



Sustainable Damascus

The Committee for the Future of Damascus

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2012 Board

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engAGE Program Final Report

The Committee for the Future of Damascus (CFD) received \$3,500.00 to conduct a survey of the citizens of Damascus, OR. regarding their support of and suggestions regarding the development of a Damascus Community Center. (See *attached Survey and Survey Letter*) The survey was mailed to each legitimate address in Damascus on June 20, 2012, with a requested return date of July 20, 2012. As a result of several summer activities, specifically the Damascus Fresh and Local Market and a September Garage Sale, it was determined that CFD would make the surveys available to Damascus citizens through the end of November, 2012. To date, we have received a total of 452 responses.

It became immediately obvious that there was a misunderstanding regarding CFD's relationship with the City of Damascus, and many of the initial respondents indicated they were "Not Interested" because they felt that their tax dollars would be involved in paying for the operation and support of such a facility. As a result, a letter was mailed to those respondents who had given us their address which explained that CFD was not part of the City of Damascus and that most funding would come from grant and foundation support, individual tax-deductible donations, and program fees for specific events. (See *attached Letter to Citizens*)

The survey asked three basic questions:

- 1) Do you support the **CREATION** of a Damascus Community Center?
- 2) What do you feel should be included in an **IDEAL** Community Center?
- 3) In what ways would you be able to **PARTICIPATE** in and / or **SUPPORT** a Damascus Community Center?

In the survey, CFD proposed three broad program areas:

- 1) **Community Services**, which included a Food Bank, Transportation Services, Community Meals, Family/Age Specific Events, Spaces for Group, Private, and Civic Meetings, an Exchange Library, and Interactive Games.
- 2) **Public Events and Community Gatherings**, which included Dances, a Harvest Festival, Potlucks, Theatrical and Musical Events, Sing Alongs, Art Exhibits and Craft Fairs, Inter Cultural Events, Exercise Classes, Craft Classes, and Public Lectures.
- 3) **Sustainability**, which included a Community Garden, and workshops/classes in Master Gardening, Environmental Education, Food Processing, Rainwater Catchment, Garbage/Waste Reduction, Algae Bio-Reactors, and Food Scrap Composting

In order to analyze the results, responses were assigned to three different categories: "In Favor", "Not in Favor", and "Mixed Responses". The overall results indicate that Damascus Citizens are "In Favor" of a Damascus Community Center:

- **53%** (241 respondents) indicated they were **In Favor**
- **35%** (157 respondents) indicated they were **Not In Favor**. (**Not In Favor** include those who indicated they were not interested in the concept, a program, or a suggestion.
- **12%** (54 respondents) indicated **Mixed Responses**. (**Mixed Responses** include those who indicated they were (or were not) interested in the development of a community center, yet indicated interest in programming. In some cases, categories were not checked, while in other cases categories were checked yet written comments indicated a different opinion.)

In addition to indicating their “votes” for the Programs and Projects suggested by CFD, the survey was also designed to collect valuable demographic information, including age, family make-up, current employment status, annual income, years in Damascus, and home ownership. As a result, CFD has created the most current demographic statistics regarding Damascus and her citizens. This information has been shared with Damascus’ City Manager. Briefly, these figures indicate that 38% have lived in Damascus more than 20 years, 40% are between the age of 45 – 64, 78% of the households do not include children or teens under the age of 17, 46% have household incomes over \$50,000, 35% of our residents are retired, and 66% own their homes. All in all, this indicates a stable population who, based on the written responses we received, are dedicated to making Damascus a better and inviting place to live. (See attached Survey Results)

The survey also gave respondents the opportunity to make their own suggestions regarding programming, respond to volunteer opportunities, and give CFD their written comments, suggestions, and concerns regarding the development and operation of a Damascus Community Center. The responses and suggestions are insightful, enlightening, and encouraging. In addition to many creative and enlightening suggestions for workshop possibilities, there is strong indication that people are willing to make both in-kind and financial donations, volunteer their time and talents in fundraising activities, special event coordination, serving on committees, ground’s maintenance, office support, IT support, workshop development, contributing to a newsletter, and legal assistance. (See attached Survey Result.)

One of the results that came from CFD learning of the community’s willingness to help was a Garage/Rummage Sale, lead by and operated by a committee that arose out of a membership meeting that survey respondents were invited to. The sale took place on September 21 & 22, 2012. Not only was the locale donated, but all items in the sale were donated by Damascus citizens. The result was that over \$1,500.00 was raised for CFD, and it is our intent to make this an annual event. In November, 2012, we held a second open meeting to which survey respondents were invited. At this meeting, we not only shared the survey results through a Power-Point presentation followed with a question and answer period, but also initiated the process of establishing interest committees regarding both the further development of a Damascus Community Center and the process of strengthening and expanding the scope of CFD itself.

As a result of this survey, CFD successfully negotiated with the City of Damascus regarding a 14+ acre piece of property the city owns, with existing buildings, located at the northwest intersection of Foster Road and Vogel Road that could be turned into a Community Center. At the December 17, 2012 City Council Meeting, a one and a half year contract was unanimously approved by City Council. CFD’s next step will be to bring the property up to legal standards and begin the process of establishing a Damascus Community Center. In the interim, based on the survey results, we are negotiating with and/or defining several local organizations, including the Lewis and Clark Montessori Charter School, with which CFD can begin offering workshops and classes that will benefit and engage the Damascus Community at large.

It goes without saying that the time and effort devoted to conducting the survey and analyzing the results were both gratifying and invaluable in that it reinforced the fact that Damascus both wants and needs a Community Center. Without the support of the engAGE Program, we would not have been able to move forward.

Respectfully Submitted,

A. Nannette Taylor (503-665-5377)

Vice Chair – The Committee of the Future of Damascus

ATTACHED:

Survey (PDF Format – 4 pages)

Survey Letter (PDF Format – 1 page)

Letter to Citizens (PDF Format – 1 page)

Survey Results (PDF Format – 27 pages)

Budget Summary Final Expense Report, Request, & Miscellaneous Expenses Detail (PDF Format– 3 Pages)

Copy of Receipts (PDF Format – 2 pages)