own information.

Noted the demographics¹⁸ for the event (# Attendees, racial make-up, gender, Boomer-aged attendees). See appendix.

Received the completed graphic from the Graphic Illustrator we hired (see website).

Sent the graphic illustration and notes to each attendee and to all stakeholders' names we had collected for the geographic neighborhood whether they attended the Gathering or not.

Step Five: Action Team Support

We had limited staff to support the Action Teams. For one year, we had a full-time AmeriCorps Vista Volunteer who helped organize Gatherings and support Action Teams. We each took 2-3 Action Teams to begin with.

To support an Action Team, we offered mainly administrative support and resource connections. A key reason many groups initially don't get traction is they get hung up in administration. We helped with things like:

- ☑ figuring out how to find a mutually acceptable,
- ☑ regular meeting time and place; getting that information out before each meeting;
- ☑ taking notes and action steps at the meetings and sending those out;
- ☑ building a contact database for the team so emails are easy;
- ☑ researching similar projects in our area and connecting the team with those resources;
- ☑ suggesting small grants (\$500-\$1000) that can help with basic materials, logos and marketing that can make all the difference.

We were careful to lead from behind. It takes careful planning, thought and restraint to let the community lead their own project. One of the reasons it can be difficult to lead from behind is we are afraid of failure and we think it might fail if we don't have total control. For each of the projects that succeeded there were a couple of moments where it was teetering. It was our goal to work with the willing, which sometimes means you have to let projects go if the interest wanes and you find yourself doing most of the work! If these are going to be community-driven projects, ask who would like to take on each step, and even to get more people on the committee as soon as possible. Ask them "who else can we recruit to help us with this project?"

Step Six: Hold a Summit

We held a Summit to tell the larger community about Aging Your Way, to showcase the action teams and other local projects and to gain support to further the work. We also wanted to expose people at higher levels to this initiative: people who were directors of nonprofits, government officials (both elected and appointed), business owners, policymakers, heads of agencies, and other community leaders.



Two hundred and fifty people attended. We used the same community organizing techniques that we employed for all 12 Gatherings. We wanted to reach all industries, sectors and silos.

We hired the same facilitator, Jim Diers. It was a four-hour event like none other. There were no long PowerPoint presentations, no boring breakout sessions from which to “leave early.” We kept people moving, learning and engaged.

Here is how we did it:

When participants registered, they were asked for their company/organization, and we categorized them in our system based on that information (transportation, healthcare, housing, the arts, sustainability organizations, architects, etc.) We used this information when we planned their rotations at the event.

Agenda:

We asked a local elected official to welcome them. Then we gave a 10 minute overview of Aging Your Way and the 12 Gatherings. The first activity was to visit interactive presentations by 4 local community-driven projects for 5 minutes each; speed-dating style. There were 20 projects total, but each participant only got to rotate through 4. We assigned the rotations purposely to get people out of their comfort zones and silos. So people in the transportation field were not in a rotating group with their colleagues, nor did they visit any transportation-focused projects. In this way, we caused people to break out of the same old patterns and learn about something new in the community. There were a few complaints; that’s how we knew it worked!

After the rotations, our Facilitator gave them a 15 minute inspirational talk and slide show similar to the ones he had done at the Gatherings. He talked about community talents and gifts and about sharing them in doing big things in the community.

The last major activity was to workshop a challenge for one of the 20 projects. Each round table of 8-10 participants was joined by a rep from one of the projects. Again, we stacked the deck by not allowing all the healthcare or housing folks sit together. We also did not allow them to workshop a problem in their own field. For 20 minutes, the project rep received ideas on how to overcome a challenge or to replicate or expand the project. The participants brought all their skills and outside the box thinking to an issue not in their comfort zone.

We followed with group table reports by only select project reps. We did this to save time, showcase some of the more innovative or “solid” projects and to have only good speakers breeze through an organized 2-3 minute summary.

We closed with a call to action by asking any participant to take the microphone and take a stand for furthering community projects.

Many participants said it was the most innovative session they had ever attended.

It was a logistical feat, but it came off almost without a single problem due to our numerous volunteers: 20 professional (but unpaid) volunteer facilitators for 20 tables; project reps who had been coached to present their pet project in only 5 minutes in an interactive way without slides or lecturing; about 15 staff and community volunteers for registration and “herding” people through the speed-dating segment.

Step Seven: Grow the Movement

As a result of the Summit, each Action Team and our community organizing for almost three years, we met hundreds of people. The connections continue to be fruitful.



Because of Aging Your Way:

- ☑ We are viewed as a player with regards to the built environment and serve on the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board.
- ☑ Two new Timebanks have formed.
- ☑ World Dance Parties have been produced in three more communities plus at a major four-day event: NW Folklife Festival.
- ☑ A new Village is springing up.
- ☑ Existing projects are expanding: Peppi's Work Parties going beyond original boundaries to include nearby urban forests.
- ☑ We secured a grant to work on equitable transit orientated development.
- ☑ We engaged two groups in visioning what the Light Rail Transit Stations will look like. These groups voices are not always heard: The Korean Community and low income folks.

The beauty of it is, you can't stop community once they are empowered to transform. The Aging Your Way staff doesn't need to be involved in these efforts however in some cases we have helped get them off the ground or offered minimal services to brainstorm possibilities or potential challenges.



West Seattle Timebank



Learnings

It was clear that without step #1, we wouldn't have been able to as effectively engage people in certain neighborhoods and communities and wouldn't have had the contacts and support we needed to get started.

We learned that regardless of what we said, most people immediately heard that we wanted to speak with “seniors” or “frail elders” when we said we wanted to engage Boomers to talk about aging in community. We had to remind them constantly that we were interested in engaging the Boomer community (born 1946-1964), rather than the current elders from the Silent Generation and the Greatest Generation. Again and again, people offered to bring busloads of residents from retirement facilities to our meetings. They tried to refer us to people who teach “fall prevention at home” and lead Alzheimer’s support groups. Yet this was not the primary group we needed to hear from. We needed to hear from the next generation of aging adults, people who would be turning 65 in 2011 and beyond.

In talking with the stakeholders, we learned that they, along with Boomers in general, really don't like to talk about their own aging. It's easier to talk about a problem with care giving services for current seniors, the latest innovative program at the Senior Center, or that Medicare funding might be cut. We kept having to redirect them to the future of communities for all.

Major, overarching principles Boomers require of their communities:

- ☑ They want to be connected to their communities.
- ☑ Boomers want intergenerational and multicultural communities.
- ☑ They don't see themselves as a service population, but know they might not always be independent. They prefer the term interdependent – which is what a well-connected community is.
- ☑ They are looking for programs that are sustainable, rather than having funding cut or taken away.
- ☑ And they know that they must rely on technology to get things done.

There were seven common themes:

- ☑ Housing
- ☑ Healthcare and Fitness
- ☑ Transportation
- ☑ Lifelong Learning
- ☑ Local Economies
- ☑ Built Environment
- ☑ Arts and Entertainment



This wonderful poster was done by the graphic illustrator we hired to capture the 7 themes and 5 underlying principles.

We also learned that it's tough to get press about this topic. If it's called "livable communities," it gets a little more notice, but the difference with our work is that it's community driven and produces so much more than the typical "livable community project" result.

But the biggest thing we learned is that if you ask and if you let them, the community will come up with their future.

Summary and Contacts

*Work with the willing
Lead from behind
Focus on strengths and aspirations
Leave the office & work across silos and sectors*

Aging Your Way

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Appendix

1. [AYW Sample Organizing Email](#)
2. [AYW Gathering Checklist](#)
3. [AYW Gathering Costs](#)
4. [AYW Facility Gathering Checklist](#)
5. [AYW Gathering Flyer](#)
6. [AYW Starbucks Sample Letter](#)
7. [AYW Volunteer Roles for Gatherings](#)
8. [AYW Reception Table Signs](#)
9. [AYW Reminder Calls Script](#)
10. [AYW Seedling Sample](#)
11. [AYW Community Gathering Agenda](#)
12. [AYW Opening Comments by Executive Director](#)
13. [AYW Opening Exercise - Gatherings](#)
14. [AYW Action Team Sign Up](#)
15. [AYW Gathering Evaluation Form](#)
16. [AYW Post Gathering Checklist](#)
17. [AYW Thank You Note](#)
18. [AYW Outcomes for Gatherings](#)

Appendix

Our Action Teams

1. *Peppi's Park* (www.facebook.com/FriendsOfPeppisWoods)

This is the view from Peppi's Park.

At one of our Gatherings, a woman named Liz mentioned a park in her neighborhood called Peppi's – the forest was overgrown with invasive plants, the trails were difficult to navigate and most of the time the park wasn't being used for any legal activities.

There were two other people at the Gathering who got excited about Liz's idea to take back the woods from the invasive plants and unwanted human activities. So like many good ideas in Seattle, this one got incubated at a local Starbucks:

- ¥ The gifts that each of the women brought
- ¥ Role my organization played

This was the trail before the work parties began

and this is how it looks now. We have had students from various universities and a group from Microsoft and parents and children from the school.

You've heard that expression: "Trouble comes in Threes"

This is the man who told us how to work with parks that made it possible to get plants, tools, the trail established and piles removed

How does this project relate to the Aging your Way Initiative? Remember our 7 themes and the 5 underlying principles?

- ¥ built environment
- ¥ community connections
- ¥ health (working on it, plus walking through it)
- ¥ intergenerational
- ¥ multi cultural
- ¥ Builds on assets in the community
- ¥ Involves nonprofit, community and government sectors
- ¥ Crosses school, neighborhood, parks and aging silos

2. *Timebanking*

Another great project that developed out of our initiative is Timebanking.

A timebank is based on a simple, yet powerful concept: Everybody has needs and everybody has something to offer. Timebanks expand circles of family, friends and neighbors who can help each other. The best way to understand how it works is to share my personal experience with it.

- ▶ I like to sail, so I took a timebank member out on Puget Sound.
- ▶ I in turn had my Pembroke Welsh Corgi looked after while I was visiting my sister in Pittsburgh by another member
- ▶ Another member helped me tackle the English ivy that had taken over my side yard and was climbing up my cherry tree.
- ▶ I had a wonderful garden consult provided by another.
- ▶ I looked after another member's dog while she and her husband went to a wedding in Vancouver, British Columbia

One of the ways SWEL recruits new members and encourages exchanges amongst existing members is to show case what members are offering through the timebank-here James is showing other members how he bakes bread.

Open source software called Community Weaver facilitates the exchanges, so it eliminates the need for an intermediary.

the community uses its gifts to set it up and sustain it (can credit volunteer hours, etc.)

Inspired by SWEL Timebank, there are two more launching in the Summer.

My organization's role with the timebanks is to provide what I call back office support

This project fires on many of the themes and principles we've been talking about this morning:

- ¥ Strengths
- ¥ Local economy
- ¥ Sustainability
- ¥ intergenerational,
- ¥ Multicultural
- ¥ interdependence
- ¥ technology supported

3. *World Dance Parties* (www.worlddancepartyseattle.org)

At one Gathering, people told us that for them to feel supported and to *love* living in their communities, they wanted to know their neighbors better and to be connected to them.

One way to do that is to share a meal and learn something new together.

They had an idea that if they held a World Dance Party, neighbors could teach each other the dances from their countries of origin and share potluck dishes from their countries.

The 2-3 people at the table that night told their friends about it.

Someone knew a friend who taught Salsa. Someone else knew a DJ. Someone volunteered to decorate. Someone volunteered to supervise clean up....and so on, until the first one was held...

It's completely community driven.

¥ 200 people from the community

¥ Potluck dishes that never ran out all night

¥ Every half hour, we learned a new kind of dance – West African, Salsa, hip hop, Jewish, Swing, line dancing

¥ No agenda, no message, no fundraising.

¥ In fact, our flyers say: Show up. Get down.

¥ Now, people recognize their neighbors. They see each other at the store and join in the planning for these events.

We've already help 10 World Dance Parties as of February 2014. Watch our [website](#) for the next one in April 2014.

To get this type of project off the ground, it can take an organization like Senior Services to help hold it together in the beginning. We were the fiscal sponsor, providing some staffing support, established a model for working and laid out some volunteer roles. But we always keep in mind that we are leading from behind. If the community wants it, we can help...and then we let go....

Who would have thought a dance party could do so much? Well....it's called "Community Connection", which is what a great community is all about.. It also clearly fits the Boomer's vision for having arts and entertainment in community, healthy living and the multi-generational and multi-cultural aspects.

This community is changing their world one dance party at a time.

4. *Learning NW* (www.learningnw.com)

A slightly different kind of project is "Learning NW". It's a one-stop website with a searchable database so you can find any kind of lifelong learning opportunity that is available in the Puget Sound region. Consider it "the Craigslist" of lifelong learning.

It all started at one of our Gatherings, where a man who works for the Seattle Public Library came up with the idea. But a well-run database could take a lot of money to build, maintain, troubleshoot and market. Senior Services has stepped up to the plate to develop a basic working beta model. The action team is looking for more partners and sponsors right now.

This community team:

- ¥ Established a Steering Committee
- ¥ Developed a logo and branding
- ¥ Surveyed Educational Providers about their desired functionality
- ¥ Developed flyers and postcards for future marketing
- ¥ Developed a website shell
- ¥ We are looking for an organization that can take over this project, develop, host, monitor and market it! Please see our sandbox at www.learningnw.com.

This project definitely covers the Boomers vision of a community that offers lifelong learning opportunities!

