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Second Ward focus group discusses city improvement

Residents cite need for more cooperation **By OBAID KHAWAJA, Messenger staff writer**

Improving cooperation between the northern and southern portions of Fort Dodge, in order to help development around the city, was a major point brought up during the 2nd Ward focus group meeting Saturday at Holy Rosary Church.

The meeting was the last of Thursday's Envision 2030 focus group sessions. The series of meetings began Thursday and will give members of the public the chance to provide their insight for improving the city. The majority of people that turned out for the session were from the southern portion of the city, which they felt had been neglected.

"This is really not a city project ... what it really has to become is your project," said Roger Slater, president of the Slater Group, which is working with city officials.

"We have to internalize and personalize this vision of Fort Dodge."

Although only 13 people attended the meeting, there were plenty of ideas, including establishing an aquatic center, completing the Oleson Park Bandshell, creating a local events arena and creating a lighted walkway along the river.

"My vision ... after eight years of being here ... is of a clean, safe town," said resident Glenn Thomas. "(And) you need more undercover cops to beat the drug problem."

People who attended were divided into groups and asked to propose a "centerpiece" for the town and then discuss ways of achieving their goal.

Many people acknowledged the small numbers of people that turned out for the meeting and called for more public involvement and increasing publicity for long-standing problems.

Completing the Oleson Park Bandshell, improving the walking trails and addressing the erosion problem — caused in part by the drainage system — was a concern for many of the older residents.

"I don't think a lot of people realize that Oleson Park has been a jewel for Fort Dodge," said Councilman Don Wilson. "The city should begin reinvesting (in that)."

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