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Performing arts center, relocated Fort Museum on local wish list

Final meeting will be today By BILL SHEA, Messenger staff writer

New attractions and a better site for the Fort Museum and Frontier Village were envisioned by a group of Fort Dodge citizens who spent Wednesday evening thinking about the city's future.

A request to think of big ideas generated those concepts and more from 22 people at the most recent Envision 2030 session at Feelhaver Elementary School.

"We're just looking for possibilities," said Karna Lowenstein, who's working with The Slater Group to gather input for a vision of the city 20 years from now.

"Somebody, somewhere is going to put their head together with someone else's and come up with the next big idea for this city," she added.

A lake suitable for fishing in the middle of town with a boardwalk around it was proposed. An exact location wasn't offered.

A convention and performing arts center was also on the wish list.

Moving the Fort Museum and Frontier Village closer to U.S. Highway 20 and perhaps, expanding it, was offered as a suggestion for improving attractions in the community.

While dreaming of new and different things, the group also composed a list of assets that ought to be maintained into the future. Many of those items, such as preserving the city's family-friendly atmosphere, have cropped up repeatedly in previous Envision 2030 meetings.

Wednesday's new additions to the mix include enhancing the city's open spaces and expanding the Blanden Memorial Art Museum.

Also appearing on many lists of things to preserve and enhance is the Des Moines River corridor.

"I think a lot of citizens see potential in that," Lowenstein said.

The Slater Group, a Woodstock, Ga., firm hired by the City Council to handle the planning process, will use the information generated Wednesday to help create a 20-year vision for the city and a more specific five-year plan for the local government.

The final Envision 2030 session that's open to the public will be from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. today at Citizens Central, 617 Central Ave.

Although that meeting is labeled as one for residents of the 1st Ward, anyone can attend it.

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