THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: September 13, 2022

Subject: Senior Opportunity Center Name Change

Staff Resource(s): D. Tyrell McGirt, Parks & Recreation Director
Christo Bubenik, Parks & Recreation Program & Operations Manager - Communications

Action Requested: Resolution to rename Senior Opportunity Center located at 36 Grove Street to Grove Street Community Center in accordance with the City's policy for naming publicly owned properties.

Background:

- Senior Opportunity Center opened in the 1970s as a community resource center specializing in recreational programming and outreach services for senior citizens, recognizing that older adults bring significant economic and civic assets to Asheville and challenging the then-prevalent perception that aging be associated with declining health, dependency, and irrelevance.
- In the early years, Asheville Parks & Recreation staff and community organizations offered meals, arts and crafts classes, clubs for special interests and hobbies, cultural experiences, and more opportunities to stay active while aging.
- Over the years, renovations and updates included a commercial kitchen, expanded craft room, ceramic kiln, greenhouse, drop-off driveway, and outdoor picnic seating.
- Today, the community center remains a focal point for active older adults to connect with vital community services that help them stay healthy and independent, but offers much more, including meals and nutrition services; health, exercise, and wellness opportunities; social, cultural, and recreational activities; education and arts programs; volunteer, advocacy, and civic engagement information; development of stronger support systems; and decreased social isolation.
- As the center on Grove Street has evolved over time, so has the way the community talks about older adults and retirees.
- As people live longer and more actively, it's unsurprising that "senior opportunity center" implies a place for the "old" or "ederly," not a resource for those still in the prime of life.
- As 50+ or 65+ become more arbitrary distinctions, the name of the center no longer fits the modern-day experience of aging.
- The community center also regularly hosts programming and special events for all ages as its location is the most easily accessible public community center for nearby neighborhoods including Downtown, South French Broad, South Slope, and WECAN.
- Throughout April 2022, Senior Opportunity Center staff members engaged with regular center visitors around the current name and solicited suggestions through conversations and an on-site suggestion box.
- In May and June 2022, feedback from the larger community was collected through information sharing and an online survey framed by feedback from the center's regular users.
- Some community members also emailed staff directly with recommendations.
- Community feedback favors renaming Senior Opportunity Center to reflect its geographic location with "Grove" being included on multiple recommendations.
- Parks & Recreation's communication team will develop a communications plan to ensure minimal confusion.
- This may include press releases, revising digital listings, and events such as ribbon cuttings.

Vendor Outreach Efforts:

- Not applicable

Council Goal(s):

- An equitable and diverse community
- A well-planned and livable community
- A connected and engaged community

Committee(s):

- None

Pro(s):

- Supports City Council's FY 2022-2023 Neighborhood Resilience and Improve and Expand Core Services priorities.
- Supports the City's policy giving priority to names carrying a geographical, historical, or cultural significance to the area in which publicly-owned property is located.
- Treats older adults with respect and dignity.
- Better reflects the expanded modern use of the facility.

Con(s):

- Initially, there may be public uncertainty surrounding the new name. Parks & Recreation's communications team will develop a plan to ensure minimal confusion.
- Community members looking for a "senior center" may not be aware that the community center on Grove Street has a primary focus on older adults.
- This has not been a substantial challenge for Harvest House, a community center in Kenilworth with a similar focus.

Fiscal Impact:

- Cost of on-site identification updates such as replacement of building signs is available in the Parks & Recreation operating budget.
- Estimated cost of sign fabrication and installation is $4,000.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to adopt a resolution to rename the building located on 36 Grove Street to Grove Street Community Center.

Attachment(s)

- Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 22-____

RESOLUTION RENAMING CITY OF ASHEVILLE COMMUNITY CENTER LOCATED ON 36 GROVE STREET TO GROVE STREET COMMUNITY CENTER

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville has a policy for naming publicly owned properties, and

WHEREAS, the community center located on 36 Grove Street originally operated as a community resource center specializing in recreational programming and outreach services for senior citizens and is currently known as Senior Opportunity Center, and

WHEREAS, the community center remains a focal point for active older adults to connect with vital community services that help them stay healthy and independent, but offers much more, including meals and nutrition services; health, exercise, and wellness opportunities; social, cultural, and recreational activities; education and arts programs; volunteer, advocacy, and civic engagement information; development of stronger support systems; and decreased social isolation; and

WHEREAS, the community center and the way the community talks about older adults and retirees has evolved over time, making words like “senior” outdated, and

WHEREAS, the community center also regularly hosts programming and special events for all ages as its location is the most easily accessible public community center for nearby neighborhoods including Downtown, South French Broad, South Slope, and WECAN;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City of Asheville community center located on 36 Grove Street is named Grove Street Community Center.

Read, approved and adopted this 13th day of September, 2022.

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City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

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City Attorney