

FOND DU LAC VISION & STRATEGIC PLAN

Student Workshop #1: Fond du Lac High School Workshop

Friday, March 20, 2015

An *Envision Fond du Lac* workshop was held with 20 students from Fond du Lac High School. Participants included freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The workshop began with a brief overview of the planning process and concluded with a student discussion of issues, concerns, and ideas. The workshop included a questionnaire exercise, from which participants shared their written comments with the overall group. The following is an issue-based summary of the input received during the workshop.

Note on Summary Context

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions received in response to workshop questions. Some comments were shared with the entire group, 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.

Issues & Concerns

Students were first asked to identify the most important issues facing greater Fond du Lac. Participants voiced their concerns regarding a range of issues; however, many comments centered on key themes, which are summarized by issue categories below.

Youth Retention & Involvement

A central concern of students is the ability of greater Fond du Lac to retain and involve youth in the community, particularly teenagers, college-age students, and young professionals. Discussion focused on the lack of entertainment options and activities geared toward younger residents, with many students feeling there aren't enough "things to do" in the area. Similarly, many respondents felt that local youth are often ignored or not asked their opinion regarding changes that will have an effect on the community. Overall, participants believe that the lack of local youth activities and involvement decreases the community's ability to retain students after graduation, with many leaving for college and choosing not to return.

Business Retention

Students discussed recent business closures and vacancies throughout the area, with a particular focus on Main Street and Forest Mall. The students expressed concern that vacant areas Downtown attract bad behavior as well as concern about how closing businesses reflected on the community. Students felt that Forest Mall was one of the main opportunities for them to meet and socialize but were concerned about its state and ability to bring in new stores. Students did note they were excited about the openings of Panera and Panda Express.

Identity & Image

Students expressed general concerns for the community's appearance, ranging from vacant storefronts to parking lot and road surface conditions to litter and debris on public streets. Students also noted that many of the residential streets adjacent to Downtown are not as well maintained as they could be. In addition, participants noted that the buildings and business districts that act as gateways and entrances to greater Fond du Lac were in poor condition, creating an unwelcoming or unfriendly first impression of the community.

Traffic Flow & Connectivity

Students raised concerns about traffic slow within the area. Discussion centered on particular routes and intersections with difficult turns and poorly timed traffic signals. It was also noted that flow is greatly limited by trains travelling through the area, which can cause backups and congestion. Students demonstrated a preference for roundabouts for reducing congestion and increasing flow, with many believing additional roundabouts would help improve transportation within the area.

Priority Actions & Projects

Students were asked to list specific projects or actions that could improve greater Fond du Lac. Their responses provide a wide range of ideas in the categories of economic development, parks and recreation, governmental services, education, transportation, and identity. All responses are listed below:

Economic Development

- Modernize greater Fond du Lac with new and advanced technology
- Fill empty properties and vacancies
- Attract new businesses to the area, particularly big businesses
- Attract more restaurant variety across the entire area
- Attract jobs that offer higher wages and a high quality of job satisfaction
- Develop more entertainment options for younger age groups or families, such as Funset Boulevard in Appleton
- Develop more dedicated entertainment areas as opposed to simply retail/bar developments

Parks and Recreation

- Clean Lake Winnebago
- Add a beach at Lakeside Park including recreation like sand volleyball
- Add outdoor features to make a place for teens to gather, such as a snack stand at Lakeside Park

Governmental Services

- Place greater focus on all generations, particularly increased attention on youth, in terms of services, identity, land use, and all aspects of the region
- Create a community health initiative
- Create an initiative to decrease littering and encourage residents to help keep the area clean
- Decrease crime through increased law enforcement
- Establish places for homeless individuals to live

Education

- Improve higher education offerings
- Place a larger focus on academic success and accomplishments
- Give media attention to academic accomplishments
- Support all education programs equally, such as academics, athletics, and fine arts
- Greater support of fine arts in the area, particularly in schools

Transportation

- Improve safety at major intersections, such as at Route 151 and DuCharme Parkway
- Add more roundabouts to decrease traffic

Identity

- Make improvements to Main Street to attract younger generations to the area
- Create more events and festivals
- Nurture a shared sense of community that is more welcoming and friendly
- Get the community involved
- Establish traditions and customs that people will look forward to each year
- Create more civic spaces and gathering areas for the community
- Improve the appearance of gateways into the region
- Review and enforce codes for property maintenance of structures and yards
- Establish a clear central hub or core within greater Fond du Lac
- Celebrate and publicize local successes and accomplishments

Community Strengths & Assets

The workshop concluded with a discussion of the assets that greater Fond du Lac has to build upon and should be preserved moving forward. Students identified Lake Winnebago, Lakeside Park, Fond du Lac's regional location, and local roundabouts as top strengths for the area. All assets and strengths identified in the workshop are listed below:

- Lake Winnebago
- Local parks
- Lakeside Park
- Regional location & access
- Local roads and roundabouts
- Small-town community size
- Safety
- St. Agnes Hospital/Agnesian
- Fond du Lac High school, particularly community service projects and its performing arts programming
- Public events & festivals
- Parades
- Walleye Weekend
- Fondue Fest
- Friday football games
- Bowling
- Gilles Frozen Custard
- Fine Arts
- Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts
- Diversity and growing acceptance of diversity
- Great place to grow up
- A community with a little bit of everything
- Local dealerships
- Local restaurants are improving