

FOND DU LAC VISION & STRATEGIC PLAN

Attracting & Retaining the Next Generation Workshop Summary

Wednesday, August 19, 2015

Overview

On Wednesday, August 19, 2015, an *Envision Fond du Lac* workshop was held at Agnesian HealthCare from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm. The workshop focused specifically on issues relating to attracting and retaining the next generation of residents and business owners.

After a brief introduction to the *Envision Fond du Lac* planning process, participants were given one hour to brainstorm ideas on how to recruit and retain young professionals. To focus the discussions, participants could select any of the following topics to discuss:

- Creating More Employment Opportunities
- Creating More Opportunities for Professional Development & Growth
- Establishing a Young Professionals Scene
- Improving Access to Post-Secondary Degrees
- Better Leveraging the Area's Strengths
- Addressing Compensation
- Engaging Current Students
- Other

The working group wrote down their recommended ideas, programs, and policies on a worksheet provided by the consultant.

Note on Summary Context

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions received. Some comments were shared with the entire audience, while others were recorded privately on worksheets. It is important to note that the items identified in this summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

Community Ideas

The ideas developed are presented below and collated based on the discussion topics chosen by each discussion group.

Creating More Employment Opportunities

- Offer certificate programs so that job descriptions don't always need to require a master's degree if a bachelors or masters will suffice
- Growth paths for associates at small businesses and/or more exposure for those associates to grow in their career
- Job swapping programs within the same company and across different companies
- Mentoring programs for high school or college students
- Offer flex work schedules, more vacation days, and options to work from home

- Make the workplace “fun” – think about why Google is such a premier place that people want to work
- Break the mold of older generations and learn to accept quirks of millennials – recognize that times are changing

Creating More Opportunities for Professional Development & Growth

- Increase networking and social opportunities for young professionals
- More cross-pollination between organizations – e.g. bring in a speaker and have several organizations sponsor it
- Expand missions of local university – make UW-FDL a four-year college and offer more graduate degree programs at both UW-FDL and Marian University
- More professional workshop series
- Offer peer-to-peer mentoring with a focus on sharing what makes their businesses successful

Establishing a Young Professionals Scene

- More walkable mixed-use district
- Address “food deserts” in Downtown area
- Make Downtown more urban with better public transportation
- Bring young professional programming to area businesses
- Show local businesses the value of hosting young professional programs
- Establish “professional” establishments for young professionals to hang out after work
- Offer intermural activities through the YMCA such as basketball and biking
- Help young professionals find information to join activities, groups, boards, etc.
- Better entertainment options
- Explore options of colleges having four year degrees vs. 2 year degrees – hard to feel part of a community with only two year programming
- Cultural amenities geared towards interests of 25-35 years, such as music, entertainment, sports, parks, unique restaurants, beaches, water sports, food cards, etc.; need something more than sitting at a bar
- Capitalize on Downtown – gear it towards students and young professionals by creating spaces they want to go such as coffee shops, boutiques, restaurants, etc.
- Capitalize on student majors that are popular within the community and develop ways to make them want to stay such as nursing, arts, education, and sports/recreation
- Housing that meets the needs of young professionals and students
- Grocery stores
- Places with a cool vibe, live music, good prices, and entertainment – such as a coffee shop, wine bar, or brewery/beer establishment
- Better “fast casual” restaurants that have a cool vibe, good prices, Wi-Fi, and are centrally located
- Create “experiences” for young people – cool apartment options near bars, restaurants, entertainment, coffee shops, dance classes, yoga, etc.
- Host outdoor activities such as movies or jazz in the park, beer gardens, outdoor ice rinks, etc.

Improving Access to Post-Secondary Degrees

- Career path education at high school level
- Partnerships between employers, high schools, universities, and colleges
- Local job market research

- Employer sponsored degrees – work while you learn
- Increase flexibility in higher education – night classes, secondary degree opportunities, online classes, etc. – many students have a family and full time job which make it hard to take classes during the day
- Create better support systems for non-traditional students such as study lounges, mentoring, childcare, etc.
- FAFSA support classes and more scholarships for local, non-traditional students
- Employers should pay for their employees to further their education and given them the support and flexibility to do so

Better Leveraging the Area's Strengths

- Take advantage of retail on the interstate
- Better utilize Lakeside Park
- Promote resources and fishing recreation
- Promote free activities and events
- Encourage suppliers of existing manufacturing to move closer
- Promote shopping local
- Take advantage of shopping local
- Promote small-town city feel
- Offer bike and kayak rentals and storage at major parks such as Lakeside Park
- Capitalize on natural/recreational assets within Fond du Lac and the surrounding region such as Kettle Moraine State Forest, Lakeside Park, and the Loop bike trail
- Promote new opportunities for reusing vacant business space and buildings
- Student discounts at local businesses
- Promote recreational opportunities such as Lake Winnebago and the Loop bike trail
- Friendly community “once you get in”
- Market how safe our community is compared to other areas in close proximity, such as Milwaukee, Green Bay, Appleton, and Madison
- Promote the strengths of our schools
- Breakdown misconceptions that Marian University is “ritzy” and “too expensive”

Engaging Current Students

- Support Leadership Fond du Lac high school program
- Reinforce the image that we are a small town with a variety of benefits that come with it – e.g. running into people you know
- Need activities that encourage interactions and create introductions
- Integrate non-profit participation for high school students, college students, and young professionals – specifically, increase board memberships for people under 30
- Better school and business communication to find internships
- Job shadowing
- Better school and university support, especially from professors and advisors
- Establish better young adult scene
- Ask area organizations to start involving students in their boards or committees, including creating mentorship opportunities

- Expand into a mentorship program for students to pair with area leaders in a non-threatening way and make it less intimidating
- Take an existing event such as Walleye Weekend and include a student leadership aspect for a fresh perspective
- Area businesses should advertise internship opportunities on websites and job sites
- Emphasize the importance of pre-work experiences and developing talent

Other – Diversity

- Understand why those of different backgrounds don't want to move here – what are we missing?