

FOND DU LAC VISION & STRATEGIC PLAN

Workshop at Mercury Marine Global Headquarters

Monday, April 14, 2015

On Tuesday, April 14, 2015 at 3:00 p.m., an *Envision Fond du Lac* workshop was held with hourly floor workers at Plant 15 at the Mercury Marine Global Headquarters.

The workshop began with a brief overview of the planning process and concluded with a community 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 these four 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

Attendees 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.

Creating Well-Paying Jobs

The majority of participants voiced concern over the state of employment in greater Fond du Lac, in particular the lack of high paying jobs. Respondents felt that the absence of steady, good paying jobs places economic constraints on individuals and specific groups in the community and discourages young professionals from moving to the area. Some noted felt that more than “high-paying” jobs, the community needed “sufficient” wages, or jobs with living wages. Many believed there is a gap between the higher paying jobs in greater Fond du Lac and minimum wage jobs, which restricts many employees to lower wages jobs. Many felt that the discussed wage gap was creating poverty within greater Fond du Lac.

Attracting & Retaining Businesses

Those in attendance called attention to the high amount of vacant or underutilized properties in greater Fond du Lac. Participants discussed the difficult of opening, operating, or maintain a business in Fond du Lac, particularly in areas such as the Forest Mall or Downtown Fond du Lac. Respondents noted that business growth and programs to bring new and small businesses to the area would be helpful in maintaining economic growth in the area as well as providing new employment options.

Improving Education Access & Quality

Closely linked with employment issues were concerns over education in greater Fond du Lac. Discussion of employment centered around two main topics. First, participants argued that the gap between wage levels in Fond du Lac is perpetuated by a gap between the skills employers are seeking and those common in the local labor base. Those in attendance felt that increased higher education options, such as technical schools, would

help create a labor base that can meet the needs of new and existing employers. Second, participants discussed the state of grade school education for children and the need for improvement. Many argued that local education options are not sufficient, which can be a deterrent to employers and new residents looking to settle in the area.

Accommodating Evening Shift Workers

Mercury Marine employees discussed the difficulties surrounding late shifts (the 2nd and 3rd shifts) and finding basic amenities at later hours in the day. With later shifts letting out at uncommon hours, many basic amenities such as public transit, shops and convenience stores, and daycare facilities are closed. Participants linked this issues with the need for more diversified employment opportunities and local businesses which would help support those working later shifts and provide new options for those unable to maintain such hours.

Reducing Crime

The prevalence of crime in greater Fond du Lac was a central concern for workshop attendees, particularly as it relates to drugs and violence. Participants emphasize the high amount of violent incidents and the easy accessibility of drugs which contributes to poor safety and a poor public perception. Some respondents felt that crime is increasing within the region and becoming more common among younger residents. This concern was also linked to issues facing those working late shifts, when crime is more common to occur.

Improving Housing Diversity & Quality

Workshop participants called for greater housing diversity and new, more affordable options. In discussion of the wage gap in employment, many felt that new housing options would help alleviate concerns over low wages. Similarly, most respondents highlighted the need for the city to hold landlords more accountable for issues occurring on their properties. This included code violations and property repair, as well as unsafe or illegal activities.

Enhancing Public Transportation, Biking, & Walking

Mercury Marine employees emphasized the lack of transportation options within Fond du Lac. Participants noted that bus routes and schedules often did not meet the needs of residents, particularly those employed in late shifts or irregular hours. In addition, the lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure was noted, regarding a decreasing in connectivity and limitation on local mobility.

Offering Youth Activities

Many participants highlighted the lack of youth activities and locations for children and teens to spend time. This was linked to difficulties retaining young professionals and recent graduates in the community. The Mercury Marine employees felt that new activities and events, as well as new and interesting development and activities at Lakeside Park and in Downtown Fond du Lac would help retain youth in the area post-graduation and provide entertainment for young children and families.

Priority Actions & Projects

Workshop participants were asked to list specific projects or actions that could improve the greater Fond du Lac area. All responses are listed below, and are in no particular order of importance:

Economic Development

- Develop programs to help support local businesses and keep them longer
- Offer financial aid to small businesses
- Explore and determine the root cause of why businesses are leaving the area

- Retain existing businesses and employers in the area
- Attract employers offering better paying jobs to the area
- Attract more businesses with extended hours
- Find a new use for the empty Home Depot
- Explore way to increase the minimum wage or ensure that local employers pay a livable wage to residents
- Modernize and improve local wages and benefits
- Provide increasing housing options in greater Fond du Lac, including affordable housing
- Reduce subsidized housing
- Increase the standards for rental housing
- Build infrastructure and increase ways for the community to link to local farming efforts

Parks and Recreation

- Make better use of Lake Winnebago and Lakeside Park
- Expand Lakeside Park with new activities and uses or improve existing facilities
- Expand Lakeside Park while ensuring that the area remains a park rather than a commercial development
- Add more bike trails throughout Fond du Lac and increase amenities near bike trails, such as rest areas, bathrooms, or trash cans
- Make recreational areas more inviting
- Expand the fishing area

Governmental Services

- Increase police patrols in Fond du Lac
- Provide programs for police to ride with those concerned for their safety
- Establish a neighborhood watch
- Provide daycare services to local workers
- Open a 24 hour daycare facility
- Address local issues of poverty
- Address local drug issues
- Establish a program to hear complaints from local tenants
- Enforce codes and laws to keep landlords accountable
- Work with local businesses to increase recycling efforts
- Explore state, federal, and local funding options to aid those in poverty

Education

- Explore and determine the root cause of deficiencies in the local education system
- Provide programs to help local residents and workers obtain a G.E.D.
- Offer scholarships to local employees and their families
- Ensure that all local teachers are fully dedicated and invested in child education
- Provide smaller, more efficient public transit with more routes

Transportation

- Extend bus hours, including schedules for Mercury Marine employees and Saturday hours
- Extend bus routes
- Make better road repairs that will last

- Ensure roadways are clean and maintained
- Analyze and properly time traffic lights

Downtown Fond du Lac

- Rebuild and Revitalize the Downtown area
- Make streetscaping improvements in the Downtown to improve the area’s appeal and identity
- Reduce the number of bars in the Downtown area
- Limit the number of liquor licenses in Greater Fond du Lac
- Create a new business climate or outlook to attract small businesses to the Downtown area

Identity

- Place more emphasis on family, not business
- Educate the community on local resources and community resources to help support individual residents
- Provide increased activities, events, and entertainment options
- Provide increased activities for kids, teens, and families
- Support and expand the local music and art scene
- Host a car show and corn roast at the Fairgrounds on labor day, potentially to act as a local fundraiser
- Increase local fundraising
- Host more sporting events

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. Workshop participants identified the people of the community, annual festivals and events, Lakeside and other local parks, and Lake Winnebago as key assets to greater Fond du Lac. All assets and strengths identified in the workshop are listed below:

Services & Facilities

- Local schools
- Blue Line Family Ice Center
- Local churches
- Public library
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Boys Scouts & Girl Scouts
- Technical school education

Identity & Location

- Regional location and access
- Downtown Fond du Lac
- Local history

Natural Resources

- Lake Winnebago
- Local fishing
- Local parks
- Lakeside Park

- Trails and paths
- Dog parks
- Agriculture
- County fairgrounds
- Water quality
- Fond du Lac's harbor

Economic Development

- Mercury Marine
- Numerous employment options
- Fast food options and convenience stores
- Multitude of small businesses
- Promotion of small businesses
- Several large, longstanding businesses that pay adequate wages

Community

- People
- Outgoing personalities
- Hard working people
- Community
- Willingness of citizens to get involved
- Community festivals, events, and parades
- Festivals and events
- Fondue Fest
- Walleye Weekend
- Nice place to live