

**March, 2009**

# **REPORT ON THE MILL WOODS SENIORS CENTRE**

## **I. SENIORS DEMOGRAPHICS IN MILL WOODS**

Currently, the population of Edmonton's seniors aged 55 years and older is growing rapidly. Today, two out of ten residents are seniors (aged 55 years and older), however by 2041, about three out of ten Edmontonians will be a senior.

As noted on the attached Seniors Population Projection maps, the number of seniors in Mill Woods is increasing faster than any other area of Edmonton. By 2016, the number of seniors will be 20123, the largest number seniors of any area the city.

The 2008 municipal census statistics for Edmonton indicate that there are 13,055 seniors aged 55 years and older.

The Mill Woods Mapping and Beyond Committee have been meeting since April 2006 to develop maps of Mill Woods which correlate services and population information. A Seniors Map was recently completed and presented at a Community Forum on March 3, 2009. At that meeting, interest was expressed to increase collaboration between seniors groups, increase seniors services and establish a Mill Woods Seniors Council.

## **II. CURRENT STATUS OF MILL WOODS SENIOR CENTRE**

### **Background**

The Mill Woods Seniors Centre was established in September 2007 as a result of the Mill Woods Seniors Connect Project, a New Horizon's project co-sponsored by the Mill Woods Presidents Council and the City of Edmonton Community Services Department. Currently, the Seniors Centre is located at the Mill Woods Recreation Centre and operates as a program of the Mill Woods Presidents Council. The Senior Centre had 150 members, after their first year of operation, and provides a variety of social and recreation programs for seniors living in Mill Woods and the Meadows.

### **Facility**

The Mill Woods Seniors Centre occupies 1432 square feet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Mill Woods Recreation Centre (7207- 28 Ave.). The City of Edmonton provides free space to the Seniors Centre as a 3-year pilot project between the City and the Mill Woods Presidents Council. The Seniors Centre is in the second year of the lease agreement.

In the original lease agreement, the Seniors Centre was provided with exclusive full-time use of one-third of the space, and shared space of two-thirds of the space. The Seniors Centre operates in all three adjacent rooms from Monday to Friday from 9am – 3pm, and was provided with alternative space during the summer to enable the Rec Centre to use the space for summer programs. In September 2008, the Seniors Centre was provided with full-time exclusive use of all three rooms, The Seniors Centre also has access to a kitchen/ storage area and an office space within Mill Woods Recreation Centre.

### **Funding**

The Seniors Centre currently operates as a program under the umbrella of Mill Woods Presidents' Council (MWPC) who is their sponsor and fiscal agent. The Senior Centre Board is currently working towards becoming incorporated as a not-for-profit society.

The Seniors Centre has received the following funding:

2005

\$21,000 Federal New Horizons Program,

2007

\$19,500 Minor Capital Grant from the City of Edmonton

2008

\$35,000 from FCSS to develop an outreach program

\$84,000 Emerging Seniors Centre Grant from the City of Edmonton (for seed funding, board development, and a 5 year Business Plan).

### **Staffing**

When the centre originally opened in September 2007, volunteers operated the centre. A new part-time Executive Director of the Seniors Centre was hired in November 2008, and the board has recently hired an Outreach Worker and Program Manager.

### **Programs and Services**

The Centre has a Program Committee which is responsible for the development and provision of a number of recreational and social programs, including fitness activities, card games, karaoke, sewing and crafts, educational sessions, monthly birthdays and potlucks and a weekly breakfast. The Mill Woods Recreation Centre Program Manager participates on this committee to plan and provide co-sponsored programs. He will be assisting the group with strategic planning in March 2009.

### **Future Plans**

The seniors centre is in the process of increasing staff and volunteer support, expanding funding sources, increasing their programs and services, developing outreach services and increasing membership. In 2008, Seniors Centre received funding from Community Services to develop a five year business plan which will address the future plans for Mill Woods Seniors Centre.

## **III.NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF MILL WOODS SENIORS**

Prior to the establishment of the Mill Woods Seniors Centre, a needs assessment was completed to identify the needs and interests of seniors. Feedback was obtained through a questionnaire and a Seniors Forum.

### **Questionnaire**

- Input from 2431 seniors is represented in the completed surveys
- 82 surveys were completed (61 individual surveys and 21 group surveys)
- Group surveys represented 2370 seniors
  - a. 52 seniors at local seniors centres
  - b. 252 seniors living in seniors housing
  - c. 2066 senior members of local churches

### **Seniors Forum**

- 30 individuals from both the community at large and local senior serving agencies participated in a one day Seniors Forum in September 2007.
- The forum obtained input on the needs of Mill Woods seniors, new services/ programs ideas, and the future vision for Mill Woods Seniors Centre.

## **IV. FEEDBACK FROM SENIORS**

Several themes emerged from the consultation process on Mill Woods seniors' needs and interests.

### **1. Seniors Needs**

- Transportation
- Housing
- Food Security
- Isolation of both immigrant and non-immigrant seniors
- Home Support Services to Facilitate "Aging in Place"
- Finances
- Health
- Information and Referral regarding Seniors programs
- Social, Physical, and Recreational Activities

### **2. Seniors Centre Services and Programs**

Suggested programs were identified in 7 different categories:

- Physical Activity
- Socialization
- Health
- Communication/Information & Referral Services
- Outreach Programs
- Arts
- Education

### **3. Future Vision for the Seniors Centre (in Three Years)**

Participant responses addressed facility requirements, programs and services, membership and

board development, staffing, and transportation. The following summary outlines specific suggestions for the seniors centre.

### 1) Facility

- A larger seniors centre or stand-alone building (at least 2 – 3 times larger than the current size)
- A number of multi-purpose rooms to accommodate a variety of programs and classes running simultaneously
- A gymnasium for physical activity programs such as exercise classes, dance, badminton, volleyball, and which can be rented out to other users in the community
- Office space for staff and volunteers
- Private office space for counselling
- A quiet room/lounge
- A kitchen and dining area
- A library
- Space for health clinics
- Drop-in area for large pieces of equipment such as a pool table, and shuffleboard
- Woodworking area/ tools
- Craft room
- Storage for supplies and equipment
- Piano, area for music and theatre performances
- Reception area
- Fully wheelchair accessible facility and with front door bus service.

### 2) Programs/ Services

Programs and Services would continue and expand to include:

- **Physical activity** (i.e. walking, fitness classes, curling, floor curling, bowling, carpet bowling, table tennis, weights, swimming, exercise programs for special needs, mall walking, and yoga)
- **Social programs** (i.e. social evenings, dances, teas, get-togethers, entertainers, cards, day trips, group tours, pool, bingo, potluck dinners, card games such as canasta, pinochle, whist, hand and foot canasta, cribbage, contract bridge, social club, dinner clubs, and trips)
- **Health services** (i.e. foot care, affordable massage and reflexology, medical workshops/ Wellness Center, free preventive health check-ups, health fairs, mental exercises, nurse visits, and wellness classes)
- **Information and referral services** (i.e. bulletin board/ display area, newsletter and website, and seniors resource area)
- **Outreach** (i.e. visit/ contact isolated seniors, facility to meet and greet and lunch, shuttle service from seniors housing complexes, mall and to Mill Woods Recreation Centre )
- **Arts and Cultural** (i.e. computer training, special interest groups and workshops such as golf or investors club, guest speakers, pottery, crafts, music groups, choirs, dance, band,

quilting/ sewing , cultural classes, art club, book club, discussion groups, drama, painting, spiritual, and storytelling)

- **Intergenerational programming**
- **Subsidized programs** (for low income seniors)
- **Park area/ walkways surrounding the centre**

### 3) **Other Features of the Seniors Centre**

The Seniors Centre would be a welcoming place, operated by a well functioning board and have permanent staff including an executive director, an outreach worker, a program coordinator and a cook. Membership would be offered at a low cost and include access to programs at other seniors centres in the city. The Seniors Centre would have its own bus/vans to use for field trips and/or to pick up members who have difficulty accessing the centre.

## **V.INTEREST IN COLLABORATING WITH MILL WOODS LIBRARY**

Four meetings were held with Community Services staff and seniors/ seniors groups in Mill Woods to explore the seniors' interest in a potential partnership with the new Mill Woods Library. A summary of feedback is outlined.

- Representatives from Mill Woods Seniors Centre expressed initial interest in exploring a potential partnership with the Mill Woods library, if their programming needs can be met.
- They would like to be considered as an equal partner in the project, working together to ensure that the building meets the needs of users of both facilities and provides the opportunity for joint programming.
- The Mill Woods Seniors Centre indicated interest in some shared space with the library but would also require some exclusive space.
- A suggested model which the seniors felt would be most desirable would be for the library and seniors centre to have access to space on the main floor and upper floors.
- The Seniors Centre would require a variety of program spaces, office space and a cafeteria/ kitchen. The building must be fully accessible, with front door parking available for people with mobility challenges, as well as free parking for the general public and easy access to public transportation.
- After reviewing other models of other seniors centres in Edmonton, the Mill Woods Seniors Centre representatives indicated that they would require at least 10,000 – 12,000 square feet. (That is the size of Southeast Edmonton Seniors Association).
- Other seniors groups in the Mill Woods area agree that there is a great need for a seniors centre in the area, they are supportive of the concept of the seniors centre being co-housed with the library, and see it as an opportunity for joint use and programming.
- On February 2, 2009, the Mill Woods Seniors Centre Board of Directors unanimously

approved a motion to continue discussions on the development of a new facility for Mill Woods Seniors Centre and Mill Woods Public Library. They fully support this future vision for Mill Woods Seniors Centre.

## **VI. SUMMARY**

As previously identified in the 2007, Community Services Seniors Centre Long Term Funding Strategy, a multipurpose Seniors Centre needs to be developed in Mill Woods. Fifteen other major Seniors Centres operate throughout Edmonton. The size of seniors centres range from 1000 – 70,000 square feet. The average size of a seniors centre, serving seniors demographic population similar to Mill Woods, is approximately 20,000 square feet.

The current site of the Mill Woods Seniors Centre has been a supportive setting for this group to develop, and has enabled the seniors centre to offer a range of programs in their space and other areas of the building. Currently the Seniors Centre space appears to be meeting the majority of their program needs.

As Mill Woods Seniors Centre develops their long range business plan, it will identify if the current space will facilitate future needs. As the number of members increase, the Senior Centre may need to relocate to accommodate growth and increased program/ administrative requirements.

If the new Mill Woods Library is not able to provide increased space to the Mill Woods Seniors Centre, it may be beneficial for the seniors centre to complete their five year business plan before making a decision on whether to relocate.

## **VII. SOURCES:**

City of Edmonton (2007) Preliminary Population Projections 2006 – 2041.  
City of Edmonton, Seniors' Centre Long Term Funding Strategy (2007 – 2017)  
City of Edmonton 2008 Municipal Census