

envision
FOND DU LAC
MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

PREPARED DECEMBER 16, 2015

WORKING
DRAFT

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DRAFT**

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Let's Get to Work!

OUR COMMUNITY IS AT A CROSSROADS...

Fond du Lac is a tight-knit community that is approaching a critical crossroads. We have deep roots and we know who we are. But who are we going to be moving forward? The world is a rapidly changing place in the twenty-first century. America is becoming more culturally diverse, the world more interconnected, and once stable industries are struggling to remain viable. In the midst of all of this flux, Fond du Lac is searching for a strategy on how best to position itself for success in the future.

....This is a once-in-a-generation wake-up call

A few years ago, a local entrepreneur posed a simple question: “what will it take to make Fond du Lac a dynamic and competitive place in 2050?” Developing a compelling answer was the genesis of Envision Fond du Lac. Over the course of two years, nearly 30 public, institutional, and private entities committed to make an impact together, as a team. Forget turf, there’s no time to argue about jurisdiction. Our charge was to go to the residents and ask them what they want to see in their community, and then do something to make it happen. Envision Fond du Lac is the culmination of these efforts and a call to action for everyone.



We're ready to roll up our sleeves....

This is not a coffee table book. This certainly is not another government report. Envision Fond du Lac is an agenda to propel action. Can Envision Fond du Lac attempt to solve every problem facing the community? No. But it does provide a framework for attacking our community's greatest obstacles? Yes. Progress begets more progress. Success breeds success.

When can we get started? Today. The greater Fond du Lac community is blessed with a multitude of resources that can be leveraged to make a difference. Think of the economies of scale and critical mass that can be achieved when we set our sights on agreed-upon goals, align our resources, and work together!

...and make a better future

Fond du Lac is small, but feisty. We work Midwestern hard and are relentless. Envision Fond du Lac focuses on three priorities: 1) growing our economy and cultivating entrepreneurship; 2) strengthening our sense of community; and 3) investing in our youth and young professionals. We are 100% committed to a brighter future for Fond du Lac.

Hold us accountable....

Talk is cheap. Progress must be tangible and measurable. We are committed to change and are the masters of our own destiny. Hold us accountable through your advocacy, voting, participation at public forums, community involvement, social media activities, and more.

...but roll with the punches.

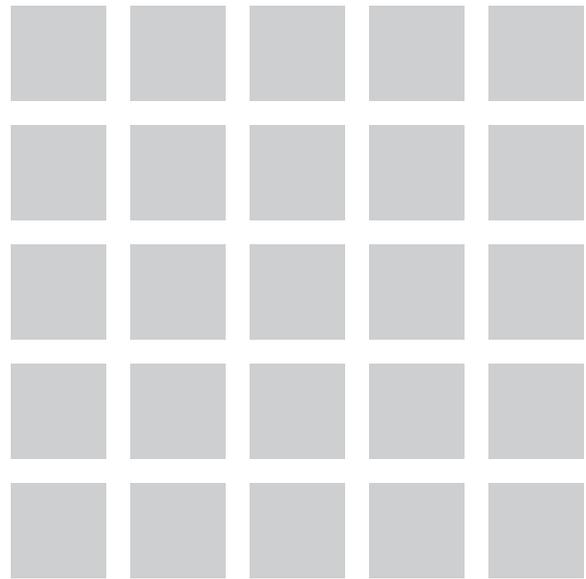
Not every idea in the plan may work, but every recommendation and strategy in the plan should receive our collective best effort. This is a living, breathing document. When something doesn't catch fire after giving it our all, let's be nimble enough to recalibrate the focus and try something new. Envisioning a better Fond du Lac is a fluid, ongoing process with entrepreneurial roots and the heart and soul of a committed people. Success will take dedication and hustle.

So go grab a shovel and join us....

Envision Fond du Lac is YOU. Put some skin in the game. Whether you're a small business willing to coach budding entrepreneurs, a big organization who can cut a six figure check to fund a capital project, or a senior citizen offering to donate a few hours a week to mentor a young student, everyone brings something to the table. Change won't happen overnight, but we're ready to move and shake things up. Join us.

WHO & WHAT IS **ENVISION FOND DU LAC?**

Envision Fond du Lac is both a planning process, a group of community thinkers and doers, and a strategic visioning document for Fond du Lac's future. More than 30 public, private, and institutional entities, as well as hundreds of residents, came together as a team to help develop the plan.



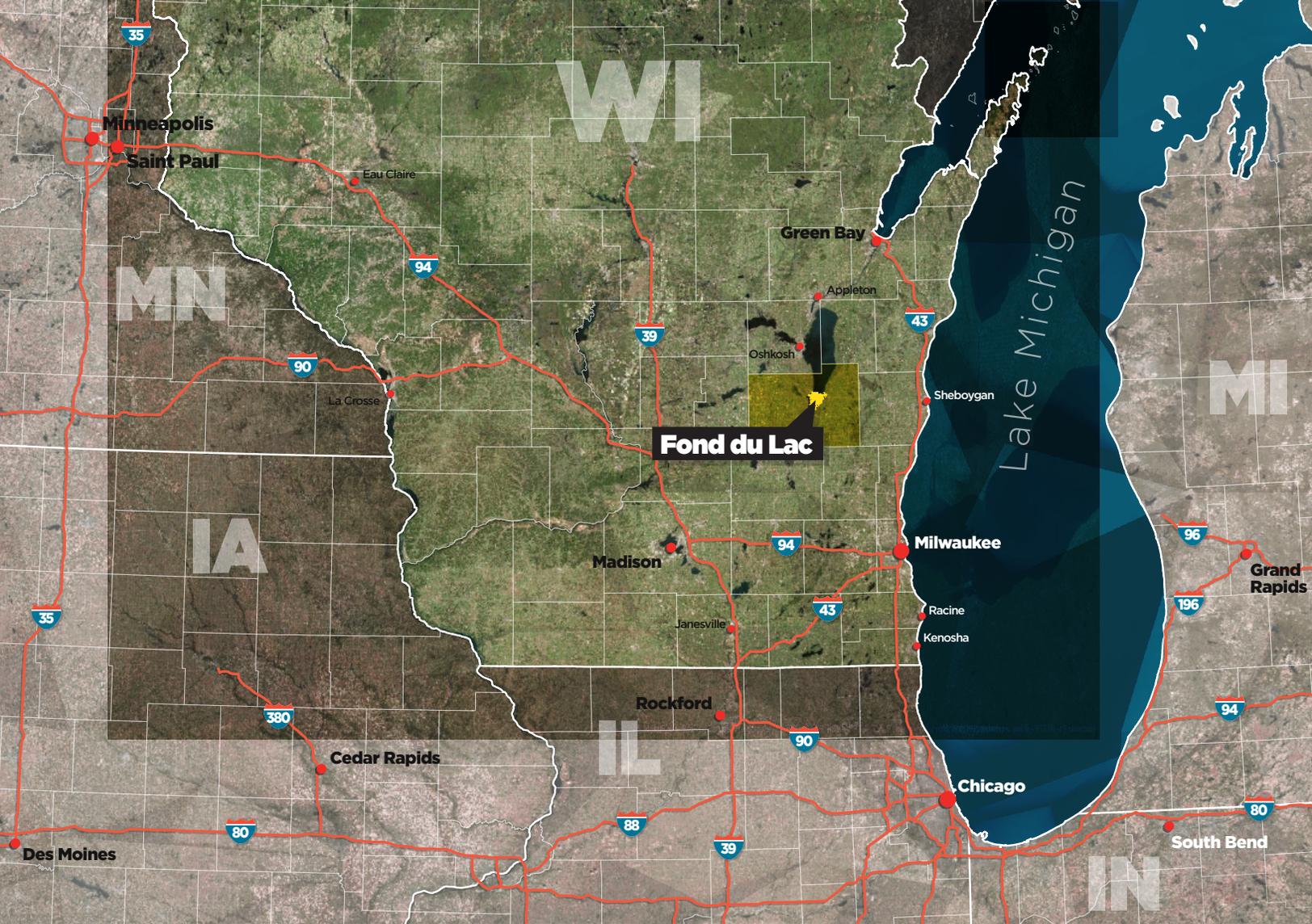
WHAT DOES **ENVISION FOND DU LAC** DO?

Envision Fond du Lac **DOES...**

- Establishes a shared vision for Fond du Lac's future
- Focuses efforts and resources on three big challenges: growing our economy and cultivating entrepreneurship, strengthening our sense of community, and investing in our youth and young professionals
- Changes the conversation about Fond du Lac for the better
- Serves as a forum for cross-jurisdictional and cross-discipline partnerships to solve shared problems, improve communication, and create a critical mass of activity
- Acts as an "action-oriented" body for change

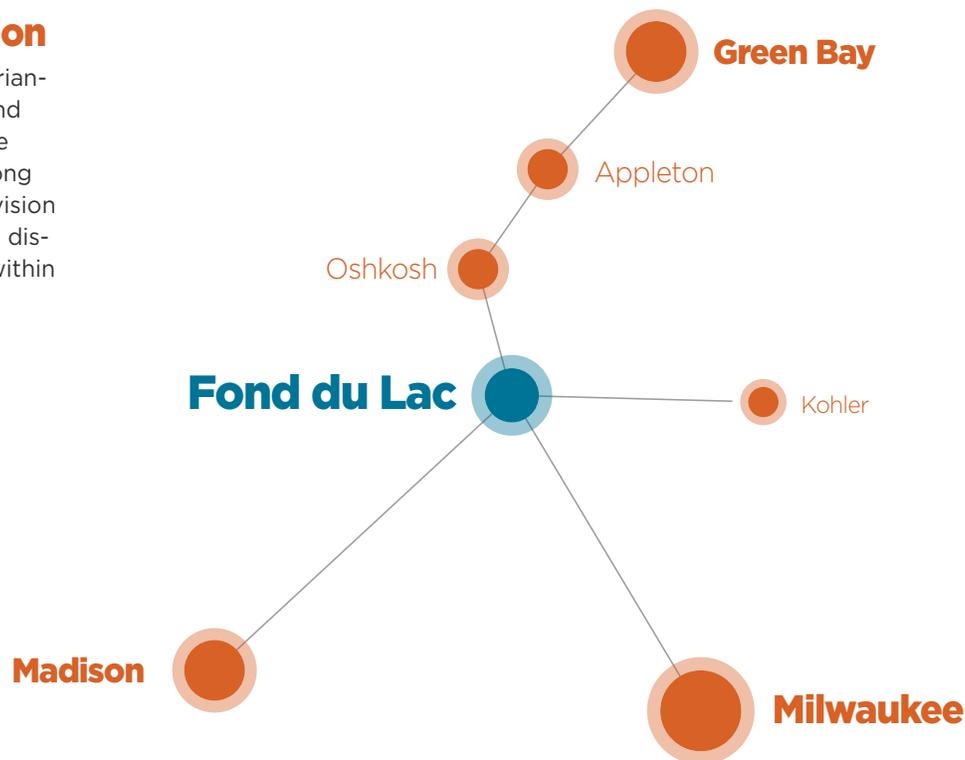
Envision Fond du Lac **DOES NOT...**

- Dictate to local governments or taxing bodies how they should spend their money
- Override internal strategic plans or documents produced by local organizations
- Force any participating entity to relinquish their jurisdiction or authority



A Polycentric Region

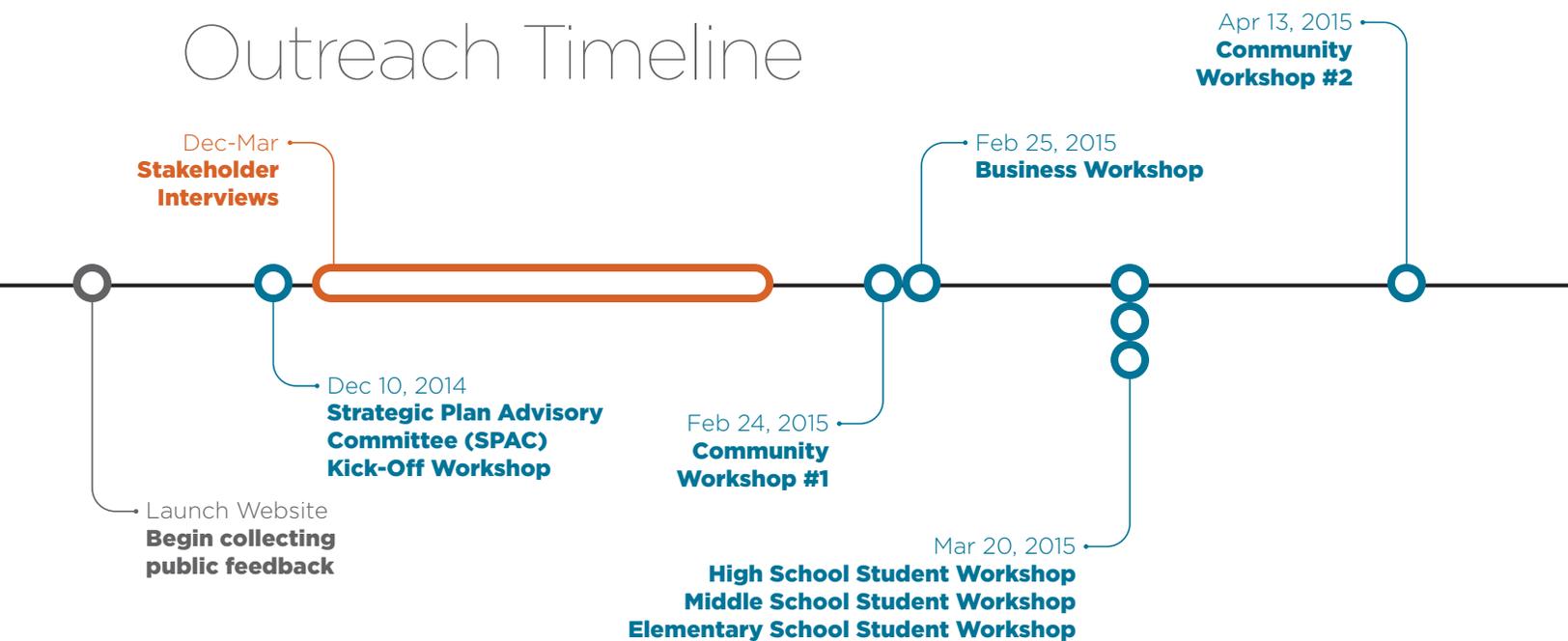
Fond du Lac sits within the triangle of Green Bay, Madison, and Milwaukee. More locally, there are 775,000 people living along I-41. A key component of Envision Fond du Lac is establishing a distinct niche for Fond du Lac within this much larger region.



You Spoke. We Listened.

Over the course of a year, the Envision Fond du Lac planning process engaged hundreds of residents from all walks of life. Targeted efforts were made to ensure typically underrepresented groups, such as low income households, racial and ethnic minorities, students, and young professionals had a voice in the process.

Outreach Timeline



What were the biggest take-aways?

- ☞ We are not as welcoming to outsiders as we should be, although our heart is in the right place.
- ☞ We can be resistant to change and hesitant to embrace new ideas.
- ☞ We are sometimes complacent and think we do not deserve the very best.
- ☞ We punch above our weight. We have great leaders, institutions, businesses, and civic groups. If we work together, we can get so much more accomplished.
- ☞ Our economy must diversify. Being overly-reliant on manufacturing and a small handful of major employers is not a recipe for long-term prosperity.
- ☞ We have great schools, neighborhoods, and parks - it's a no brainer why families choose to live here.
- ☞ We have an amazing array of community assets, but we are too humble to brag about them.

Fantastic Turnout!

You came out by the droves and shared your concerns, your aspirations, and your ideas for change. Your fingerprints are on every page of this plan.



Shutdown Website
239 resident surveys
44 business surveys
20 maps w/ 334 points

Apr 15, 2014
“Leadership Fond du Lac” Workshop

August 20, 2015
ADVOCAP Workshop;
Neighborhood Livability Workshop

Apr 14, 2015
Senior and Retiree Workshop
Mercury Marine Workshop
Young Professional & Student Workshop

August 19, 2015
Economic Development &
Entrepreneurship Workshop;
Attracting & Retaining the
Next Generation Workshop;
Community Identity Workshop

- Downtown has great bones and lots of potential, but lacks activity. It should be the locus of the community and be a community gathering place.
- We need to communicate a clear and compelling reason as to why they should visit or move to Fond du Lac.

- Lakeside Park should be the crown jewel of the region.
- We need more things for our kids and young professionals to do.
- We must have a well-rounded, well-educated workforce and workforce training programs that are nimble and can reposition when the market fluctuations.

- We must light a fire among our youth and get them to think entrepreneurially.
- We’re growing old. We must retain and attract the next generation to inject new life into our community.
- We must look out for each other, including the poorest of the poor.

Our Plan

This is where the rubber meets the road: the plan itself. Envision Fond du Lac focuses on three big ideas: recalibrating of our economy for the 21st century, enhancing our identity and brand, and investing in our children -- the next generation. In conversations with nearly a thousand people over the past year, we heard these issues pop up again and again.

We need to throw everything we've got - including the kitchen sink - at these challenges. They are the most critical pieces to making Fond du Lac a great place to live, work, visit, and invest. Sure, there are many other important issues that need to be addressed to move our community forward. But we can't do everything - we have limited resources and time, and we must maximize our collective splash. And successful achievement of the "big three" will ripple throughout the community and solve many other related challenges.

We must be realistic - accomplishing the "big three" may take a decade. But the following pages contains a game plan of actions, policies, and recommendations that can be implemented to move the needle **starting tomorrow**. Recommendations were designed to be implementable and short-term.

Envision Fond du Lac embraces a fluid and flexible approach. While the "big three" won't change, the game plan certainly will. Conditions on the ground will change. Resources will come online or offline. If a recommendation fails to catch fire, we must go back to the drawing board and conjure up a different approach. As recommendations are implemented, more should be added. We must be tactical and we must stay hungry. Envision is not a static document - it is a living, breathing process.

At the core of the entire Envision Fond du Lac is the notion of collaboration and cooperation. Working together is key because we are a region that does not have resources to waste. In the following pages, some recommendations may already be underway in some form by a single group or small group. What changes now is that it is a priority of the entire community. Now, we can identify ways to bring more folks on board and put more support and resources behind it.

A big pot of money is not going to be dropped on our doorstep. No one is coming to fix our community for us. We, the Fond du Lac community, must band together to chart a new course using the resources we have. This document is our flight plan.

OUR PRIORITIES

Our Economy

Become one of the primary hubs for entrepreneurship, small business start-ups, and quality job growth within Wisconsin and the Midwest.

page
11

Our Identity

Enhance Fond du Lac's community identity and distinct sense of place.

page
23

Our Next Generation

Attract, retain, and invest in Fond du Lac's next generation.

page
45

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Mindset.

We need to challenge the status quo and change the way we think. We can't be anchored to the past.

Focus.

Strategic, laser-like focus on the big impact items are key. We can't fix every problem, as much as we may want to.

Cooperation.

We can achieve increased efficiency and optimization when we pool and align resources.

Inclusivity.

Let's put turf, ego, and territoriality aside. Everyone brings something to the table.

Flexibility.

Conditions change, but our destination shouldn't. We must anticipate sea changes and alter the course when necessary.

OUR ECONOMY

**Become one of the
primary hubs for
entrepreneurship, small
business start-ups,
and quality job growth
within Wisconsin
and the Midwest.**

SHAPING OUR ECONOMY

#	Strategic Objectives	Recommendations
1	Youth Entrepreneurship Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Connect kids to opportunitiesMentor and coachJobshadowingSTEM in schoolsCollege credits nowNetwork students and network ideasGrow the arts
2	Growth & Expansion Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Seed FundsEntrepreneurshipOffice hours and coffeeBank networksCo-work spaceBusiness owner educationSister city networks
3	Workforce Development for Today and for the Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workforce partnership councilExpand existing programsDraft a formal plan
4	Regional Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Coordinate and collaborateA 5 Year Plan

INTRODUCTION

Now is the time to kick-off a new century of prosperity in Fond du Lac. But in order to do so, we need to change the way we think, train, and innovate. Why shouldn't Fond du Lac be one of the Midwest's primary hubs for entrepreneurship, small business start-ups, and quality job growth? With the right investments and a mixture of hard work and cooperation, we have that potential.

The availability of good, well-paying jobs forms the bedrock of any community. They fund our police, fire, libraries, and parks through tax dollars; provide a sense of purpose and pride; ensure the health of families and stability of the community; stimulate creativity and happiness; and so much more. For Fond du Lac to be a desirable place to live and raise a family, we must house a roaring economic engine that is aligned with the way the world operates in the twenty-first century.

But first, it is important to change the conversation on how we think about regionalism and competition. Fond du Lac sits within a complex metro region located along I-41, where there are multiple city centers of roughly 40,000 – 100,000 people in size lined up right next to each other. Some think that Fond du Lac competes with Green Bay, or Oshkosh competes with Appleton. But truly, these cities function collectively as an economic region and each has their own unique role. It is not Fond du Lac vs. Green Bay, but instead the Fox Cities vs. the Quad Cities vs. Indianapolis. Research shows that regions tend to rise and fall collectively.

Fond du Lac's economy has been historically tied to traditional industrial and manufacturing production. This work is a noble calling, and Fond du Lac's major industrial employers are important pieces of the community fabric. They will remain so moving forward.

But advances in automation, global competition, and a lower cost of operation elsewhere continue to challenge Midwestern manufacturing, even in the face of job growth in recent years. Within the manufacturing industry itself, technological advances and changes require workers to have a level of skills and training that were not necessary even a decade ago. Companies are doing more with less. The economy is changing, and Fond du Lac cannot rely on one industry alone and a few major companies for future prosperity. Manufacturing is one piece of the future but it is not the future exclusively. The region's economy must diversify and adapt.



So what does our future look like? We envision a diverse economy with a variety of thriving sectors and a robust small business community. A place where workers make things with both their hands and minds, at the large factory scale and the smaller live-work studio. A place where students are taught the principles of entrepreneurship from a young age and think creatively about problem solving and innovation without even realizing it. A community where any risk taker with a good, market viable idea is able to hatch their business - be it a cutting-edge global technology firm or an auto-repair shop.

A thriving entrepreneurial scene also allows Fond du Lac to better weather economic shifts, bubbles, and slowdowns. No one knows what the future holds and we are unable to predict what industries will rise and fall over the next fifty years. However, we know that throughout history technologies change, industries shift, and companies come and go. Fond du Lac will persevere. Communities that support a thriving “entrepreneurial way of life” are able to evolve, adapt, and respond to these changes the most nimbly and it must be the long-term vision for Fond du Lac.

Maybe we are not going to be Madison, Silicon Valley, or Texas - and we probably don't want to be. We're Fond du Lac and we love that. The vision is to preserve what we love about life in Fond du Lac while ensuring we have the jobs and economic activity to continue to support it.

We can achieve that by focusing on four things: creating a pervasive culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, providing the tools necessary to hatch new business and expand successful ones, preparing our workforce for the jobs of the next generation, and streamlining and coordinating all existing economic development efforts. By funneling all of our energy into these initiatives, we can empower our community to prosper.

“The vision is to preserve what we love about life in Fond du Lac while ensuring we have the jobs and economic activity to continue to support it.”

1.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Establish a pervasive culture of innovation and entrepreneurship within the community beginning at an early age.

The Approach

Can entrepreneurship be taught? Absolutely. While some are “just born with it,” many can become successful innovators and job creators with the right investments, coaching, and preparation. And it begins in grade school.

Students should graduate high school and college with an understanding of what builds a successful career, a mastery of soft skills such as networking or interviewing, and access to a web of successful community leaders. This exposure to ideas as well as leaders, mentors, coaches, and advisors is critical in skill development.

Efforts should not stop at graduation. There must be a pervasive culture of critical thinking and entrepreneurship permeating throughout the community, whether it is in City Halls, boardrooms, or around the kitchen table. The entrepreneurial spirit is a mindset and a way of solving problems and addressing needs. How can we continually do things better? “Good enough for Fond du Lac,” a sentiment frequently expressed during community outreach emphasizing low expectations, is not acceptable. We have to shift mindsets to ask “how do we respond to this challenge by reexamining our approach?” This means every decision. This means every day.

Recommendations

- Develop a “connection” program that matches local students with internship and summer employment opportunities, both within the community and with national employers outside the community leveraging Fond du Lac alumni networks.
- Develop a mentoring and training program for students that provides career guidance and coaching, develops life skills, and teaches networking.
- Create and promote a city-wide job shadowing day/week that allows local students to explore different career options.
- Elevate school curriculum to provide for additional training in science, technology, education, math, financial literacy, and coding.
- Promote and strengthen existing concurrent enrollment programs that allow students to obtain college credit while in high school.
- Host or participate in existing annual summits, talks, and roundtables around entrepreneurial topics (e.g. Forward Fest in Madison, Global Entrepreneurship Week, or a new Fox Cities Ideas Festival).
- Foster the creation of Arts District along Sheboygan Street, anchored by THELMA, which can grow Fond du Lac’s creative arts economy.

2.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Provide the tools necessary to hatch viable new businesses and expand successful ones.

The Approach

How can we connect innovators to resources that can help them hatch, expand, and flourish? Often times, those with a market viable idea or a successful small business just do not have the resources at hand to launch or grow. This is not a reflection on their ability or product, but an issue of resources and support.

Access to capital and social networks are the accelerant that can transform a great idea into a successful product or service and support expansion. How do you bring ideas to market as a business product?

Such tools are just as valuable to existing business owners, students, and residents as they can be when used as carrots to attract aspiring entrepreneurs from across the Midwest. If Fond du Lac wants to further a culture of entrepreneurship, it has to set the stage and foundation for it to occur. The region's governments and institutions aren't baking the cake themselves, but they are supplying the kitchen and some of the ingredients.

A vibrant small business scene is also a boon to the area's large businesses and corporations. It increases the size of the local employment pool, providing a wider range of talent to draw from. In some cases, some of the smaller businesses may develop technology, products, or services that can be utilized by larger businesses. It also helps create a critical mass for a variety of other infrastructure that are beneficial to both. The mixture of both creates a healthy ecosystem that feeds off each other in a symbiotic fashion.

Recommendations

- Create a Fond du Lac seed fund for local entrepreneurs, funded jointly by public, private, and institutional partners, as well as tap into existing seed funds such as the Wisconsin Angel Network.
- Match aspiring entrepreneurs with experienced mentors from the business industry.
- Organize “open coffee clubs” or “office hours” for entrepreneurs to drop in and discuss/troubleshoot with industry professionals.
- Facilitate close relationships with local banks to expand access to small business loans.
- Support the creation of a new co-working space in the heart of Downtown Fond du Lac that can provide cheap office space and a collaborative environment to small businesses.
- Evaluate opportunities for free or reduced higher education coursework in business or related fields (e.g. night school) for small business owners meeting established criteria.
- Establish sister-city business relationships and trade missions that can open new markets to Fond du Lac businesses as well as encourage new investment from at home and abroad.

3.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Create a comprehensive, cross-discipline, and cross-jurisdictional workforce training and development apparatus that prepares Fond du Lac's workers for the jobs of the next generation.

The Approach

We add more jobs by investing in our people. It's as simple as that. What is a workforce development strategy? It's the programs we need to unleash the full potential of our workforce. Everyone in town has a role to play in this effort. From our citizens, to public officials, to schools and colleges, to businesses and employers, elevating our workforce's skillset and competitiveness for jobs comes from robust, coordinated leadership across Fond du Lac. We need to double-down on that commitment.

Ultimately Fond du Lac has a number of great jobs today. We want to keep them here. And we want more. But beyond that, there should be an emphasis on quality jobs that will be here for years to come. We need to identify the local growth sectors and connect training and education to future employment. We need to focus on filling available jobs today, while also preparing the workforce of the future. The effort must be multi-generational and multi-faceted.

The good news is the area has already made a big push forward with Fond du Lac Works. But the region's workforce development efforts can be pushed farther. Part of the Envision process was to identify a few strategic priorities and swell our resources around them, and this is one that's ready to take to the next level. It would yield results. We can accelerate our existing momentum by bringing more partners to the table and putting more programs in the community. That can start today.



Recommendations

- Identify the regional partners that should be engaged in workforce development planning and programming for the Fond du Lac region and establish a partnership council, coordinated through Fond du Lac Works.
- Through this partnership council, assess the performance of Fond du Lac Works to-date, and identify opportunities to grow and broaden the program based on the contributions of expanding program resources through new partner contributions.
- The partnership council should develop a regional workforce development strategic plan that builds from the 2013 State of Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development Plan. Part of that plan should be identifying lead stakeholders for implementation and structuring performance management through a lead agency.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Establish a management framework, with clear roles and responsibilities, of each entity engaging in economic development efforts within the Fond du Lac region and beyond.

The Approach

Economic development can be a difficult thing to define. Ultimately it is not one singular thing, but more so the outcome of a series of conditions that makes a place competitive for investment. It's complex. It's ever changing. And no single entity controls everything necessary to pursue new economic investment. At its core, it is about teamwork.

We are fortunate because we have a lot of talented people dedicating time and resources to promoting the Fond du Lac area. But those efforts are somewhat fragmented. The approach can improve. It should be optimized for maximum effectiveness. It needs to leverage everyone's strengths in clearly defined roles. The vision must be to have a coordinated "Team Fond du Lac" that is representing the community with a unified voice that leverages a wide variety of expertise.

A lot about how our economy works has changed since 2008 and one of the major shifts has been the "metropolitan revolution." In the new global economy states like Wisconsin are playing

a less impactful role in generating economic growth than well-coordinated metropolitan areas. Milwaukee now competes against Monterrey, Mexico and Randstad, Netherlands as much as it does against Cleveland and Cincinnati.

Where does Fond du Lac fit in all of this? A key strategy is understanding Fond du Lac's place within the triangle between Green Bay, Madison, and Milwaukee. This is particularly true of the emerging I-41 corridor stretching north through Oshkosh and the Fox Cities more broadly. That's about 775,000 people. That matters. We must digest that the area's residents, consumers, employees, and businesses live in this complex region. At the end of the day, that's how stuff works around here. And it is definitely how major economic development decisions are considered.

Simply, we must successfully do two things. First, get organized locally. Secondly, carve out a competitive niche as part of this larger region. Those two efforts combined will maximize Fond du Lac's economic competitiveness.

Recommendations

- Identify all organizations in the Fond du Lac region working on economic development efforts and engage them in a collaborative effort to restructure the area's approach to maximize the strengths and value of all entities in a coordinated, optimized manner.
- Coordinate all regional Fond du Lac business recruitment, retention, and expansion efforts across all partner organizations and government agencies as a part of a unified 5-year economic development strategic plan.
- Begin to coordinate Fond du Lac's economic development efforts with the larger I-41 corridor and promote this region of approximately 775,000 residents for investment, growth, and development within Wisconsin and throughout the nation.
- Consider establishing quarterly I-41 corridor economic development summits hosted by a partnership between local mayors, the respective chambers of commerce and economic development agencies from each community, appropriate state agencies, and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to report, plan, and coordinate ongoing programming.

OUR IDENTITY

**Enhance Fond du Lac's
community identity and
distinct sense of place.**

SHAPING OUR IDENTITY

#	Strategic Objectives	Recommendations
1	Launch a Unified FDL Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network the branders Map the markets A collaboration platform Identify the themes A formal branding plan
2	Establish a Welcoming Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambassadors Why I love this town... Employers and new residents Welcome packets Volunteer networks An iconic gift Work with realtors Recruit new faces
3	Promote Our Success Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory the actors Link communications Earned media Establish relationships What's #trending? Success story center Conduct an Assessment Shape the narrative Life in the I-41
4	Reposition Our Best Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lakeside Park & Lake Winnebago Downtown Riverfront Forest Mall
5	Create Outdoor Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network the partners An outdoor destination Identify missing players Target new businesses Brand it across the Midwest

INTRODUCTION

Every community has an identity. When you say “Miami” or “Omaha” certain images pop into your head and it helps define how you think about a place. You think of defining features, landmarks, and memorable experiences, and it congers a reaction about whether it is a place you would like to visit. Or move to. Or start a business. Or stay and raise your family.

We need to answer: what is the story we tell about Fond du Lac as a community? And how do we make it resonate with a wide audience, of both people currently here and those we wish would join us?

Throughout outreach we heard that the community feels like Fond du Lac’s image, identity, and brand could be spruced up. Simply, there is a disconnect between the area’s reputation in Wisconsin and our local reality. While the outside world hears about our challenges, locals know that Fond du Lac is stringing together a series of success stories that would make an impact in much larger cities, virtually anywhere in the nation. And while other Wisconsin towns get buzz and attention for cool new businesses, festivals, and initiatives, Fond du Lac’s story seems to continue to be the best kept secret in the Badger State.

A community identity must hit three core audiences. First, for existing residents it represents, in effect, our self-esteem as a region. Secondly, for potential new residents and businesses considering locating in Fond du Lac, it represents our reputation. Finally, for potential visitors – whether that is a day trip or longer – it represents our brand as a destination. All three groups address the question – why would someone want to spend their time and money in Fond du Lac?

Locally, many existing residents and business owners love Fond du Lac and have deep roots in the area. That helps make it a great community. We want local pride; and that emotional bond keeps people in Fond du Lac for generations. But perhaps we sometimes love it the way it is too much and resist change.

Existing residents will have needs and tastes that change over time and the community has to respond alongside them – otherwise it is too easy to up and relocate to the next great thing. We need to more effectively share our success stories far-and-wide, while we reinvest in our best features and put our best foot forward. Not only will this approach bring new faces and investments to Fond du Lac, it will ensure it remains a “hometown” that keeps existing families in the area for decades. It will instill deep-rooted community pride in our home.



While we work to retain, we also need to be recruiting. To grow as a community we need more people and more capital. Ultimately a potential new resident taking a job in the area may make their decision on where to live based on what turns up in Google search results, or a business owner may never even consider our market because of what they heard on the nightly television news.

Simply, we need to proactively reach out and change the conversation. We need to share what we love about Fond du Lac while we tap into one of our best, but underutilized, assets – our people. While some development efforts take major capital and infrastructure, building a community reputation for our people and how we represent ourselves is a simple, straightforward, and thrifty strategy.

Finally, Fond du Lac needs to be more than a hometown, or a potential new home and professional opportunity, it should be a great place to visit as well. The city features a number of destinations, like Downtown and Lake Winnebago, that carry considerable potential. Further, the area is located in the nexus of some of the state’s most attractive outdoor recreation areas. There is a strong momentum in the area to brand Fond du Lac as a hub for these destinations alongside building its tourism brand more broadly, and that will be a critical part of making of its broader image and identity throughout Wisconsin.

How can we take steps to proactively tell our own story and shape our brand? How do we invest in our distinct community spaces and places to keep them vibrant? We do so by concentrating resources on five key initiatives: developing a “FDL brand” across all platforms, establishing a welcoming community, promoting our success stories through the media, repositioning and reinvesting our signature destinations so they continue to thrive, and by leveraging the region’s natural amenities and outdoors landscape to its full potential.

“Locally, many existing residents and business owners love Fond du Lac and have deep roots in the area.”

1. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Develop a unified “FDL brand” across all organizations and platforms in the area charged with promoting Fond du Lac’s development, and communicate the region’s story with a consistent, strategic voice.

The Approach

The classic phrase in business is “your brand is what they say about you when you’re not around. Branding is what you do about it.” Although cities are very different than consumer products, ultimately every community has a narrative about it that the public tells each other. That story is told through kitchen conversations among family and friends, through the media, and through a variety of organizations that represent a part of the Fond du Lac community to the marketplace. It’s about reputation.

The Fond du Lac region is a large, complex place and it has many brands. Brands will be different for obvious reasons, such as who Blue Line Club and Family Ice Center is communicating to and how they message is a different than Marian University’s. But the point is they both – and any organization or business engaged in similarly activities – is helping to shape Fond du Lac’s image, identity, and ultimately its reputation. While each organization needs to target their own audience and communicate their specific message, there are opportunities to better coordinate activities and present a consistent thread that tells “the Fond du Lac story” as part of formal branding efforts.



Recommendations

- Identify the organizations that communicate a version of a Fond du Lac brand to the public and create a reliable network for contact and interaction.
- Map the geographies where Fond du Lac organizations are currently branding and marketing their efforts today.
- Consider establishing an online collaborative platform and/or a standing monthly “hackathon” session where organizations working to brand Fond du Lac can crowdsource each other for ideas on marketing and branding strategies.
- Conduct a formal study of these ongoing branding efforts and identify the major thematic components of the region’s messaging to the public.
- Consider establishing a partnership to conduct a formal branding campaign for the Fond du Lac region that identifies the ability to link efforts in a clear and unified voice, while still allowing flexibility for individual customization and use.

2.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Establish Fond du Lac as a “welcoming community” to all citizens through a series of proactive programs that engage the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

The Approach

One of the most common threads heard throughout a variety of outreach was that Fond du Lac is not a welcoming community. Whether that is in terms of the “old guard” versus “outsiders” who have recently come into the community, or in addressing the area’s new diversity, or even an openness to new ideas, participants stressed that Fond du Lac does not always embrace new people and new ways of doing things. It was clear that the community sentiment is not comfortable with that perception of Fond du Lac, and there is desire to tackle it head-on.

Ultimately establishing a “welcoming community” is about local culture. That’s a big topic. And local attitudes and behaviors will shape slowly over time. So it is important to identify strategies that build momentum while also building a foundation. The approach must match outgoing Fond du Lac residents who are exuberant about their community with those who are new to it. That passion must be shared. It must engage the big employers that recruit new faces to town and work to have them put roots in Fond du Lac. And it must bring new ideas to the table in organizations across the city. These efforts should be delivered through a warmth that reflects Fond du Lac’s small-town charm and fellowship.

Recommendations

- Establish a network of Fond du Lac ambassadors to represent the community in a wide variety of formats, available via an on-call, volunteer basis.
- Consider creating a “Why I Love this Town” program organized around walking tours, site visits, and special events (i.e. restaurant open houses) that provide both a forum to learn more about positive news in Fond du Lac alongside a social setting.
- Evaluate establishing a large volunteer network organized around ongoing community service projects.
- Coordinate with major employers to promote living locally in Fond du Lac and have them directly link new residents with community ambassadors early in their relocation process.
- Create a welcome packet, deliver it to new resident households, and have a designated community ambassador follow up six months later with a community satisfaction survey and a “how can I help?” interface.
- Consider a marketing campaign where all new resident households receive a unique community item, and publicize the program through media and social media.
- Establish a team to regularly meet with area realtors to track, monitor, and identify the community attributes that attract new residents as well as the weaknesses that deter them elsewhere to other cities.
- Local organizations that feature a membership board should consider recruiting at least one new member who has not previously been active in their organization, but share their mission and interests.

3.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Promote the community's success stories and accomplishments through Wisconsin and Midwestern media platforms, including social media, through a regional strategic marketing and communications plan.

The Approach

Fond du Lac is a community with a tremendous amount of recent success and a compelling story to tell, but it needs to more assertively tell that story to a larger audience. With examples ranging from the Children's Museum, to the Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts, to the Library expansion, to the joint YMCA/Boys and Girls Club facility, to Marian University and Agnesian Healthcare moving downtown to the AC Nielsen building, Fond du Lac is accomplishing big things despite being a small-town. There are a number of organizations and entities in Fond du Lac that promote their ongoing work and activities, but the larger story is not cracking through to a broader Wisconsin audience.

Throughout outreach we heard that Fond du Lac is somewhat at the mercy of Green Bay, Madison, and Milwaukee television and radio outlets, and that only "bad news" about crime and job losses make their way onto the airwaves. Although Fond du Lac has The Reporter and KFIZ News Talk 1450 locally, much of the community turns to social media for their news, where coverage can be equally ugly. The strategy must be to leverage the critical mass and bulk-weight impact of everyone across the Fond du Lac community working together to crack through the noise, establish relationships with media outlets throughout Wisconsin, and get the area's story out. That approach must be coordinated and produce sustained momentum.

Recommendations

- Identify the list of organizations and businesses that regularly communicate through media outlets and network their existing efforts.
- Consider establishing standard content guidelines that link public communication across the community and disseminate this methodology to the master list of organizations and businesses.
- Identify a lead organization to track all Fond du Lac coverage and earned media pursuits and act as a clearinghouse for the region.
- Identify media outlets in key markets and establish direct contacts and relationships with editors and reporters, including inviting them to the community for a kickoff tour.
- Identify a lead agency to monitor social media trends about Fond du Lac and act as a clearinghouse for that information.
- Consider creating a “Success Story Center” that acts as a clearinghouse within an existing organization to coordinate all success stories and promotional material in the region for earned media opportunities.
- If and when adequate data is available, conduct an assessment of how Fond du Lac is represented in Wisconsin media and issue a report to key stakeholders.
- Working through a partnership, develop a regional strategic marketing and communications plan that structures a consistent message about Fond du Lac to reshape the existing narrative about the community, aimed towards a broad audience throughout Wisconsin.
- Evaluate the creation of a lifestyle magazine covering feature pieces and interest stories from throughout the I-41 corridor, in partnership with potential partners and businesses in Green Bay, Appleton, and Oshkosh.

4.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Strategically reposition Fond du Lac's key assets and leverage them as catalytic anchors for redevelopment activity and new investment for the next generation.

The Approach

Every city brings a few distinct places to mind, and those signature places help shape how the public thinks about a community. When you think of Madison, many think State Street; when you think of Milwaukee, many think of the Historic 3rd Ward. They express a vibrancy about a community – they provide a contagious energy that draws people to “get in on the action.”

On the flip side, we can all think of communities where our entire impression is shaped by a boarded up downtown or a dead mall. We don't get past those initial impressions and never see all of the other cool parts of town or hear about hidden gems, because those signature districts shape everything we think about a city. In a way, these districts represent a city's “curb appeal” or “front door” that acts as a gateway for everything else.

Currently, Fond du Lac has a little bit of both. Fond du Lac already features some great destination districts that help shape how people think about the region, namely Downtown and Lake Winnebago/Lakeside Park. But it also features an older, industrial riverfront and Forest Mall, which has been struggling to retain major tenants. All of them could be better leveraged through sustained reinvestment over the next decade. These areas are the Fond du Lac region's key assets and they should be repositioned as catalysts for much of what is discussed in this strategic plan. Each warrants its own detailed strategy, which ultimately goes further than this plan can completely address, but certain initial action steps will begin the effort.



Recommendations

- Lakeside Park & Lake Winnebago
- Downtown
- Riverfront
- Forest Mall

4.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Lakeside Park & Lake Winnebago

Lake Winnebago has been an essential geographic and environmental feature of our community since our founding in the nineteenth century. The lake continues to define us today. We acknowledge this every time we utter our community's name -- Fond du Lac is French for "foot" or "bottom" of the lake."

The value of green and blue spaces has been recognized by civic leaders, planners, health advocates, and environmentalists for over a century. Lake Winnebago and Lakeside Park allow us to connect with nature, spend time with our family, exercise, touch the water, recreate, and more. It is Fond du Lac's "front yard."

However, both Lakeside Park and Lake Winnebago have for many years been underutilized, both from a programming and infrastructure perspective. We are home to one of the largest outboard motor companies on the planet. "Lake" is in our name. Outdoors recreation is in our blood. How is our lake and the adjacent park not the signature "Fond du Lac" experience we are known for far and wide?

In response, the community recently underwent a visioning process for Lakeside Park, culminating in a final report issued by a committee of citizens and stakeholders. The report provides recommendations, including the creation of walking and bike paths, concerts and festivals, public docks and boat landings, food trucks, a public beach, and more.

Envision Fond du Lac does not seek to duplicate the efforts already undertaken by the committee. We just want to grab a shovel and help implement it. We too envision Lakeside Park as the crown jewel of the Fox Cities and I-41 region, where families come to boat, grill, catch a summer concert, play baseball, bike, skateboard, and more.

Recommendations

- Implement the Lakeside Park plan by funding and executing at least two project per year.
- Evaluate establishing a community trust for Lakeside Park and pursue creative fundraising, donations, and grant funding to supplement government resources.
- Better link Lake Winnebago's lakeshore, Lakeside Park, and downtown through complete streets practices as well as by expanding and extending the existing bicycle trail network.
- Examine the potential to create a major visitor destination on Lake Winnebago that recognizes and celebrates Fond du Lac's heritage and connection to boating and watersports, including a potential signature Mercury Marine corporate museum and product showcase marina.
- Consider establishing development incentives to promote the redevelopment of the Johnson Street corridor in proximity to Lakeside Park to promote a mix of uses including housing that leverages its strategic location between Lake Winnebago and downtown.

4.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Downtown

Downtowns are the defining feature of any community and are often synonymous with the community itself. If we asked you to picture Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago, or New York in your mind - the first thing that likely pops in your head are the iconic buildings, restaurants, shops, offices, theatres, and more located within each city's downtown. Downtowns are THE defining space for a community, a crucible of commerce, socializing, idea exchange, entertainment, and more. A city cannot thrive without a healthy downtown. Their fates are intricately linked.

Our downtown is the heart of our community, but it has struggled over the past few decades as previous generations adopted attitudes leading to disinvestment. Now, our downtown is uniquely posed for revitalization and transformation, as the importance of downtowns is being appreciated again and a national wave of new attention and investment is igniting downtowns across the country.

Downtown Fond du Lac already has "good bones" - a walkable street grid, historic architecture such as the Commercial National Bank and Wisconsin Power and Light Company Buildings, proximity to the lakefront, and a variety of great small businesses. And that's a start. But what is needed is more hustle and bustle. More activity. More people. A mix of uses. A critical mass.

We need to focus on lighting a fire within downtown and making it "the place to be." Our downtown is the mirror of our community. With the right focus and resources, it can be one of the great, family-friendly destinations within the I-41 corridor.

Recommendations

- Build on the recent successes at the Nielsen Building and work with local universities and colleges to locate student housing downtown.
- Building on the recent Agnesian project, approach regional employers not located in downtown and examine potential job growth expansion plans to locate future operations downtown.
- Redevelop the Retlaw Hotel into a modern property that brings population, foot traffic, and economic activity to the downtown.
- Identify all available and potential development incentives the region is willing to offer, identify key development sites and potential concepts, and engage developers in a direct “pitch” for investment, as part of economic development efforts.
- Emphasize the importance of additional housing development and population and employment density in downtown Fond du Lac across all land use and development planning in the region.
- Leverage the recent momentum around the emerging arts district and library as a hub for a variety of community programs available for all ages.
- Host a planning charrette to consider new potential downtown special events and festivals and identify at least one new concept to fund, staff, and launch.
- Consider working with the Downtown Development Association to launch a branded “Shop Small” program that features Fond du Lac small businesses downtown, including a signature event on “Small Business Saturday.”

4.

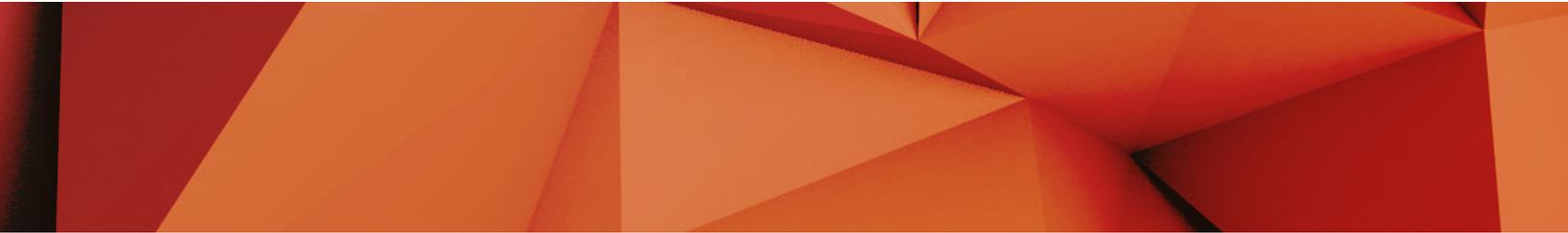
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Riverfront

You might not even know that we have a river. The Fond du Lac River forks around Military Road before leading into Lake Winnebago. This peninsula features the YMCA and Post Office and largely forms the western edge of Downtown along the Riverwalk. Further north near the lake, the river is largely industrial and travels past a transit maintenance facility and the city's water treatment facility. Today the river is torn - it represents both Fond du Lac's industrial past as well as provides some attractive place-making that could represent its future.

The riverfront should be a major priority for redevelopment over the next generation. The river corridor helps connect Lake Winnebago and Lakeside Park to Main Street and Downtown, and this loop should act as the heart of Fond du Lac's core neighborhood. It ties three of the city's unique areas together as a major destination for a potentially wide range of recreational amenities, businesses, employment, and housing.

Further, it also emphasizes the city's connection to waterways and creates an alternative to Main Street for pedestrians and cyclists traveling to Lake Winnebago. There is a lot of work to be done to achieve this vision. But there are clear initial steps. The first effort is recognizing the riverfront's potential and integrating it into existing planning and budgeting efforts.



Recommendations

- Conduct a river corridor design plan to establish a long-range vision to reposition the river as a prominent community asset and gathering place.
- Through future actions, programming, and infrastructure investment, emphasize a “loop” of connectivity between the riverfront, lakeshore, and downtown, establishing a clear “heart of Fond du Lac” neighborhood.
- Evaluate the potential to establish brownfield destinations along the river corridor and pursue state and federal funding for associated remediation.
- Evaluate the potential use of form-based zoning codes and trail development exactions for the riverfront corridor to guide the vision for long-term redevelopment.

4.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Forest Mall

The Forest Mall was opened in 1973 and reflects a time when every city of a certain size saw a new indoor mall built off a highway exit and many of the traditional department stores moved from Main Street. Although the mall has long been a part of life in Fond du Lac, that is changing.

First, retail shopping is changing in many ways, driven by online sales, mobile devices, and consumer preferences. This macro trend is dramatically shifting the retail industry all across the world. Secondly, the Fond du Lac market competes with Prime Outlots in Oshkosh, the Fox River Mall in Appleton, and retail centers in Kohler, West Bend, and the Madison and Milwaukee areas. In 2015, brick-and-mortar retail is cut-throat and there are no expectations that will change.

But the Forest Mall still represents a large and prominent site in the Fond du Lac community and a long-term viable strategy must be developed and executed. The approach cannot be a “Band-Aid” for the next few years, but a true long-range repositioning.

Retail and dining will likely remain a part of the Forest Mall site but it should also be positioned as a contemporary, mixed-use center that serves the needs of the community more broadly. That vision could include housing, offices, medical facilities, employment and education centers, and other uses. This approach will take a close partnership between the Simon Property Group and public officials. That planning effort should begin immediately.

Recommendations

- Conduct a detailed retail market assessment to identify the long-term viability of the Forest Mall property in terms of competitiveness in the I-41 corridor.
- Begin to host quarterly meetings with the Simon Property Group, along with the City, County, and interested economic development agencies, to coordinate retail recruitment activities.
- Partner with the Simon Property Group to conduct a concept redevelopment plan to transition Forest Mall from a traditional indoor retail shopping center to a mixed-use village, including housing, office, medical, employment, and other diverse uses.
- The City and County should identify development incentives that could be available for the redevelopment of Forest Mall and begin the deliberative process of how a public-private partnership for the site could be structured.

5.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Create a network of open space management jurisdictions throughout central Wisconsin and establish the Lake Winnebago area as one of the premiere outdoor recreation hubs in the Midwest.

The Approach

Many of the characteristics that make a place appealing to visitors, and those considering moving to the community, are man-made, such as restaurants, schools, housing options, and entertainment venues. However, a critical part of a community's overall appeal can and should be its natural setting. Wisconsin is known nationally for its scenic lakes, forests, and rivers, and many of the best-known communities in the Badger State are closely associated with nature and the outdoors.

Fond du Lac may not be today, but it has the opportunity to be known as a city nestled within some of the state's best outdoor destinations. This is a near-term strategy to elevate the Fond du Lac area's image in Wisconsin and surrounding states by leveraging what it already has, to its fullest potential.

Fond du Lac should leverage these natural assets by establishing the region as a destination for outdoor recreation and bolstering the city's identity as an "outdoors town". Fond du Lac sits in the nexus of Lake Winnebago, Lakeside Park, the Ledge, several trails (the Taycheedah, Wild Goose, and Prairie Trails), the Kettle Moraine State Forest, and a series of state marshes and wildlife refuges at the Horicon, Theresa, and Sheboygan wildlife areas.

Even indoor opportunities, such as Blue Line Club and Family Ice Center and the Do-It-All Sports Arena can be incorporated into these broader efforts. However, all of these sites and entities are managed by a complex network of actors, which need to be better aligned to maximize the area's potential.

Recommendations

- Create a coordinated and collaborative effort between natural areas management agencies and the Fond du Lac Area Convention and Visitors Bureau that regularly meets to promote the region's outdoor recreation assets together.
- Develop a formal outdoor recreation destination strategic plan with all partners to identify projects, investments, and development that would enhance the Fond du Lac region's competitiveness as a destination for a wide variety of visitor activities.
- As part of the strategic planning process, identify missing elements of the regional outdoor recreation tourism marketplace and establish approaches to recruit such users or construct such infrastructure as part of economic development efforts.
- Evaluate the market demand for niche outdoor recreation retail and service businesses, identify needs and unmet demand in the trade area, and then target business recruitment efforts to these types of potential tenants.
- Establish an outdoor recreation tourism branding plan and target key markets, including both within Wisconsin but also in neighboring states.

OUR NEXT GENERATION

**Attract, retain, and
invest in Fond du Lac's
next generation.**

SHAPING OUR NEXT GENERATION

#	Strategic Objectives	Recommendations
1	Bond Students with their Hometown	Youth volunteerism Students & retirees Youth leadership Student representation Join clubs Plan events
2	Capture the Millennial's Spirit	Grow Young Professionals of Fond du Lac (YPF) Connect people Use social sports Link college students Do cool stuff Do it Downtown Public art Tactical Urbanism Celebrate diversity
3	Market our Strengths	Clear consistent pitch Hit career fairs Incentivize living here Expat pipeline
4	Enhance Professional Development Opportunities	Build a consortium New skills Dynamic course work Serve on boards Expand young professionals



INTRODUCTION

We are an aging community that continues to age. In 2015, the median age of Fond du Lac County was estimated at 41 years old (which is three years older than the national average). Less than one-fifth of our population is between the important age cohort of 20-34 years. If we do nothing, the trend line will continue in a troubling direction. We must take action so our community has a generation of ambitious, passionate, and well-trained people to pass the torch.

The exodus of educated young people from a community is not unique to Fond du Lac. It has been estimated by various studies that between 9,000 and 14,000 college graduates leave Wisconsin each year. It is a pervasive challenge across the state, affecting Milwaukee, Madison, Sheboygan, Appleton, Oshkosh, and beyond. We are not alone.

Over the course of the past year, we have spoken with hundreds of students and young professionals about what it would take to retain them or recruit them to our community. What is evident is that the wants of the next generation are appreciably different than that of middle-aged or older generations. There is elevated value placed on lifestyle, diversity, cultural amenities, urbanism, and a vibrant social scene. While some aspects of this currently exist in our community, we must do a better job to make Fond du Lac a fun and exciting place for the next generation to live.

“ Building a new generation of leaders is more than just retention – it’s about attracting new blood as well. ”



Young people do more than invigorate a community with youthful energy. They start families, they volunteer, they pay taxes, and they enact change. People in their teens, 20s, and 30s are our next generation of leaders and workers – our mayors, teachers, executives, city council members, police officers, small business owners, factory workers, and more. The lack of a qualified workforce to fill open jobs is often one of the major reasons that companies relocate to greener pastures. We cannot thrive as a community without an infusion of new talent in their 20s and 30s.

We must be a hub and destination for young people. We are realistic enough to know that we cannot retain every single young person that graduates from our schools, no matter what the community offers. But we want the remainder to know that we are committed to them. For those that initially move away, they will always have a place to come back to and thrive. They will have an emotional connection to Fond du Lac and a trove of good memories that makes them proud of their hometown.

Our net is wider, however, than just those who grew up in Fond du Lac and attended our schools and universities. Building a new generation of leaders is more than just retention – it's about attracting new blood as well. We are putting out a call to youth across the Midwest. Maybe you've never heard of Fond du Lac, but you will and we promise you will love it here. We have a story to tell and we want you to be a part of our future.

What can we do to attract, retain, and invest in our next generation? We are going to focus our resources on four key initiatives: building strong ties and social bonds between youth and their community, making Fond du Lac a fun and livable place for people in their 20s and 30s, proactively marketing Fond du Lac on college campuses across the Midwest, and enhancing professional development and career opportunities for young professionals.

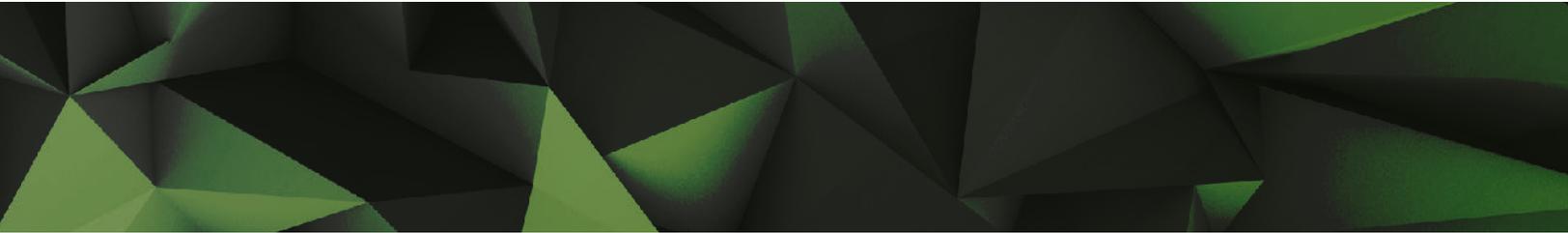
1. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Cultivate strong ties between Fond du Lac youth and their community.

The Approach

We must involve Fond du Lac's next generation of leaders in community decision making at a very early age. By including our youth in leadership positions, trainings, civic clubs, volunteering, and more, we are giving them a stake in the future of their community. It is important to not just be reactive and let youth come to us. We must go to them and make it clear why it is so critical for them to pitch in.

A recent study conducted by the Corporation for National Community service showed that volunteering and community involvement is associated with 27% higher odds of employment. But increased youth involvement in civic and community matters is more than just providing them with skills for the future. It is giving them a voice and getting them invested in their community. They are putting "skin in the game" and developing an emotional bond with Fond du Lac. Over time, we believe that this positive relationship and sense of community-mindedness will not teach them skills such as civic-mindedness and leadership, but also retain our next generation.



Recommendations

- Increase youth volunteerism by conducting community-wide youth service days and providing regular year-round volunteer opportunities for youth.
- Develop a mentoring program that connects youth with local professionals or retirees, potentially coordinated through local schools.
- Support, and explore opportunities to expand, establish youth leadership programs such as the “Youth Leadership Fond du Lac” and Kiwani’s “Key Club.”
- Integrate youth into the boards of local not-for-profits as student representatives.
- Increase youth membership in local civic/service organizations, both fraternal and charitable groups.
- Include youth in the planning and hosting of major community events such as Walleye Weekend.

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Make Fond du Lac a fun, social, and livable place for people in their 20s and 30s.

The Approach

We must provide for the quality of life needs of those in their 20s and 30s. The world is changing and the next generation desires a different lifestyle than previous generations. Over the course of one year, we held numerous workshops, events, and interviews with residents in their 20s and 30s, including those that had moved away.

The message was clear: “we love Fond du Lac, but we want a more urban, social, and intercultural experience.” For those in their 20s and 30s, the lifestyle and daily cultural experience of a community can be just as important, if not more, than the availability of a particular job. The next generation is mobile and open to relocation in a manner previous generations have not been.

While Fond du Lac cannot compete for those specifically set on living in Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Los Angeles or Boston, every young person does not desire that “big city” experience and the associated high cost of living. Recent studies have demonstrated Millennials are more diverse and living in a wider variety of community types than national media would have us believe. Although some young families are living in condos in huge cities and riding their bicycle everywhere, most young Millennial families are not.

If we work together, Fond du Lac can bring many things to the table. An exciting and quaint downtown. A historic yet affordable housing stock within traditional neighborhoods. A tight knit community of young professionals. Quality schools, churches, and community organizations. An endless access to recreation and outdoor activities, such as boating, hunting, hiking, cycling, and more. We are committed to implementing tactical projects that can transform Fond du Lac into a fun, social, and livable place for young people in their 20s and 30s.

Recommendations

- Support, and explore opportunities to expand, existing social programming for young professionals such as those hosted by the Young Professionals of Fond du Lac (YPF).
- Match new young residents with established young residents to help them make friends and get acclimated to the community.
- Establish an intermural sports and recreation league/clubs for those in their 20s and 30s, including both traditional sports (e.g. basketball, baseball, etc.) as well as non-traditional (e.g. yoga in the park, cycling, Frisbee golf, etc.).
- Connect students at UW-FDL, Marian University, and Moraine Park Technical College with one another socially.
- Host and well-publicize concerts, movie screenings, food truck festivals, sporting events, and other forms of entertainment specifically targeted to a younger audience.
- Revitalize Downtown Fond du Lac, with an emphasis on mixed-use development, adaptive re-use, and walkability.
- Develop a public art campaign using young artists that injects murals, sculpture, and other forms of public art throughout the community.
- Implement tactical urbanism projects, such as pop up cafes, street fairs, and more that can inject a sense of excitement and interest into the community.
- Place an emphasis on increasing the city's cultural, religious, ethnic, and racially diversity.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

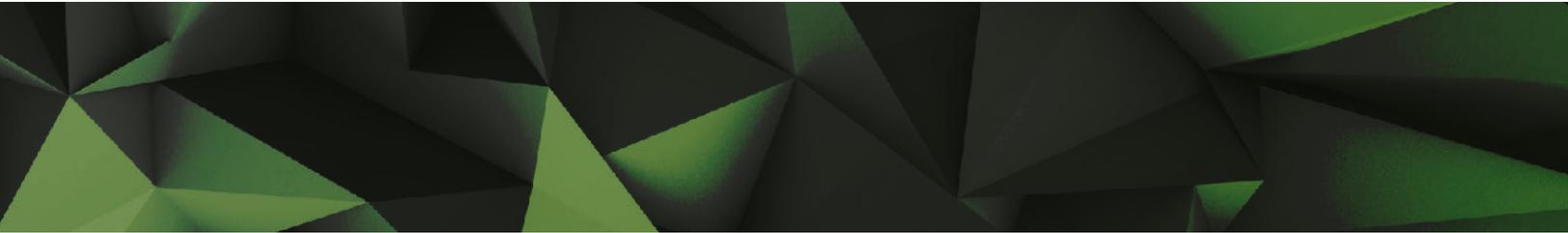
Proactively market and promote Fond du Lac's strengths and assets to Midwestern professionals and potential entrepreneurs.

The Approach

During the community outreach, one person hit the nail on the head by stating: "maybe it's our Midwestern or Wisconsin nature, but even though we have things to be proud about here, we don't boast about them." That has to change. It is time to proudly tell our story, our way.

One component of building a next generation in Fond du Lac is retaining those we already have, either young professionals that are "born and raised" but are attending college elsewhere, or those who are from elsewhere but are attending one of our three local colleges. A just as important piece, however, is drawing new talent to the community from other places across the Midwest and beyond. It has to be a one-two punch.

How do we do that? By getting aggressive and casting a wide net. We need to get in front of graduating college students, as well as community "expats", across the Midwest and beyond to show them the opportunities that can be found in Fond du Lac. It's time to tell our story and start a roadshow. It starts with a pitch and a strategy, and takes off from there.



Recommendations

- Agree upon a clear and consistent “pitch” that can be used across various organizations to recruit the next generation.
- Participate in career fairs at college campuses throughout the Midwest using a booth promoting the value of living and working in Fond du Lac.
- Evaluate the creation of a “Live Fond du Lac” program, modeled on Detroit’s “Live Midtown” program, which would incentivize young professionals to move to Fond du Lac and work at a major employer.
- Develop a “pipeline” for bringing back Fond du Lac “expats” who live elsewhere but may be open to moving back to Fond du Lac, using tools such as local alumni databases, LinkedIn, social media, and more.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Enhance ongoing professional development and employee growth opportunities for workers in their 20s and 30s.

The Approach

Ensuring upward career mobility and professional growth opportunities are critical to attracting and retaining young workers in Fond du Lac. Although someone may love living in Fond du Lac, their career also matters – we need to ensure they do not hit a professional development ceiling locally.

The strategic approach includes providing both a base of mid- and upper management positions for workers to be able to grow into, as well as support for trainings, certifications, conferences, and advance degrees that can improve the knowledge base. Not only will this increase career satisfaction but also improve the quality and productivity of the workplace.

Fond du Lac already has several organizations and many employers who see the value in such programming and investment. The community is also blessed with three colleges and universities that provide advanced training opportunities. However, it is evident that there are gaps in existing programming that can be remedied by partnerships and investments.

We envision a coalition of major employers, not-for-profits, and colleges/universities working hand-in-hand to develop a more robust career development program for our young professionals. What this looks like remains to be fleshed out in the implementation process and it should be dynamic and nimble so it responds to the local workforce. But this objective marks the beginning of a new and heightened focus on the professional and career needs of our young workers, including participation in civic sectors.

Recommendations

- Establish a consortium of major employers and education institutions to identify gaps in existing associate, bachelors, graduate, and certificate programs.
- Identify partnership opportunities between employers and institutions to jointly-fund training programs, certificate programs, and other career development programs that would be difficult or costly to support alone.
- Engage other higher education institutions across Wisconsin and Illinois in innovative new partnerships to establish satellite courses and/or facilities for education and training that cannot be offered by local higher education institutions.
- Integrate young professionals into the boards of local not-for-profits and government committees.
- Support expansion of existing young professional organizations, such as the Young Professionals of Fond du Lac (YPF).