

FEEDBACK FOR THE SITE VISIONING COMMITTEE FROM EVANSTON FRIENDS

The annual gathering for Illinois Yearly Meeting at McNabb is an opportunity for Friends to connect with the wider and deeper Quaker fellowship. We gather, face to face, with Friends from around the Middle West, and beyond, in a place that has deep historical roots for our community and our country. Young Friends, young families and seasoned Friends can renew friendships and share the experience in a beautiful natural setting. A sense of connection to ILYM varies widely among members and attenders in Evanston Meeting. A young teen says it is "awesome." Another member said it was like "Girl Scout camp for grownups," as well as parents, and young children, and includes camping out, fireflies over the fields, bright stars at night. For others, the simplicity of the site is not as comfortable as they would prefer. Some like the chance to stay in the country in simple accommodations. Others desire more comfortable facilities. The likelihood of changes in weather, including heat and thunderstorms discourage others.

For Chicago Friends travelling to McNabb is challenging although it is deeply refreshing once we have arrived. Greater awareness of Amtrak `railroad transport schedules and planned coordination of pickups, even renting a bus, might help us be more willing to travel by public transportation.

Development of the Mills' house as a simple retreat center, for individuals or small groups, might be an opportunity for Friends to use the site. Although the building of the dormitory and the new kitchen seems less likely than it did a few years ago, the Mills property that has been refurbished might be used for this purpose. This might require the employment of at least a part time coordinator to plan and prepare food and to help facilitate this. Planning to use the site as the location of Fall and Spring Continuing Committee Meetings might be another opportunity. Increasing sleeping facilities connected to the Mills house was suggested as a way to host small retreats and accommodate some that are not drawn to camping or group cabins. Having golf carts might improve mobility of some between different parts of the property.

Another member felt such a commitment to responsibilities at the monthly meeting that she felt the yearly meeting would be seen as a distraction.

A desire was expressed for increased awareness of the work of ILYM beyond the annual gathering. This includes more awareness of work such as the development of Faith and Practice and the work of the Field Secretary. Promotion of ILYM's relationship to EFM by a specific person might raise awareness. This might be a more active role than only being representative to Continuing Committee. We would also like more intervisitation from ILYM committee members.