

We want you!

Flotsam and Jetsam

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I really hope hundreds of Walker area residents have penciled Friday night's Great Community Get-Together at Moondance Fairground onto their calendars as a must-attend event.

In case you haven't heard, the Get-Together is one of the highlights of the Minnesota Design Team's three-day visit to the Walker area — the city itself, plus Shingobee, Leech Lake, Turtle Lake and Pine Lake townships.

The Great Community Get-Together features a free fish fry supper — yes, free food! — served from 5:30 to 7 p.m., followed by a very important visioning session.

Saturday, the Design Team visit concludes with another presentation for the whole community at 7 p.m. at the WHA Auditorium.

Now I know the word "visioning" puts some folks right off their feed. So let's substitute "brainstorming;" or "information exchange;" or just "a free-for-all discussion."

The discussion session following the fish fry supper (did I mention it's FREE FOOD, served from 5:30 to 7 p.m.?) will run from 7 to 9 p.m. Everyone who comes for supper will be encouraged to stay and get involved.

The two hours will be led by Design Team members — 19 architects, urban designers, planners and landscapers, all volunteers from across the state, who are spending three days in and around Walker. Their goal is to find out what makes this community tick; what locals like and dislike about it; and what they want for their community in the future.

Then, using that information as their base, the Design Team will put down on paper ideas and concepts that reflect the community's vision for the future and create proposals for how to make them become reality.

But to repeat, the Design Team can't do this without you.

"Me?" you may say. "I don't have the time to get involved in all this. There are plenty of movers and shakers in this town already working on that Healthy Communities thing. They don't need me."

You're right — dozens of people have been working hard on the Healthy Communities Partnership, or are members of the Walker Area Partners, or have helped organized the Design Team's visit.

So, you say again, "What the heck could I contribute that others haven't already thought of and can say better than I could?"

That's exactly the point! There may be lots of stuff! We just don't know. We want to find out. That's why you need to come to this event.

If this effort to revitalize the greater Walker community is to succeed, it needs the viewpoints, criticisms, ideas and input of people of all ages, at all economic levels, with all sorts of jobs and interests. Not just the educators; the business owners; the "true believers" who are already deeply involved.

They want you, need your input! And if they have to bribe you with free fried fish to participate, they will do so!

YOU means the guy in the camou pants and ripped T-shirt who's getting ready to go fishing. Stop for supper before you leave!

YOU means the grocery store clerk or convenience store cashier. Have supper on us; then tell us how this community could better serve you and your family.

YOU means the retiree who lives outside of town but comes here to shop or go to the doctor. Come for the fish fry; stay to talk.

YOU means the teenager who's working two summer jobs to earn money for college. Free food is free food. We value your viewpoint. We want you to move back here in the future to work and live.

YOU means the waiter or waitress at the cafe, casino or supper club. Take a load off your feet. Let someone serve you. We want to hear what you think.

YOU means the mom with two toddlers clinging to her ankles. Bring the kids along; we'll feed them, too. Then take this opportunity to engage in some adult conversation.

Have we missed anybody? If so, you're also invited.

After the Design Team hears from as many people as possible, they'll spend all day Saturday bringing that information together into concepts that reflect this community's shared vision. Using their professional expertise, they also will come up with proposals for how these visions can become realities.

So, then — after Friday night's fish fry supper (did I mention it's free?) and after engaging in some lively discussion, why not come back Saturday night to the WHA Auditorium at 7 p.m. to hear and discuss what the Design Team comes up with?

These may well be the concepts that will guide this community for decades to come.

And, they're serving free coffee and cookies!

Gail DeBoer is a staff writer for The Pilot-Independent.