

# FOND DU LAC VISION & STRATEGIC PLAN

## Economic Development & Entrepreneurship Workshop Summary

*Wednesday, August 19, 2015*

### Overview

On Wednesday, August 19, 2015, an *Envision Fond du Lac* workshop was held at the YMCA in the Multipurpose Room from 11:30am to 1:00pm. The workshop focused specifically on issues relating to economic development and entrepreneurship.

After a brief introduction to the *Envision Fond du Lac* planning process, participants were split up into several working groups and given one hour to brainstorm ideas on how to grow and strengthen Fond du Lac's economy. To focus the discussions, groups could select any of the following topics to discuss:

- Diversifying & Modernizing the Employment Base
- Workforce Development & Education
- Entrepreneurship & Small Business Growth
- Tourism & Entertainment
- Shopping Local
- Downtown
- Other

Each working group wrote down their recommended ideas, programs, and policies on a worksheet provided by the consultant. After the break-out session, each working group also presented their ideas to the entire audience.

### *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. Several groups opted to create their own discussion topics, which are noted by the "other" heading.

#### *Diversifying & Modernizing the Employment Base*

- Make Fond du Lac more welcoming – does not matter whether unwelcoming reputation is real or perceived, it is there
- Radio stations need to make sure Fond du Lac is promoted and given fair coverage
- Lots of people who work here do not live here and vice-versa
- Market the community - if people do not see Fond du Lac as a nice place to live and have fun, they won't want to be employed here
- Build a cultural center or central meeting place for community gatherings

- Conduct trend analysis on up-and-coming markets and work with post-secondary institutions for credentialing opportunities
- Transition endangered jobs and industries to emerging careers, particularly in STEM
- Businesses need to align actual requirements to the applicant pool
- Educate the community

### *Workforce Development & Education*

- Businesses need to be involved in education and quality of life
- We need a medium to communicate what is going on here so people know – newspaper is non-existent and there is no local television station, although KFIZ does a good job of communicating
- Encourage internships and partnerships
- Clarify, market, and communicate image
- Talent upload – give students exposure to industries and other opportunities they might not normally consider
- Establish “sister city” relationships
- Encourage partnerships between local companies and institutions
- Use our current strengths and opportunities in progress to springboard to additional opportunities
- Recognize that manufacturing will be a big part of the future
- Target the right industries
- Shift to a values-based hiring system
- Provide pathways-back credentialing for adults
- Address communications deficits in the community
- Develop a collective impact plan/programming for cradle-to-career training (e.g. birth to 5 years, K-12 programming, post-secondary pathways, etc.)
- Boost positives of the community and overcome negative perceptions

### *Entrepreneurship & Small Business Growth*

- Ensure access to venture capital and angel investing to allow businesses to raise funds
- Need seed funding for start-ups to tap into – some do not qualify for traditional lending avenues but will not go to venture capitalists
- Work with banks to ensure businesses have access to capital – some banks don’t want to take a risk because the loan applicant does not have a recognizable last name
- Make starting a business easy using programs such as IGNITE
- Go to Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) and State of Wisconsin to procure research grants and research products
- Promote networking between businesses, educational partners, and not-for-profits
- Build relationships between funding partners, Wisconsin institutions, and the community
- Focus, focus, focus – similar to Aviation Park in Oshkosh
- Participate in accelerator programs
- Get foundations involved
- Find grants – federal, state, and other funds
- Communicate tax benefits of hiring low-income workers and veterans
- Establish an arts district with THELMA as the anchor

- Conduct trade missions between Fond du Lac and cities across the world
- Make sure that people know resources that exist
- Work to get the community “in the know” – the world is in a transitional phase of how people hear/read their news and often times information gets stuck in the middle
- Issue welcome packets to new people moving into the area, explaining the available resources and how to integrate themselves into the community
- Nurture entrepreneurial roots at a young age so students will keep roots in the communities
- Work with educational institutions to get classes and programs available for businesses
- Work with big businesses and corporations to assist local entrepreneurs
- Support business start-ups through FCEDC programs
- Increase positive awareness of the community via billboards
- Offer entrepreneurship courses to school age kids
- Develop high school programs that support learning innovative thinking skills
- Create a small business directory for local business-to-business (B2B) and community consumers
- Create a culture of brainstorming that can come up with new ideas
- Engage boomers to stay engaged with new businesses post-retirement
- Need to make process of moving a business here welcoming and supportive and prevent obstacles
- Change the climate to be open, diverse, and welcoming
- Increase visibility of Fond du Lac County Economic Development Corporation, IGNITE, and mentoring programs
- Increase link between entrepreneurs and graduates
- Publicize the success stories through a mix of social media and conventional outlets
- Develop a local “kick-starter” type of programming
- More “lemonade days” for children to understand and have hands-on business experience
- Develop a business incubator for small businesses

### *Tourism & Entertainment*

- Develop agreement between Association of Commerce, Fond du Lac County Economic Development Corporation, Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, Fond du Lac Festivals, and Fond du Lac Convention and Visitor’s Bureau

### *Shopping Local*

- Recruit stores that will attract young professionals
- Attract shopping where residents will want to linger and spend time browsing
- Get rid of dead strip malls

### *Downtown*

- Capitalize on Downtown’s potential - older generation says how much better the Downtown was in the 1960s and 1970s
- Change the message regarding Downtown – get radio stations to stop talking bad about Downtown Fond du Lac
- Promote and market existing assets – art walks, peddle pubs, bakery, etc.
- Evaluate the creation of a publicly available restroom
- Identify and recruit businesses that the community will support

- Create a consumer scavenger hunt that sends consumers to different stores over the course of a month's time
- Redevelop or position upper floors of buildings for residential/loft use
- Address parking
- Identify grant and incentive funding to bring in new businesses
- Identify ways for businesses to promote local businesses to their employees such as discounts
- Social offices, residents, and businesses should come together to devise a plan to make downtown attractive to millennials and families, both to frequent and live downtown
- Make Downtown safer
- Take advantage of the fact Fond du Lac has three colleges to draw in activity
- Create leagues for college students at the YMCA
- Make facades look alive until a tenant moves in
- Re-evaluate the downtown district plan
- Paint murals on boarded up buildings to make Downtown vibrant
- Ensure clear definition of the respective responsibilities of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership and the Fond du Lac County Economic Development Corporation
- Host activities every night or on most nights to promote Downtown as a gathering place
- Repurpose Downtown into a pedestrian mall with no cars
- More food trucks
- Move the Community Theatre to Downtown

#### *Other – Lakefront*

- Move forward with the Lakeside Park Exploratory Committee's recommendations

#### *Other – Communicate A Positive Image*

- Emphasize "an hour from everything" – arts, sports, the water, culture, etc.
- Emphasize high quality of life – low crime, recreation, the YMCA, STEM Academy, 3 universities, etc.
- Promote I-41 as it is now an interstate

#### *Other – Investment*

- Taxes for specific uses to fund meaningful projects
- We need to move faster – as one area improves, others will follow suit
- We need to educate more individuals, not just business people to understand what needs to be accomplished and why
- We need to think in big picture with small building blocks

#### *Other – Urbanize*

- Need a better "vibe" to create excitement
- Need to offer better schools
- Need to offer more arts and activities to get people to want to move here

#### *Other – Increasing Wages*

- Increase private wage structure through non-manufacturing sectors, thus increasing disposable income
- Focus efforts on IT/business services recruitment

- Work as a region vs. individual communities
- Identify community assets and know what we need to keep in our community as we change, adapt, and grow