Summary

By design, the ‘We are the Experts of Us’ Encore Grand Rapids Conference was less about bringing in external ‘experts’ to talk ‘to’ community, and more about amplifying the realities, wisdom, resilience, and lived experience of those within our community. To do so, we intentionally centered the conference around activities designed to live, listen, and share in community with one another. One of the tools used to foster meaningful conversation and authentic engagement was an interactive two-part roundtable discussion. This activity was used to tap into the power of the individual and collective stories and wisdom in the room.

We organized attendees into tables designed to engage a cross-section of our Encore community by age, race/ethnicity, lived experience, retirement continuum, and topics of interest. In these spaces, community members had real opportunities to deepen connections and engage in authentic conversations with those seated with them.

The following [8] topics were discussed:
1. Using our talents and gifts to make meaningful contributions
2. Celebrating our Aging
3. Creating a New Normal: Making Peace with Changing Circumstances
4. Flipping Talent for Profit: Accessing the Shareable Economy
5. No more shame or stigma -- Resilience, Retirement, & Mental Health
6. Innovative Housing Models and Retirement
7. 55 and still working full time/Unretirement
8. Retirement Caring 4 Family

Each group also shared ‘power statements’ summarizing key elements of their conversation. That feedback is included as well.

A representative from the national Encore movement commented, “This was the most diverse audience I have ever seen at an Encore program...and the way you engaged strangers in thoughtful conversations was unparalleled…”

Listed below is a visual synthesis of the voices and wisdom shared at the September 2017 conference. As promised, we are sharing this data back within community. It is our hope that this data will be used by residents, partner organizations, elected leaders, and community influencers to help inform the ongoing evolution of the age-friendly Grand Rapids movement.
WE ARE THE EXPERTS OF US!

09.15.17

Using our Talents + Gifts to make Meaningful Contributions

Spread the Wealth!

Using our gifts benefits us All

Share yourself! Giving means receiving

People need our gifts and talents just as we need friendship and value.

Help others

Tutor

Write grants

Teach

Sew!

Mentor

Budget

Help others

Seek financial aid

Do something meaningful

Work with animals

Play a sport with someone less skilled

We all grow from our shared talents

"Need other people to need me"

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Relax! Celebrate Our Aging
- Slow down
- Invest in our Joy + the joy of OTHERS
- Never stop Learning
- More dancing!
- Accept ourselves for who we ARE
- Have a wonderful mind

Aging is not limiting—
- You have time, talents, treasures to share

Be comfortable in your own skin!
- Stay educated!
- Aging is not limiting

Active = Freedom of Choice!
- Be closer to nature
- Have a wonderful mind

Stay educated!
- "Mom made it look fun!"
- "I surround myself with positive people"

Wisdom
Confidence
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Creating a New Normal
Aging gracefully
...just go with it!

Lots of Change...
Selling the home

Looking at a third career
Learning new things
More free time

Learn to say NO!

Learn from the past
Get ready for the future

Do what you WANT TO DO!

Creating balance
Less is best
Something to keep you going!

Patience

The reality of an empty nest

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Flipping Talent for Profit

DON'T BE ISOLATED

Not tech-savvy? Security concerns?
Fear of rejection? Fear of discrimination?

Sell your wisdom, hobbies, and passions to secure $$$!
Make money with your talents!

$ uber/lyft driver
$ create a non-profit
delivery
$ teach
$ Pet care tutor
$ child care
$ write + create
$ design
$ sell
$ volunteer
$ Caregiver

THE WORK IS NEVER DONE

Go GET IT: it's not coming to you!

Discover your talents and match needs

Sharing is giving

Know resources that assist
I am enough
Supportive services, education, hospitality

Sketchnotes by @alyshalach and @lilspacestudio
We Are the Experts of Us!

09.15.17

No More Shame or Stigma

Fear is huge
- Seeing elderly parents not doing what they used to do
- Change in lifestyle
- Establish good networks
- Establish good therapists and counselors
- Establish good support
- Stay Relevant
- Healthy lifestyle
- Seek counseling and support

"You have nothing to fear but fear itself."
- Winston Churchill

Would elderly widows like to help someone else?
- Telling children about new relationships
- Fear of widowed life
- Uncertainty
- Change in communication: be willing to ask for help
- Own Your Path and Share It

"It could happen to me...
- Divorce
- Jealousy
- Flexibility change
- Others can't understand when you are slipping
- Have a glass of wine and relax!
- No more shame

Sketchnotes by @alyshalach and @lispacestudio
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Innovative Housing Models + Retirement

ADAPT + SHARE!
- Discover
- Enjoying living with LESS
- Split bulk shopping with friends & house
- Eat fresh, buy local

DOWNSIZE
- Leave GOODNESS + not a BURDEN for our KIDS
- Detach
- Hand down your heirlooms

Less is More
- Make space in your life: home, schedule, budget, relationships

GO WITH THE FLOW
- Run an AirBNB!
- Multi-generational housing

Move:
- with another couple
- into a smaller house
- to another state!
- (take a leap of faith)

Sketchnotes by @alyshalach and @lilspacestudio
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55 AND WORKING FULL-TIME: UN-RETIREMENT

THE BALANCING ACT

Keeping passion alive!
“I can still make a difference”
Personal goals
Time management

Financial Stability
Single family
Needs are concerning
Rebirth at any age!
More flexibility

Quality of Work
You can still make a difference
How to become un-pigeonholed

Time for Self
Refine: into another career, not on site
Like to work
Start Small
Work fewer hours + days
Because you WANT to, not because you HAVE to
Own a business!

Sketchnotes by @alyshalach and @ lil space studio
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09.15.17

RETIREMENT CARING FOR FAMILY

Living fit!

Baby Boomers

More pressure on system! More aging in workforce

Cultural differences in assisted living

Smell the roses!

More Kids moving back home

Taking care of grandchildren...

More pressure on system! More aging in workforce

Going back to work to care for elderly parents

Living further away from family workforce

Everyone needs your care

Be Proactive

Find the resources available!

It's more about experience not things!

Patience is necessary!

It's always something...

Few resources for aging!

Parents not wanting assistance

Making too much to quality for assistance, but too little to pay bills

More serious illnesses!

Older adults become caregivers...

Sketchnotes by @alyshalach and @ lil.space.studio
WE ARE THE EXPERTS OF US!

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Power Statements

- We are more than our stuff!
- Reinvent ourselves + community
- Go get it (because it's not coming to you!)
- Say no
- Stay politically alive!
- Get rid of the weight: Someone needs what you have!
- More is less
- Self-care
- Be present:
  + accept what it is
- Rebirth at any age!
- Go with the flow
- Ask for help
- Be a life learner
- Embracing change
  - Embracing change
  - The power of self
- Content, sincerity, balanced life, + flexibility
- I can still make a difference for myself + others

Share yourself! Sharing expertise + wisdom helps communities grow

Lead with wonder instead of judgment

Speak up, make a glass of wine + relax!

Find opportunities that highlight strengths

Give + receive

Lead with wonder instead of judgment

Listen

Sketchnotes by @alyshalach and @lilspacestudio
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