Howes House Building Committee Focus Group Insights Oct, 2022

"Listening today to plan for our future"



Focus Group Committee Members

Bernadette Lyons, Chair
Cindy Trish, HAMV
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Beth Kramer

What we set out to do

Objectives of research

- Solicit community input from 55+ Older Adults to directionally inform the Howes House redesign
- Employ a methodology that is inclusive of all age groups 55+, representative of each of the Up Island towns, representative of COA usage, and of gender and employment status
- Include the perspectives of island-wide agencies that serve Older Adults
- Explore “blue-sky” thinking of what a center for Older Adults could be and how to maximize its utility and value for all
- Create recommendations to keep the community voice active in the redesign process

How We Made This Happen

Getting Started

- ✓ Focus group committee expanded to include tri-town representation and research expertise (provided by Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard)
- ✓ Methodology was selected and approved by the Howes House Building Committee

Recruitment

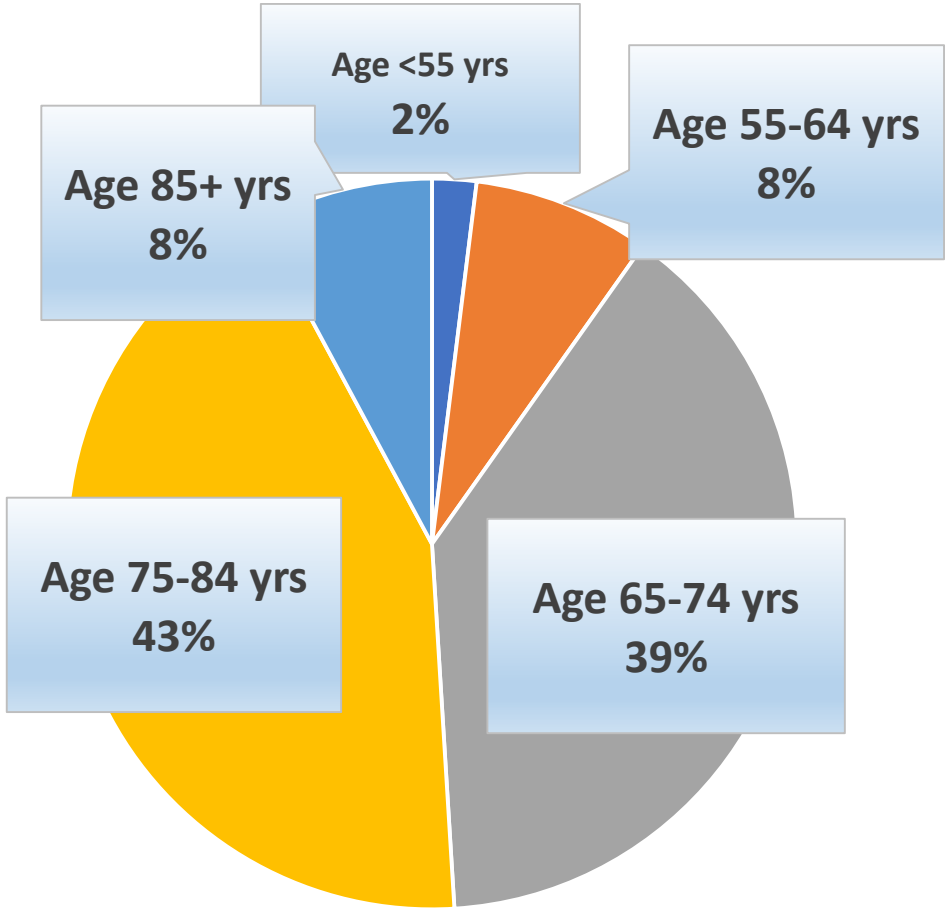
- ✓ Local media was employed to raise awareness and recruit for groups
- ✓ Committee members networked across three towns to ensure diversity
- ✓ Contacted service providers for agency perspectives

Execution

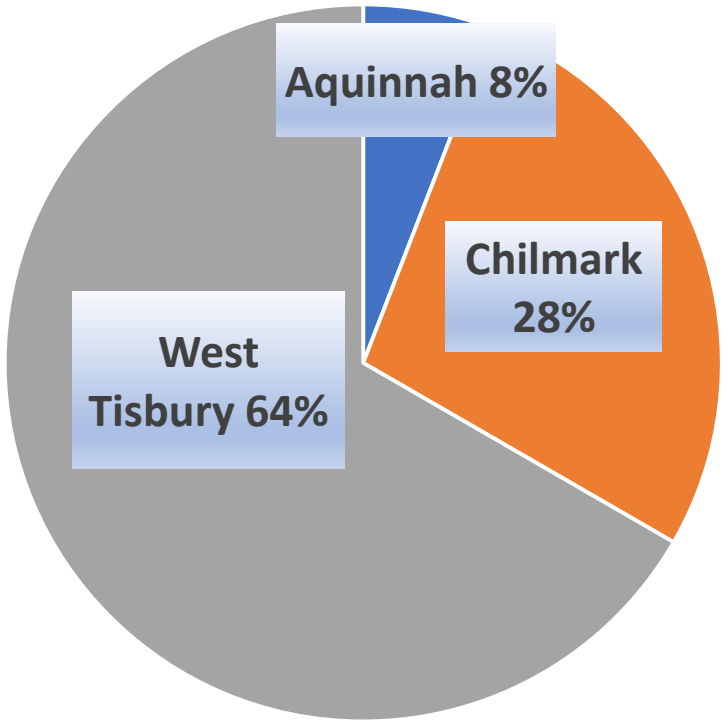
- ✓ Six 90 minute focus groups, (4 in person, 2 virtually) week of Oct. 3, 2022
- ✓ Five focus groups comprised of community members; one focus group for agencies and individuals providing services to seniors
- ✓ 59 participants in total

HEALTHY AGING MARTHA'S VINEYARD
Making Martha's Vineyard an Aging-Friendly Island

Participants by Age and Town

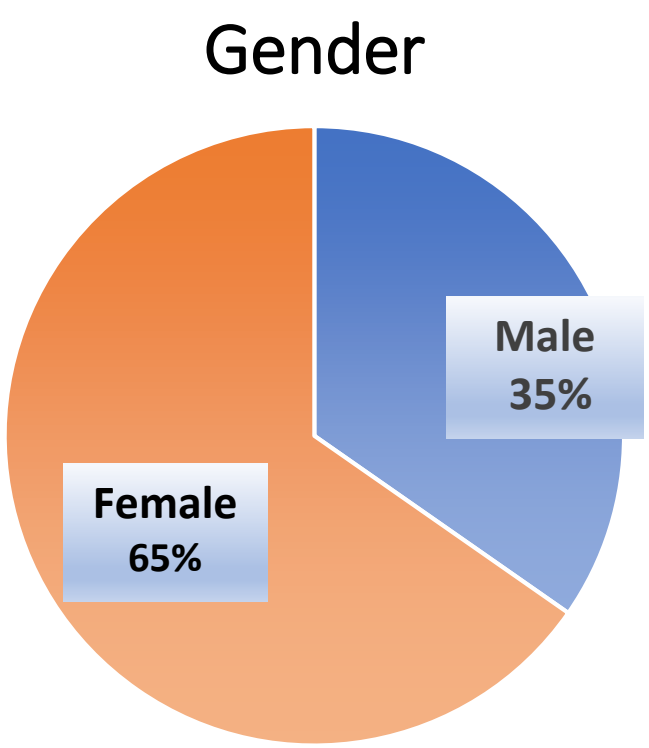


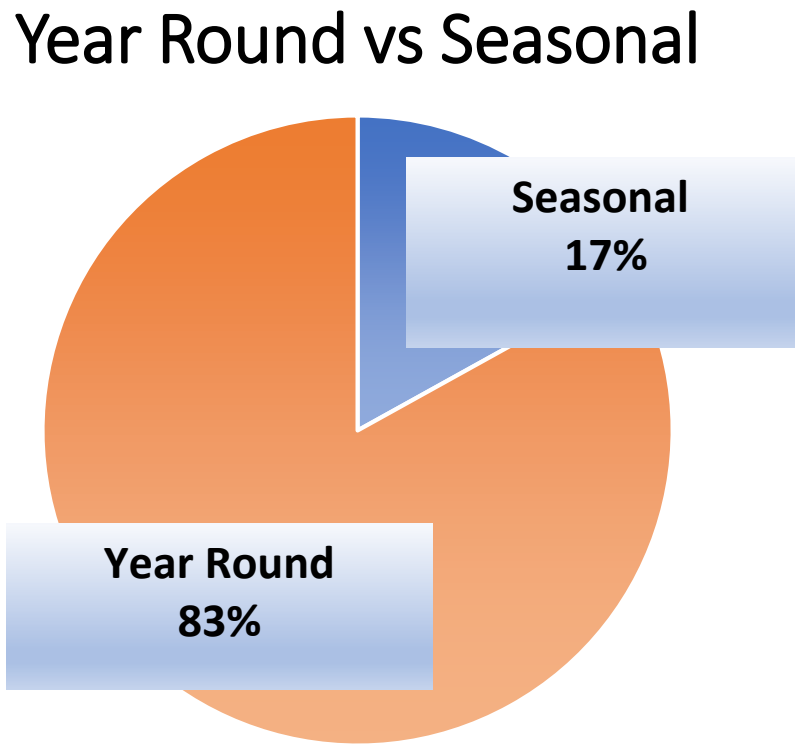
Age Cohorts



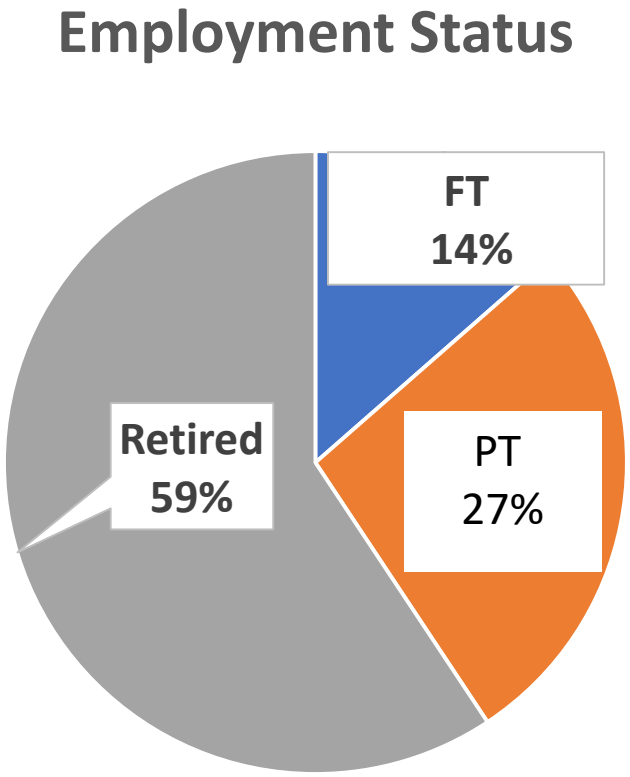
Representation by Town

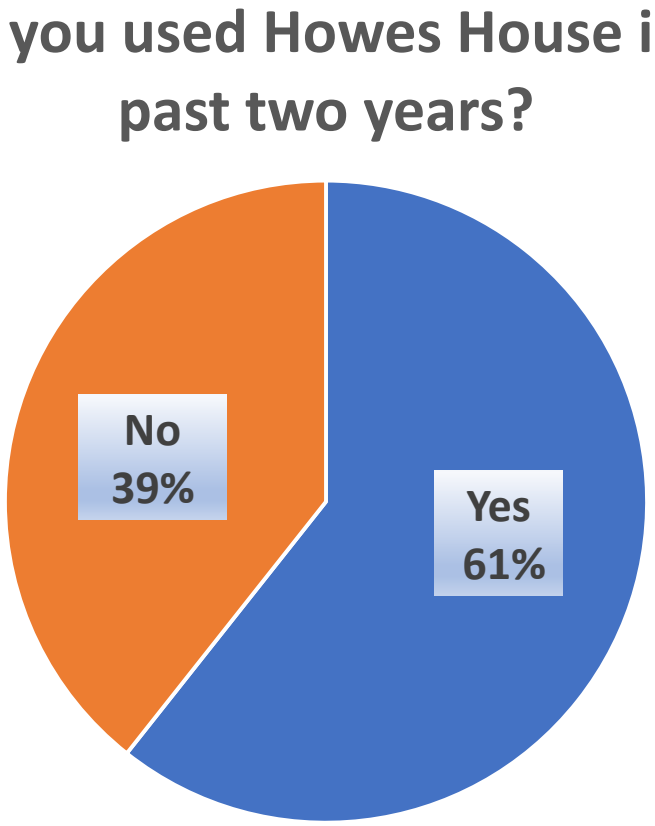
Participants by Gender and Year-Round vs Seasonal





Employment Status, Usage of Howes House





Our exploration focused on a variety of relevant topics

Howes House Today

Awareness, perception, usage

Looking ahead

Planning for the aging journey

Current Island Service Landscape

Awareness, perception, usage

Imagine

Design from the ground up a physical gathering place for Older Adults

Current perceptions of Howes House share some common themes

Provider of Older Adult Services

Part of a campus

A Town Resource

Provider of Older Adult Services
Serving 3 Up Island Towns

Town of Aquinnah
MASSACHUSETTS

Town of Chilmark
Massachusetts

WEST TISBURY, MASS
INCORPORATED APR. 28, 1892
1669

Strengths of the Up Island Council on Aging (UICOA)

- Staff is welcoming
- Deep understanding of existing clientele
- Valued Resource (focused by those 80+)

- Information available in person as well as over phone
- Provides opportunity for socialization
- Offer support groups (e.g., Parkinson's Support Group)

- Lends medical equipment
- Legal/Health insurance/tax expertise
- Provide access to Public Health Nurse

- Food and fuel assistance distribution
- Assistance in aging journey (Agency perspective)

Challenges

- Lack of awareness of resources and services
- Perception that services are for only the very old or infirm
- Hours of operation limit access
- Perception that it is for West Tisbury residents only – limited outreach to the other up island towns

Howes House: A town resource

What Howes House Provides

- Meeting rooms
- Space for nonprofits to meet
- Space for town committees to meet
- Exercise space
- Multipurpose room for activities
- Dining
- Bathrooms
- Space for groups to meet (knitting, painting)
- Space for bridge, mah-jongg games

Challenges with current building

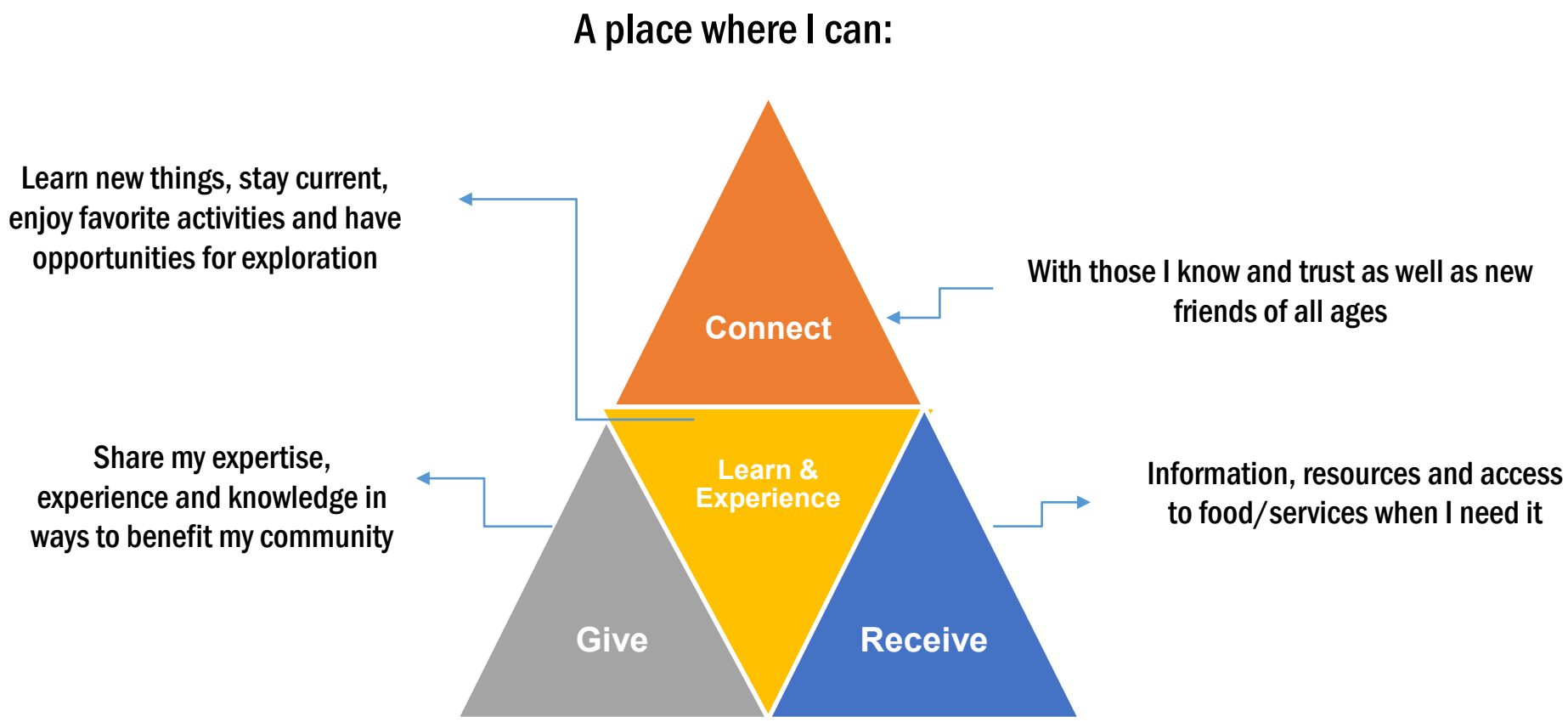
- Needs improved access
- Not ADA compatible
- Needs improved ventilation
- Desk too far from entrance
- Needs working elevator
- Needs improved lighting
- Not energy efficient
- Needs safer traffic flow

Howes House: Part of a campus

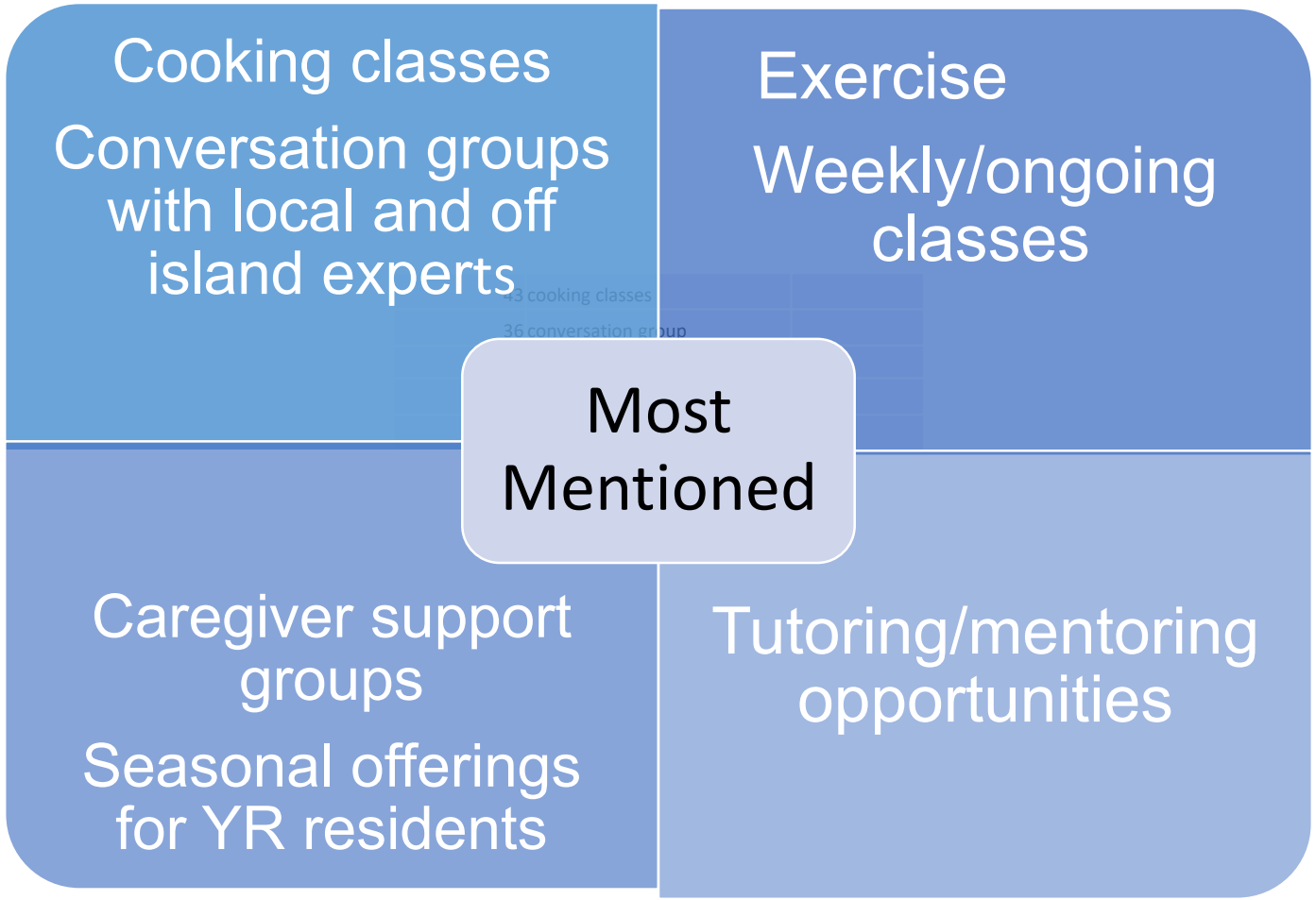
- The Howes House is located in the Town's historic district
- Howes House is surrounded by an art gallery, general store, public library, restaurant, church, gas station, Grange, town hall
- Located on a main transportation route and a highly trafficked area
- Potential for collaboration with the West Tisbury Free Public Library for programs and activities

Older Adults Want a Physical Gathering Place that is …

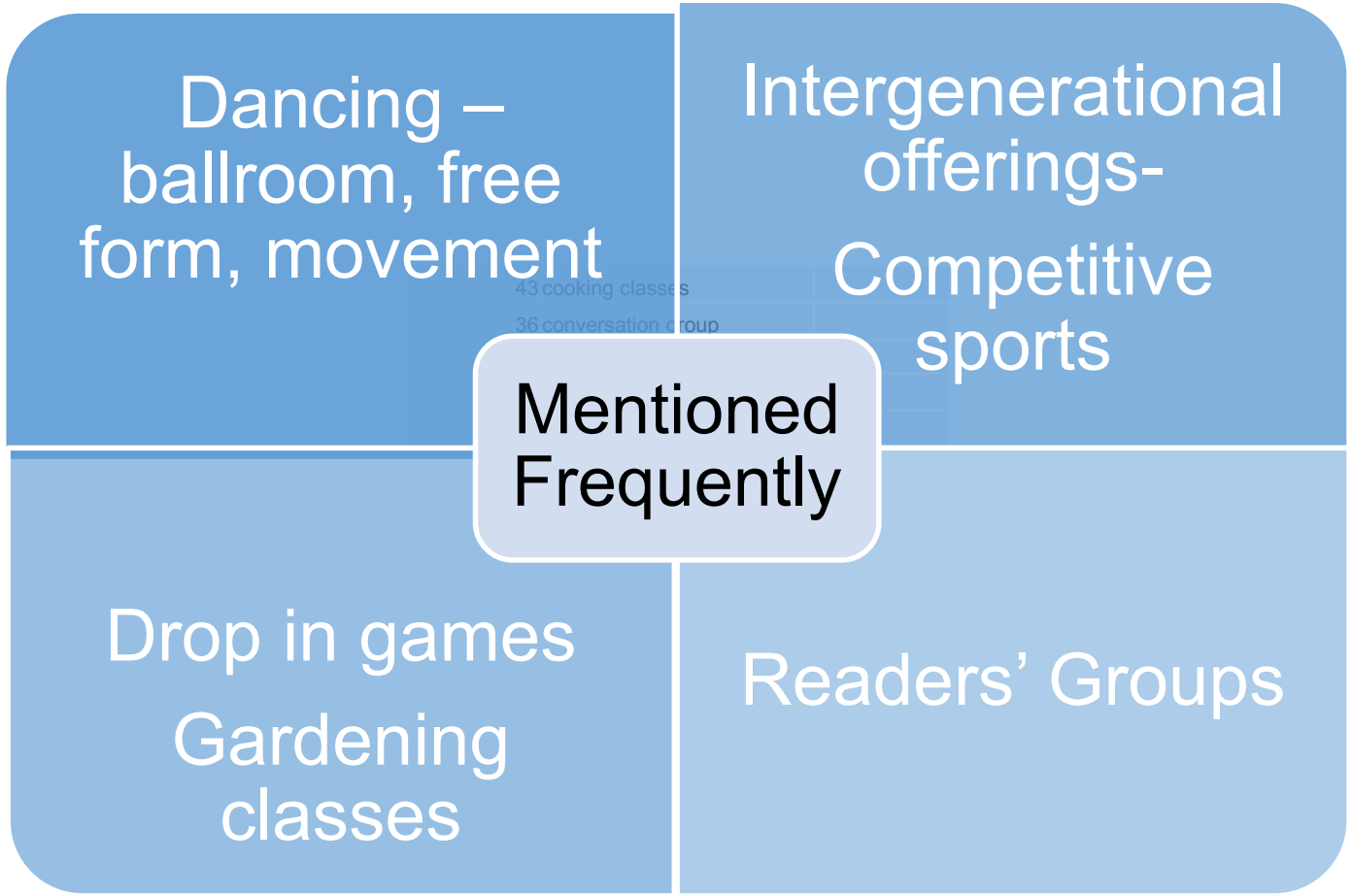
A place where I can:



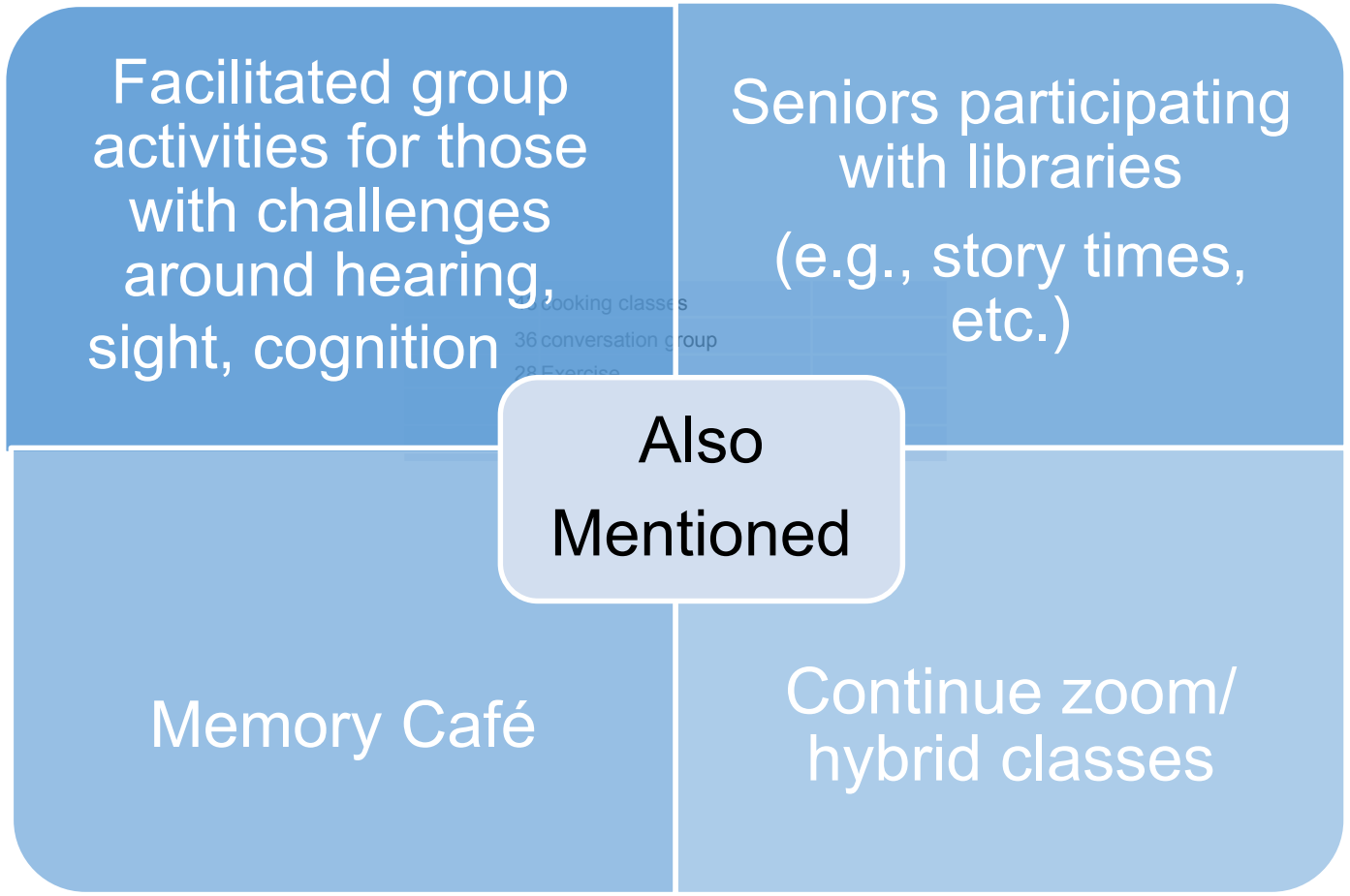
A wish list of activities that are…
a reflection of the desire to connect



A wish list of activities to…
enrich one's quality of life



A wish list of Activities that offer…
opportunities for social interaction



A wish list of events

Social gatherings with food

Talks with Local Experts

Music/Singing

Current event talks

Lectures on topics of interest

Skill development workshops

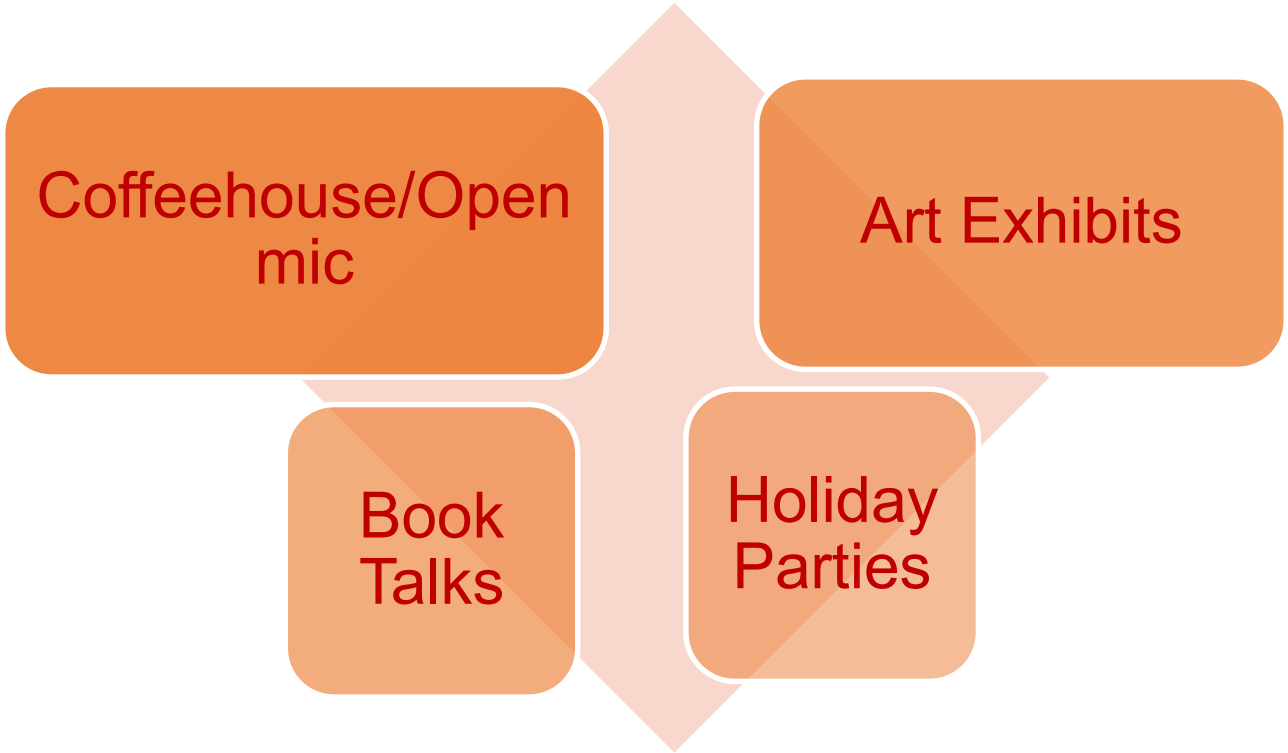
Events offered at different times of the day

Intergenerational events

Trips off island for Cultural Programs

Field trips on island

A wish list of events (cont.)



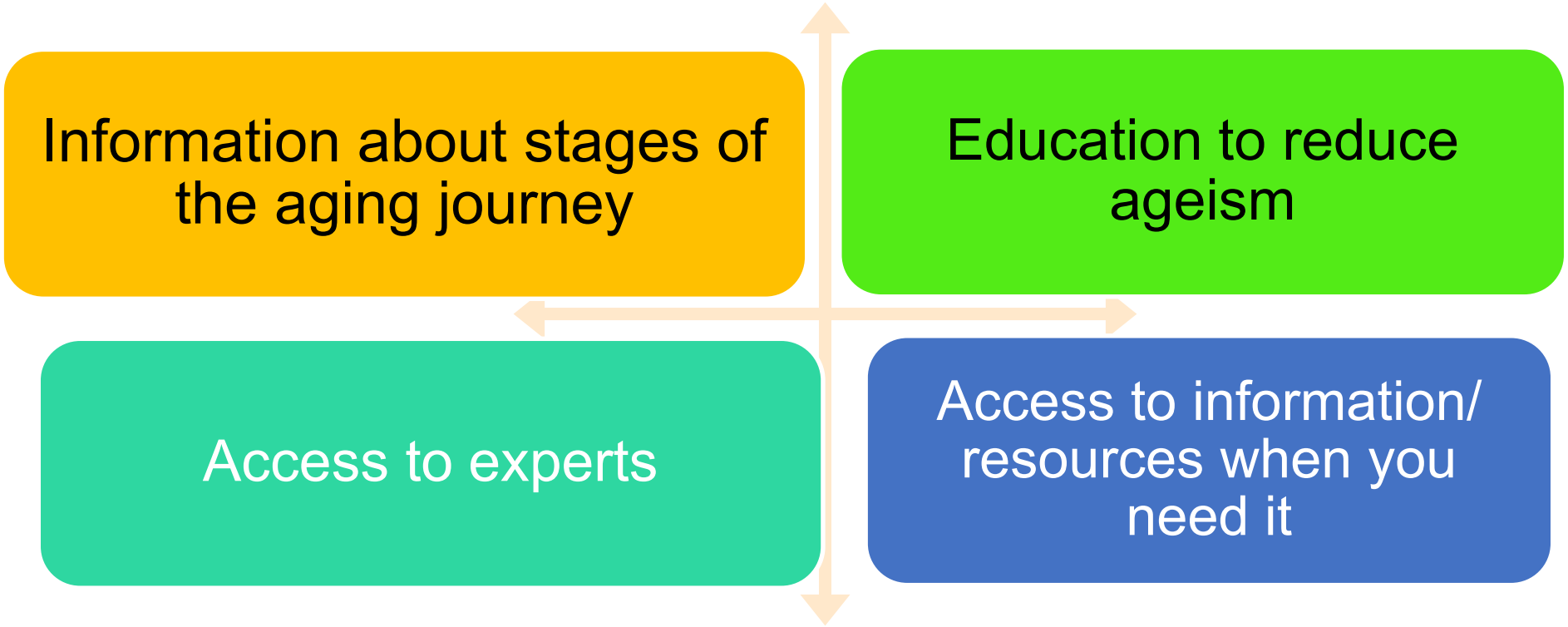
A wish list of events (cont.)



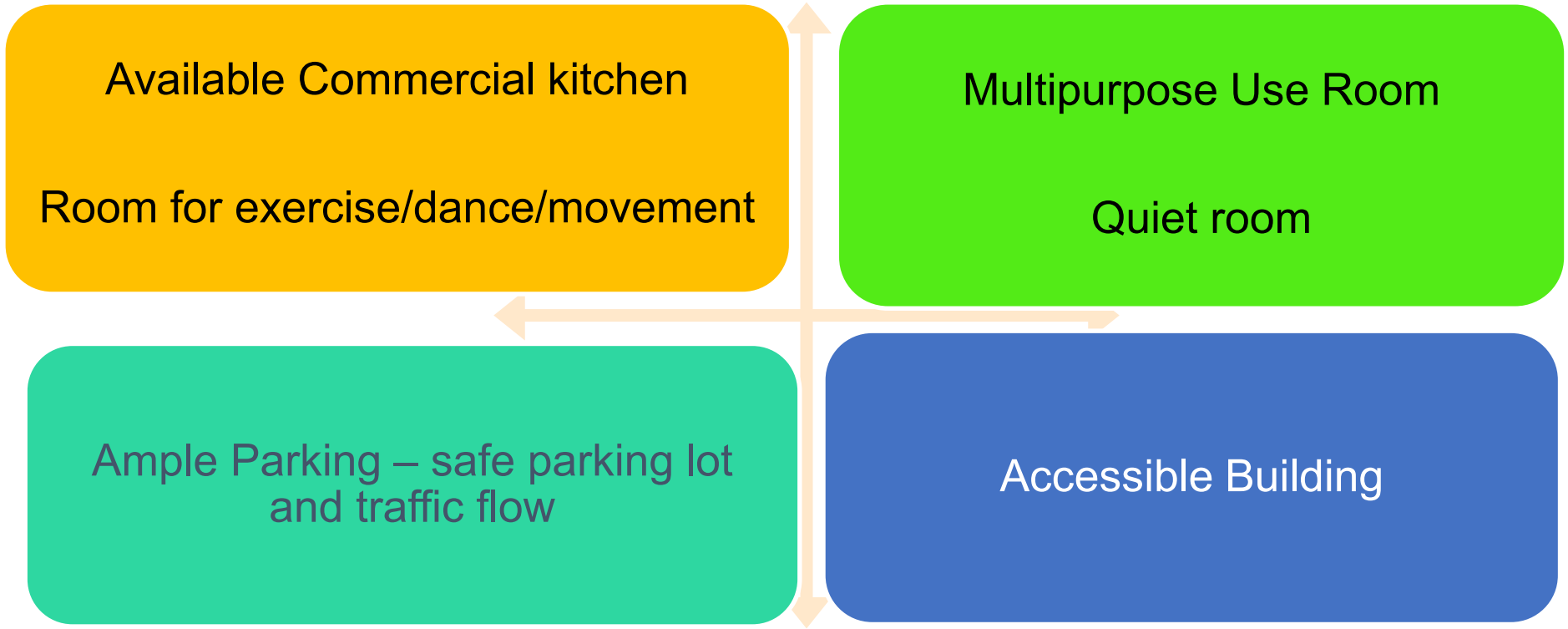
What it needs to offer: Resources, Programmatic



What it needs to offer: Resources, Programmatic (cont.)



What it needs to offer: Resources, Building (cont.)



Agencies Weigh In on needs island wide

- A place to educate the community about the aging process – destigmatize
- Demonstrate positive images of aging
- Programs about the aging journey
- Importance of intergenerational opportunities
- Importance of exercise
- Nutrition education
- Access to food
- Welcoming and relevant activities/resources across the age spectrum (60+)
- Providing volunteer/mentoring opportunities
- Transportation assistance
- Technical assistance (for electronics)
- Solutions for elder housing
- Need for access to caregivers

So the building must…..

Meet Basic Expectations

- ADA compliant
- Every room accessible to all
- Private/public places
- State of the art technology
- Comfortable, accessible furniture
- Energy efficient
- Warm/natural lighting
- Appropriate acoustics for a range of hearing
- soundproofing

Create a feeling of

- Welcoming
- Inviting
- Safety
- Relevance
- Lively energy
- Inclusivity across older adult age spectrum
- Indoor/outdoor feel

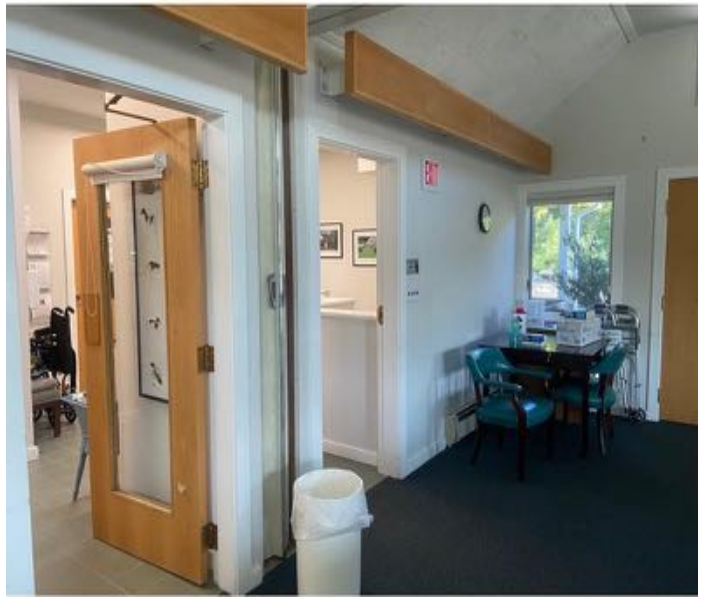
Think Big

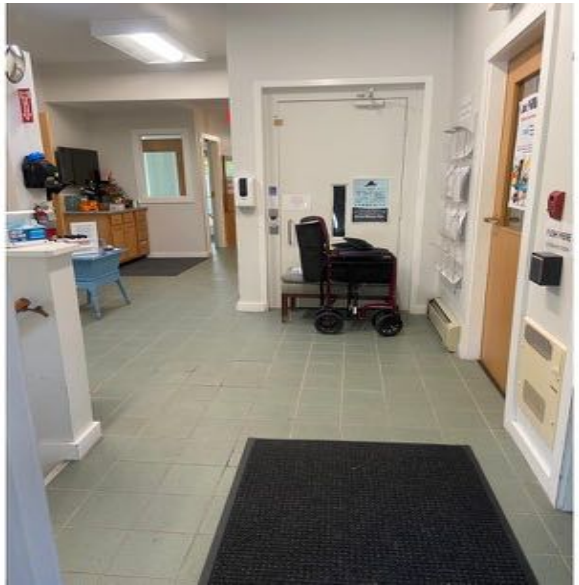
- Exercise room with variety of equipment
- Dance floor
- Commercial kitchen
- Café/Pub
- Gardens with raised beds
- Fireplace
- Pool table/ping pong table
- Coffee bar

Desired Entrance Characteristics

What
Exists Today







It Could Look Like:

- Level entrance – does not require stairs or ramp
- Wide, automatic doors
- Open, airy reception area
- Natural light
- Community bulletin board
- Clear signage inside and out
- Seating area
- Information kiosk
- Staff visible
- Inviting and welcoming
  - Artwork, colors, plants
- Looks open from the outside when it is

Desired Characteristics of Staff Offices





What Exists Today

<u>It Could Look Like:</u>

- Flexible arrangement
- Adequate Workspace
- Accessible
- Natural lighting
- Confidential
- Soundproofing
- Private entrance
- Comfortable, accessible furniture
- Securable storage space
- Modern technology

Desired Kitchen Characteristics



What Exists Today

<u>It Could Look Like:</u>

- Commercial kitchen available to all
- Commercial flooring
- Plenty of storage
- Computer
- Accessible
- Counterspace for 8-12 people
- 6 burner stove
- Two ovens
- Air conditioning
- Ample refrigeration
- Commercial dishwasher
- Near dining room
- On site cook/chef
- Food from scratch

Desired Café/Game Room Characteristics

It Could Look Like:

- Bar with coffee/tea/smoothies
- Fireplace
- Fresh snacks/food available
- Small tables – variety of heights
- Comfy chairs
- Games, books, shelves
- Lots of color
- Natural light
- Welcoming
- Music (sound and entertainment system)
- Beer tap



What Exists Today

Desired Characteristics -Exercise/Movement Room



What Exists Today

<u>It Could Look and Feel Like:</u>

- Wood “springy” Floor
- Warm Lighting and natural light
- Neutral colors
- Lots of storage
- Great acoustics
- Moveable furniture
- Windows/ventilation
- High ceiling
- Soundproof
- Accessible
- Age friendly exercise equipment

Desired Outdoor space characteristics



What It Looks Like Today

<u>It Could Look Like:</u>

- Gardens
- Raised beds
- Greenhouse
- Head gardener in place
- Collaborate with IGI
- Critter proof
- Irrigation
- Accessible from inside/outside building
- Generator

Desired Parking area characteristics



What It Looks Like Today

It Could Look Like:

- A safe place
- Ample parking, including handicap parking
- Accessible
- Level entrance
- Lighting
- Gardens
- Landscaping
- Move driveway away from curve
- Improved traffic pattern



Summary

Howes House Today

Provider of older adult services, part of a campus, a town resource

Looking ahead

A place to educate the community about destigmatizing aging

Exploring solutions for elder housing

Supports to age in place

Current Island Service Landscape

Lack of caregivers

Transportation challenges

Lack of intergenerational opportunities

Imagine

A place where seniors can connect, give, receive, learn and experience

The Time is now!

The need has grown

- Faster than forecasted growth of Older Adult population on the island; now with more than 1 in 3 over the age of 60
- Our Older Adult population is aging with 25% of Older Adults forecasted to be 85+ by 2030
- Older Adults want to remain on the island, age-in-place, and will need support to do so

Optimizing our treasured asset

- Acting on our responsibility to preserve, protect, and use this building most effectively
- Creating inclusive opportunities and access to needed resources
- Optimizing the utilization of Howes House

In conclusion….

- Enormous opportunity for Howes House to provide more activities, services, and resources for the Up Island community
- Future demands on the UICOA for services and supports will only keep growing - need a facility and the resources to meet these demands
- The renovation of Howes House provides a breakthrough opportunity to increase inclusivity and eliminate barriers, biases, and misconceptions

"Listening today to plan for our future"

Thank you to the Staff at the Howes House



Participants in the Focus Groups expressed their deep appreciation for the assistance and support that the Staff of the Howes House provide

The Committee thanks the staff for their hospitality and assistance during these focus groups sessions