



discuss
DOOR COUNTY



They is us.



Door County
Community
Foundation, Inc.



Voices from a Community
Conversation about
Growing Older
in Door County, Wisconsin

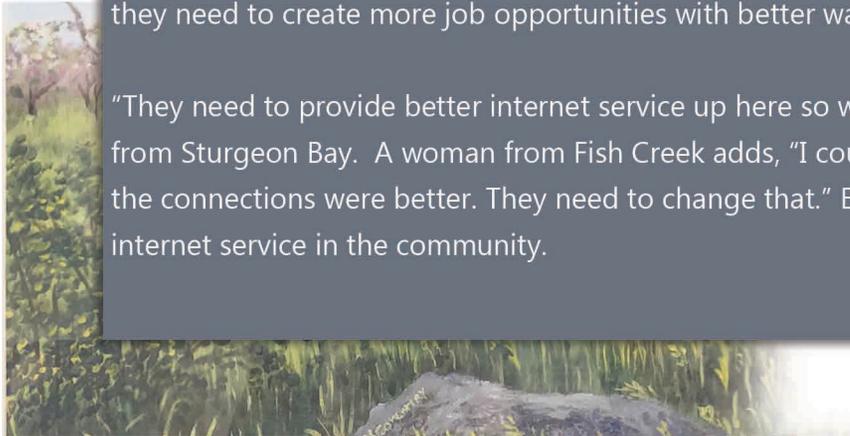
Preface

Imagine walking into a room full of people, all gathered to discuss the topic of growing older in Door County. It takes you by surprise how many unfamiliar faces are in the room. Where are all the old folks you wonder. Given the topic, you expected the room to be full of gray haired people, but at least half of them look like they are in their 30s or 40s. That woman over there getting coffee looks like she could still be in school. What do they know about growing older?

The facilitator starts with a simple question: what do we want Door County to be like as we grow older?

"They need to create jobs that pay decent wages," says a woman in her 30s from Egg Harbor. "Most of us need to work two to three jobs to get by." A Jacksonport resident in his 70s agrees, "My son would live here if there were better employment. I want my family near me, but he has to go where the good jobs are." There is agreement: they need to create more job opportunities with better wages.

"They need to provide better internet service up here so we can work more efficiently," says a business owner from Sturgeon Bay. A woman from Fish Creek adds, "I could stay better connected with my family in Milwaukee if the connections were better. They need to change that." Everyone agrees: they need to improve phone and internet service in the community.



"They need to make housing more affordable so young families can afford a decent home. I work three jobs to make my rent," says a younger man from Brussels. A retired librarian from Sister Bay agrees, "My daughter would move here with her kids but they just can't afford these prices. I want my grandkids near me. They should have housing people can afford." Again, the heads in the room nod in agreement: they need to create housing that people with limited incomes can afford.

The suggestions continue:

"They need to provide better home health care."

"They need to preserve the beauty of the county so that our grandchildren's children can enjoy it."

"They need to improve transportation services in the county and to Green Bay so that we can get to medical appointments and to the airport easily."

"They need to listen."

"They need to pay attention."

The room quiets down and everyone looks around at each other nervously until one person says what everyone else has been thinking: "They is us."



Introduction

They is us.

For five months, the people of Door County came together in groups small and large to discuss what they want the community to be like as we grow older. This was Discuss Door County, a process of understanding what the community values, respects, and cherishes about the place we call home.

Through conversations held in senior centers, libraries, church halls, and private homes, people shared their stories.

Volunteer facilitators reflected the diversity of the participants who joined discussions. Farmers whose

families have worked the land for four generations joined those who live here half the year. Immigrants from Central America joined entrepreneurs who returned to the county after college. Sales clerks and service industry workers; artists and auto mechanics; health care professionals and law enforcement officials – we all came together to talk about growing older and discovered that what we were really talking about was how to improve our community; how could we improve the daily lives of every resident of our beloved peninsula.





People entered expecting a set of procedural rules, pages of statistical information, flow charts, data analysis. People looked to an unknown “they” for answers and for resolutions. Over the course of the conversations, participants rediscovered their innate power to define the process for themselves. We grew together, gaining a deep understanding of who we are and who we want to be as each of us, day by day, grows older in Door County.

They is us.

“It became clear that this was not solely about retirement. This conversation was about community in all the ways that word can be interpreted,” a participant explained. “We were focused on elevating our world to bring great meaning and connection to all. Criticisms were combined with our collective positive energy. Some solutions may be found through community and/or governing agencies, but most of the changes we hoped to see would come from our daily actions. Even if geographically we may not have been neighbors, our sense of caring surpassed township lines.”

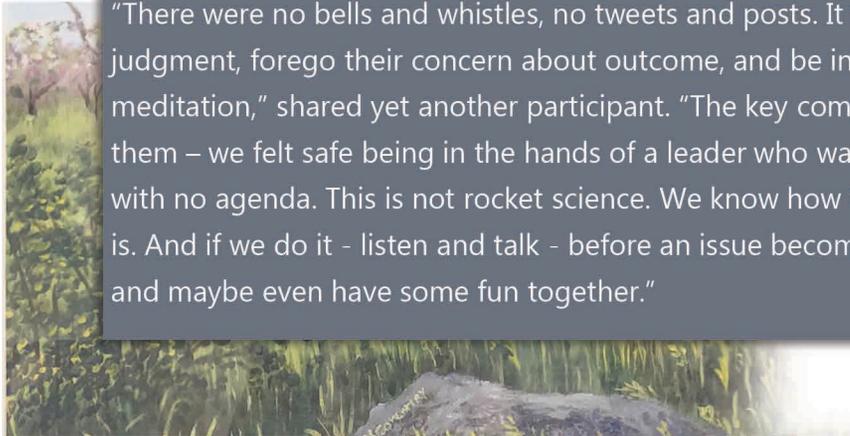
Discuss Door County is not a strategic planning process. It is not an effort to define a work plan to achieve a predetermined goal. Nor is it an attempt to convince the community of the righteousness of a particular course of action. It is a genuine opportunity for people to connect with one another and talk about our aspirations for the county.

Introduction Continued

"The thought of no planned outcome was a bit of a challenge at first," said another participant. "However, it opened up new freedoms that I never dreamt of before. Everyone reaches a satisfaction of being able to know that their thoughts are important. There is a general feeling of ownership in the discussions. This was inspiring as the negative formidable challenges of the county and the world can be changed by offering more kindness, compassion, and respect by me not they."

There have been plenty of very sophisticated analyses of what's wrong with the world, much of it quite helpful. Yet what's often missing is the vision to help people link the desire to change their lives with a commitment to change their communities. Through Discuss Door County, our neighbors were able to articulate their hopes for our community.

"There were no bells and whistles, no tweets and posts. It was simply people agreeing to show up, withhold judgment, forego their concern about outcome, and be in the moment with each other. It's a kind of community meditation," shared yet another participant. "The key components are so humble, it might be easy to overlook them – we felt safe being in the hands of a leader who was there not to talk, not to pass judgment, but to listen with no agenda. This is not rocket science. We know how to do this; we may have just forgotten how important it is. And if we do it - listen and talk - before an issue becomes contentious, we can save ourselves so much trouble and maybe even have some fun together."



Have fun together. Listen to and respect one another. Offer more kindness and compassion. Combine collective positive energy to bring about the changes we most want to see for our community. We believe that the best way to predict our future is to create it for ourselves. It is our hope that this will inspire all of us to work - both individually and collectively - to sustain and advance the community we love.



WRITE ON
DOOR COUNTY



Special thanks to
Write On, Door County
for convening and
facilitating the many
residents of Door County
who composed this
preface and introduction.

Discuss Door County {6}

Neighborhood Conversations and the County–Wide Assembly

Community Statement



Discuss Door County: Growing Older in Door County is an outgrowth of discussions between Bader Philanthropies, the Door County Community Foundation, the R. Bruce & Alyce S. Kopseker Trust, the Raibrook Foundation, and the United Way of Door County. This effort was created and jointly funded by these philanthropic institutions.

Building upon the model for community engagement created by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, and with the assistance of Moore Strategic Consulting, LLC, the Door County Community Foundation guided this effort. At its heart is a simple question: What do you want Door County to be like as you grow older?

A Leadership Team was formed, comprised of a broad range of local citizens. The Community Foundation then invited residents and organizations to host structured Neighborhood Conversations all across Door County. Each conversation was led by 2 trained Conversation Leaders, observed by members of the Leadership Team, and were documented by trained note takers. Each Neighborhood Conversation took about 2 hours. We gathered in living rooms, places of business, charities, and at public places like a library or community center. The Community Foundation assisted with the logistics of hosting the conversations.

***Growing Older
Door County
Leadership Team***

*Tom Torinus
Joe Mitchell
Co-Chairs*

*Bret Bicoy
Garey Bies
Anthony Birdsall
Cory Dahl
Laurel Hauser
Christine Henkel
Mark Jenkins
Amy Kohnle
Barbara Lawton
Mark Moeller
Michele Notz
Caitlin Oleson
Amber Papke
Marietta Sherman
John Stevenson
Tom Voegele
Rachel Willems
Jerry Worrick*

Neighborhood Conversations and the County–Wide Assembly

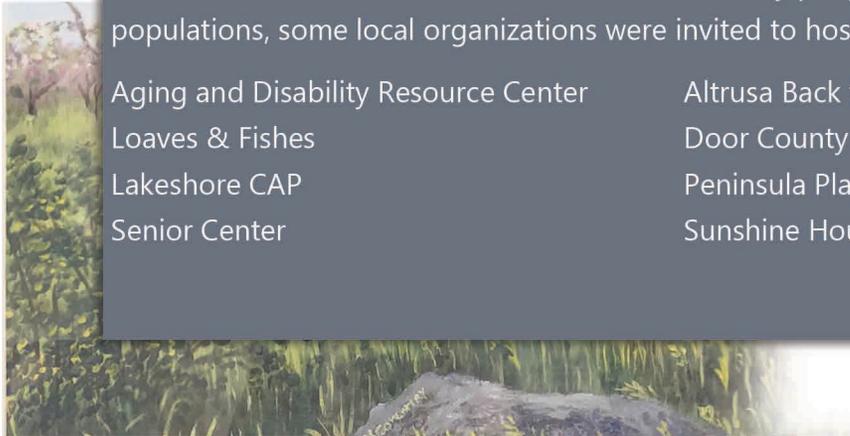
Forty-five structured Neighborhood Conversations took place during the summer of 2016 throughout the county and included (but were not limited to) residents from:

Baileys Harbor	Brussels	Clay Banks	Carlsville	Egg Harbor
Ellison Bay	Ephraim	Fish Creek	Forestville	Gardner
Gibraltar	Jacksonport	Liberty Grove	Nasewaupee	Sevastopol
Sister Bay	Sturgeon Bay	Valmy	Washington Island	

To ensure that voices were heard from every segment of Door County, special outreach was made to low-income individuals, young adults, the LGBTQ community, and Spanish-speaking residents.

Most of the structured conversations were hosted by people in their neighborhoods. However, to reach specific populations, some local organizations were invited to host as well:

Aging and Disability Resource Center	Altrusa Back to School Fair	Door-Tran
Loaves & Fishes	Door County Medical Center	Neighbor-to-Neighbor
Lakeshore CAP	Peninsula Players	Scandia Village
Senior Center	Sunshine House	Young Professionals





More than 500 full-time and seasonal residents participated in a Neighborhood Conversation. We then invited the community to apply to participate in a County-Wide Assembly that took place over a series of Saturdays in the fall of 2016. The 45 participants were selected to reflect the demographics of our community. From seasonal residents to year 'round folks, from young people to senior citizens, from the wealthiest citizens to those who are struggling to get by - we worked to ensure that voices from every segment of Door County were heard in this process. This Community Statement is an outgrowth of their work.

Preamble

From the people who live here to the place itself, there's so much we love about Door County. Yet our aging population and changing demographics now confront us with an uncertain tomorrow. We believe that the best way to predict our future is to create it for ourselves. This is our mutual effort to articulate a shared vision and common aspirations for Door County. It is our hope that this will inspire all of us to work - both individually and collectively - to sustain and advance the community we love.



Home for the First Time

I'll never forget the first time I stepped foot into Door County.
Shops upon shops.
Beaches upon beaches.

One brother,
being the joker he was,
bought himself an accordion.
Another found peace in a hat shop.
It seemed everyone could find comfort in this magical kingdom.
So I kept my eyes sharp,
searching for the tucked-away place
that would make me want to stay forever.

Was it the restaurant named after a bird
I can't remember
or one of the million ice cream shops?

No,
I think it was the rocks lining the shore
that made me realize this was my true home.
The big ones, begging me to jump off
so the water could take me
under its wings.

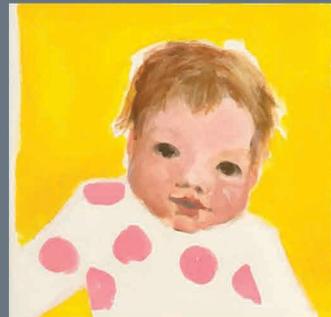
With my arms outstretched
eyes eager to fly
the wind whispered to me
and I swear
I felt the warmth that only a hug from
Door County could provide.



Discuss Door County {12}

I. The Community We Want

- A. An intergenerational community
 - ♦ where people experience and enjoy each other
- B. Entrepreneurial and creative spirit
 - ♦ where new ideas and businesses can flourish
- C. Involvement of people
 - ♦ people connecting with their neighbors
- D. More diverse and welcoming
 - ♦ valuing everyone
- E. Respectful interactions and engagement
 - ♦ forums and settings where we can talk about hard issues and be heard
- F. Maintain beauty
 - ♦ valuing what we treasure about our environment and the arts
- G. Job opportunities and better wages
 - ♦ a chance for everyone to make it here
- H. Integrated and expanded educational opportunities
 - ♦ connected to our community
- I. Connected to each other within and beyond Door County
 - ♦ housing, roads, transportation, and internet options

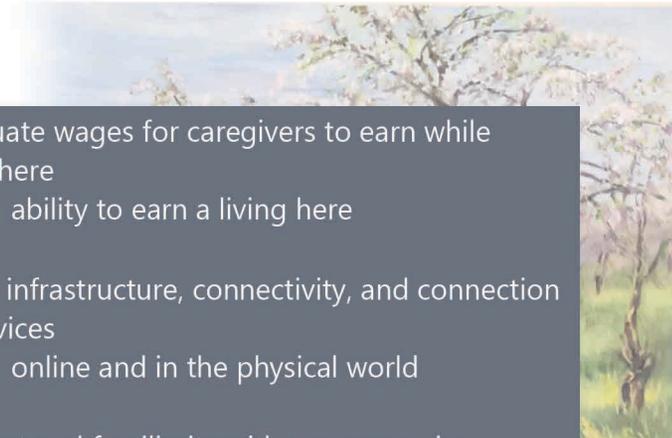


II. How We Want To Face Growing Older

- A. Connected community with a sense of security
 - ♦ connected to each other for support and peace of mind
- B. Change in attitude about "senior" to see it as an asset
 - ♦ seniors as a strength for the community
- C. More intergenerational housing and activities
 - ♦ tangible ways for us to come together in diverse groups
- D. Better understanding of issues by everyone
 - ♦ informed and engaged
- E. We want our families with us and they need to work
 - ♦ viable employment opportunities
- F. Adequate wages for caregivers to earn while living here
 - ♦ ability to earn a living here
- G. Better infrastructure, connectivity, and connection to services
 - ♦ online and in the physical world
- H. Comfort and familiarity with our own aging realities
 - ♦ understanding and ability to access services when needed



Discuss Door County {14}



III. The Situation We Face

A. We love Door County

- ♦ we value our environmental treasures
- ♦ this place fosters and nurtures creativity
- ♦ there's a lot of good things about Door County but we could be doing more

B. For those of us without a strong support network, we feel isolated and unsafe

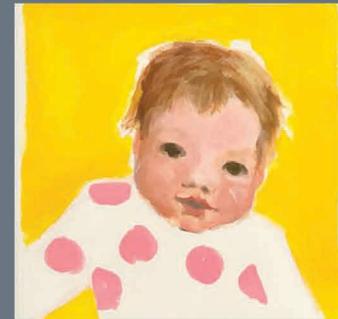
- ♦ concern about our physical safety, such as falling in the shower
- ♦ lack of connection with neighbors leads to fear and isolation
- ♦ close-minded about the views and values of others

C. Our geography keeps us disconnected

- ♦ how do we connect across the open spaces we love

D. We don't have enough opportunities to interact across generations and with those different from us

- ♦ we don't have opportunities to experience the vibrancy and richness of younger people
- ♦ we value the wisdom of our elders but don't know how to connect with it
- ♦ lack of a sense of community across generations and throughout the entire peninsula



E. Door County is not a viable or attractive place to live for those who could provide care as we age

- ♦ difficulty filling open positions in healthcare and other service jobs
- ♦ young people who could care for their older family members cannot find satisfactory employment

F. Our infrastructure hinders our ability to be connected with each other within and beyond Door County

- ♦ physical structure
 - lack of options for living in communal community clusters
 - many places are not safely and easily accessible for those with physical limitations
- ♦ residents are unaware of the services that are available

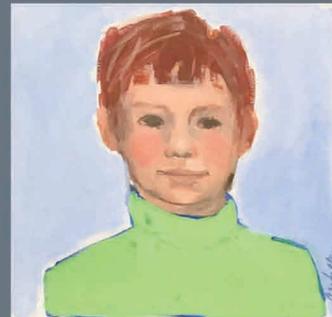
- ♦ local governments are disconnected and at times seem unresponsive to the issues we care about the most

- ♦ unpredictable and/or unavailable digital connectivity

- limited or no ability to conduct on-line work from home

- barrier for young families or new businesses to make Door County their home

- current healthcare technology is limited by inadequate internet connectivity



IV. What Needs to Happen to Address the Situation

- A. Foster intergenerational spirit across all of Door County and cultivate opportunities that elevate and enrich intergenerational experiences that encourage mutual appreciation, respect, and love
- B. Create safe places that provide a meaningful way for us to share stories and life experiences and foster a willingness to hear, consider, and understand other's opinions
- C. Create the conditions which entice younger people to move to and/or stay in Door County
- D. Welcome people of different ethnicities, religions, ages, orientations, and beliefs - and be aware of ways in which we may not be welcoming
- E. Improve digital connectivity in all areas of the county
- F. Create economically-diverse, communal cluster communities that enable increased accessibility to services, sharing of resources, and neighborly mutual care
- G. Communicate about available services in better ways so that more people see and access support available to them
- H. Advocate for and enact government policies which support physical, virtual, and personal connectivity



V. Conditions Needed to Make Progress

- A. Individuals seeing themselves as a part of community and not afraid of being a neighbor
- B. More kindness, compassion, and respect among and between all of us
- C. Individuals seeking out their neighbors and creating connections
- D. More conversations that let us sort out and hear each other
- E. People connected directly to each other without endless reliance on technology
- F. People taking responsibility for asking for and finding out about resources
- G. Expansion of digital access for all of the county
- H. More people involved in connecting to government and local decisions

Wisdom Late Acquired

What did I know then of old women
in sturdy black oxfords with sensible heels,
with cardigans draped over rounded shoulders,
their knobby fingers grasping knitting needles, crochet hooks,
stitching one more cap, one more sweater,
a proxy hug for a great-grandchild
in Houston or Hawaii, a child
they might never meet. *Boring,*
I said, *dull, unattractive, out of touch.*

What did I know then of bedpans emptied,
tantrums endured, of soup and stews
spooned between the reluctant lips of old men
lost in the netherworld between past
and present. And oh, the smiles,
the hard-willed smiles, the murmured
encouragement, the insistent prayers.

What did I know then of the courage
of old women, exchanging their stories
over those knitting needles, over coffee,
over the phone, of the energy spent
shoring one another up, shoring themselves up
through the shortening seasons.

VI. Steps We Can Take to Make Progress

- A. Keep the conversation going by inviting others to add their voices to the discussion
- B. Spark thoughtful, intentional efforts to create intergenerational communities for living, working, and addressing services
- C. Hold more neighborhood block parties and events to encourage people to come out of their homes to get to know each other - especially across generations
- D. Create more responsive support structures to nurture entrepreneurs
- E. Create a central resource so that people know and share what services are available
- F. Create opportunities for ongoing dialogue with governments and organizations.



They is Us: A Discussion Guide

We encourage you to gather a few friends around your kitchen table, or a couple of colleagues in a conference room, to talk about *They is Us*, our community statement about Growing Older in Door County. Here are some questions to get the conversation going.

1. Tell us something you love about Door County.
2. Whether a young child entering kindergarten, or about to celebrate your 90th birthday, we are all growing older. What kind of a community do you want as we all grow older together?
 - ♦ Why is that important?
 - ♦ What difference would that make?
 - ♦ What would that look like?
 - ♦ How have you experienced that in your life?
3. How are our aspirations reflected in what the community says it wants?
 - ♦ What are our shared dreams for aging in Door County?
4. What can we do as individuals and/or organizations to incorporate this into our lives and/or work?
5. Now that we've learned what our community wants, how can we change what we do on a daily basis?
 - ♦ Where could we use what we are learning?
 - ♦ What are the possibilities for moving ahead?
6. What can we do collectively?
7. The Door County Community Foundation would love to hear how you're using this Community Statement. Please e-mail us at Discuss@GiveDoorCounty.org.

Discuss Door County

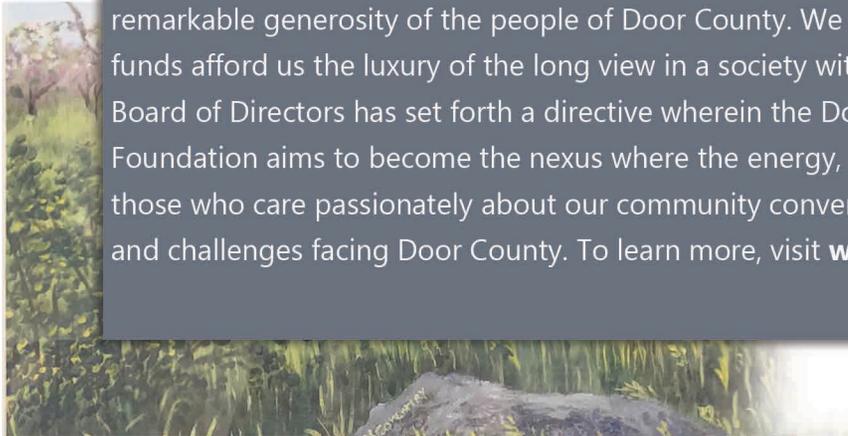
Discuss Door County is the banner under which the Door County Community Foundation listens to the community. Among the most important qualities that the Community Foundation can cultivate is curiosity about the community we serve. Among the most important skills we can develop is the ability to forge consensus. We also recognize that expertise comes in many forms and includes the practical knowledge gained by people whose daily lives are affected by the issue being addressed. Whether by commissioning studies, convening all of the known organizations and entities that deal with a particular issue, or hosting neighborhood conversations like these, the Community Foundation is acquiring a deep understanding about our community.

The Community Foundation is mindful of the privileged position we occupy thanks to the remarkable generosity of the people of Door County. We understand that our endowment funds afford us the luxury of the long view in a society with a short attention span. Our Board of Directors has set forth a directive wherein the Door County Community Foundation aims to become the nexus where the energy, talent, ideas, and resources of those who care passionately about our community converge to meet the opportunities and challenges facing Door County. To learn more, visit www.DiscussDoorCounty.org.

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The Door County Community Foundation is pleased to include artwork from Door County artists in this Community Statement. We wish to extend our sincere thanks to those who submitted their work. The Community Foundation has donated \$250 to a Door County charity selected by each of the artists whose work is included in *They is Us*.

Cover/Page19	<i>4G</i> by Buttons Wolst
Page 2	<i>Aging Orchard</i> by Martha Coventry
Page 3	<i>Road to the Ferry</i> by Laurie Haig
Page 6	<i>View from the "MO" Bridge</i> by Gerald Richter
Page 7	<i>Eagle Harbor</i> by Brian Pier
Page 10	<i>Fire in the Sky</i> by Susan Hoffman
Page 11 (a)	<i>Nesting</i> by Bonnie Hartmann
Page 11 (b)	<i>Moonset Over Chambers</i> by Nancy Sargent
Page 11 (c)	<i>Circadian Rhythm</i> by Bonnie Hartmann
Page 12 (a)	<i>Home for the First Time</i> by Nalani Bicoy
Page 12 (b)	<i>Heart in Hand</i> by Sherry Mutchler
Page 18	<i>Wisdom Late Acquired</i> by Judy Roy
Page 22	<i>Untitled</i> by Faith Blackley



This effort was created and jointly funded by these philanthropic institutions:

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United Way of Door County

Discuss Door County {22}

discuss

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Growing Older in Door County, Wisconsin



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