Raymore: Becoming a Community for All Ages

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One of the outcomes of the Reimagine Raymore meetings was a more focused meeting about how to handle an aging population. So what does it mean to be a Community for All Ages? Julie MacLachlan from the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) was on hand in Raymore last Thursday evening to answer that question. It means accounting for the needs and interests of all age groups and abilities will create just that, cities where it's a great place to grow up and to grow old.

First it means recognizing that approximately 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 every day in America. Currently in Cass County between 10-15% of the population is over 65. This number is expected to increase dramatically in the next 15 years.

Second is recognizing what retirement looks like for baby boomers. As a whole they are interested in maintaining an active lifestyle including some form of work, exercising, and transportation alternatives. They often have the same amenities desires as millennials such as affordable housing, low-maintenance housing, walkability, mixed use developments, transportation options, and social engagement.

MARC has created a “toolkit for cities” that are looking to meet these needs. It included a checklist of the following six items: public outdoor spaces and buildings; housing and commercial development; transportation and mobility; social inclusion, communication and participation; civic participation and employment; and community and health services.

There is also a recognition program for this initiative that includes areas of awareness, assessment, and implementation.

After the official presentation the meeting was opened up to the group of more than 20 attendees for discussion and questions.

Jim Cadoret also took a moment to speak to the group about what the City Staff needs from the community to plan for the future. “We all know this is something we really need to start planning for. We’ve been thinking about this for the past year, but it is becoming more and more prevalent to all of us. We as a city really need to start looking at everything that we do through an aging lens to make sure we are meeting the needs of all of our residents.”

The question that was put before the group was, “What can Raymore do better to prepare for the future of an aging population?” Responses included: transportation (low cost & networked with other services); more office space for services; senior center; adequate ADA parking; municipal point of contact for questions; support system for grandparents who are caring for their grandkids; town center; encourage universal design from builders in the area; more flexible housing options; cultural shift of the city’s thinking about 55+; facility that will keep minds and bodies active; better ADA accessibility at parks.

The meeting was a great success in that it evoked great discussion and ideas that city staff can take into consideration as it moves forward with city planning and development. More meetings like this are planned for citizens to have more input on the direction they would like to see their city take as Raymore moves forward.