



REDEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

June 1, 2010

To: Mayor Robert Thompson, City of Waterloo, WI

From: Kristen Fish and Deborah Ersland, Redevelopment Resources, LLC

Re: Post-Summit Follow-up Report

The Waterloo Economic Development Summit was held on Thursday, May 27, 2010. There were approximately 20 people in attendance, representing the City staff, City Council, Community Development Authority, the newspaper, school system, banking community, development industry, Jefferson County, and Trek Bicycle.

The group reviewed where the community has been in terms of studies and plans. The 2003 Downtown and Community Visioning study and the 2008 Comprehensive Plan were briefly discussed. It was the consensus of the group that the Economic Development goals and recommendations in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan still represent how the community feels today. The City is still interested in promoting itself as a Green and Healthy Community.

Waterloo is a beautiful, small community with wonderful assets as identified in the Comprehensive Plan. This plan is a solid guide for work that can direct and stimulate Economic Development, and working this plan needs to be a priority of the community. Economic Development must be driven from inside the community, requiring solid leadership to guide the work, as well as the enthusiastic support of community volunteers, City staff and committees.

Work to position Waterloo in the most competitive way to sell your community to new businesses, new citizens, developers and new opportunities. Keep in mind that there are approximately 110 communities in Wisconsin with a population between 2,000 and 5,000 who are all hoping for the exact same thing – to position themselves in a way that can keep their small communities vital. Utilize your competitive assets, the Comprehensive Plan you already support, and you can make Waterloo a place where people will want to live, work and play.

Based on the group's interest in continuing the work set out in the Comprehensive Plan, a review of the Economic Development Recommendations, along with recommendations from Redevelopment Resources are included here:

- 1) **Grow the economy by enhancing quality of life** – (from the Comp Plan) “the City will continue to capitalize on its abundance of natural amenities, including the Maunasha River... Streetscaping, gateway improvements, community entry and way-finding signage, parks and trails will also contribute to this effort”. Businesses would benefit from enhancing the hospitality toward existing customers, new visitors to the community, as well as toward other businesses in the City. An atmosphere of welcoming and friendliness (to match the “Waterloo Welcomes You” signage) is an asset on which to be capitalized.
- 2) **Pursue a more assertive approach to Economic Development** – includes developing a (more intense) business retention program. This is fairly low hanging fruit but the benefits can be exponential. Eighty percent of business growth comes from existing business. Waterloo should not underestimate the potential of growth from existing business. A recommendation that has already been executed from the Comp Plan is to form a CDA. This group could enhance its structure and purpose with training and a focused work plan. It makes sense to utilize this group and its abilities to spearhead the work that needs getting done rather than a City Committee because of the special powers granted to CDAs under state statute. Recommendations for one model include the CDA (with appropriate support from staff, technical advisors, business associations, and Jefferson County/Thrive) would work through committees including but not limited to Marketing, Business Recruitment/Retention/Start-up, Design Guidelines, and Redevelopment. A part- or full-time employee is one way to assist in directing the activities of the CDA and volunteer committees. This position would serve as the band leader, and others in the community (staff, committees, board members) all need to play the instruments.
- 3) **Work with existing local businesses to promote economic growth** – Continue to work on assisting businesses with their needs, and develop future economic development strategies based on business retention. Consider making available to existing business, a database of mentor/advisors from among local business who volunteer service in their area of expertise. Implement a business survey within the City, to uncover unmet needs and areas of improvement desired by existing businesses. Also, encourage buying local. Set an example by and for support one another.

- 4) **Encourage entrepreneurial efforts and small business start-ups** – Continue to foster business incubator space. The Maunessa Business Center is a fantastic opportunity to conduct training in conjunction with MATC and create the appropriate environment for start up businesses. Consider a mentorship program which allows business people in the community to offer a limited amount of free advice to entrepreneurs to answer questions and provide necessary guidance. Another idea is to promote an “Incubator without Walls” concept where startups are encouraged to locate in existing vacant buildings with a rent discount and free services for a limited period of time, including free wireless internet. Existing businesses could act as sponsors for a nominal fee.

- 5) **Recruit new businesses that fill unmet local needs** – The Comp Plan references several types of businesses which the City should focus on. It will be difficult to recruit new business unless their market needs are met by locating in your community. Any recruitment effort should be focused on business that is not location dependent. Waterloo offers many of the amenities to serve the virtual world of businesses which are not location dependent but can operate from just about anywhere. In this case, Waterloo should capitalize on the assets within the community that make Waterloo a great place to do business and market those aggressively. For example: the high speed internet pipeline running through the community should be taken advantage of. Whether the community develops a fiber optic utility or just promotes the massive abilities and benefits of the pipeline, it is an asset that can serve to attract many different kinds of business and interesting business ideas to the community.

- 6) **Promote the development of bio-based or “green” industries** – The community should not only implement but aggressively promote “green” practices. This will work to attract the types of desirable business mentioned in number 5 above.

- 7) **Further utilize TIF** – Learn about the value of TIF and implement a set of guidelines which allows the Finance Committee, the CDA, or other committee to bring appropriate projects forward, which if fall within the guidelines, receive approval and support without a lot of debate. This will show a welcome to the developers and businesses interested in doing business on an easy and friendly basis with the City.

- 8) **Enforce high quality design standards for economic development projects** – See the Comp Plan for its lengthy list of good ideas.

- 9) **Pursue redevelopment of underutilized lands and infrastructure** – This is great work for the CDA to focus on. Choose a property or block and brainstorm the possibilities. Carefully study what would work well and create an approach with proper business or community support, financing and follow through. The redevelopment process should not be overwhelming if taken in small, focused, measured steps. Don't think redevelopment has to be done over entire city blocks at a time. It can be as simple as one property at a time. Additionally, the infrastructure is in place for companies with high water and high speed internet usage. Capitalize on both of these items and work to attract tenants and businesses that have those particular needs.

Economic Development is a community effort. One person cannot be solely responsible for the successes or failures of a community trying to grow and develop. The development team includes Waterloo City officials and staff, Jefferson County representatives, state and federal government, special authorities (CDA, etc), private sector business, local residents, utilities and consultants. Attendees were encouraged to volunteer and recruit others to help contribute to the success of the community. Activities could include serving on a committee; being hospitable to residents, customers, visitors from outside the community, new businesses, and existing employers; offering to serve as a mentor to an entrepreneurial company; or to simply lend support to those who already serve the community in an elected or staff capacity. It was a pleasure to get to know your community and all the potential you have to grow and develop into something even more special than you are today. It will be exciting to watch! Please feel free to call on us for advice or ongoing support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kristen Fish". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Kristen Fish, Redevelopment Resources, LLC

Waterloo Flipchart Notes
May 27, 2010

What does Economic Development Mean to You?

- Buildings being built
- \$ locally spent
- Local job opportunities
- Places for people to work
- Sustainable employment
- Maintaining residents
- Positive attitude for change
- Jobs
- Recreation
- Residential development
- Living wage jobs
- Deposits/loan demand
- Low vacancy downtown/industrial
- Thriving/vibrant/bustling downtown
- Quality of life
- Sustainable wage/tax base
- Benefits = taxes = value
- Reflection of communities wants and needs

What are examples of communities where it appears there is economic development success?

Cottage Grove:

- Specific business
 - New buildings
 - Renovated buildings
 - Well planned
- La Crosse
Stoughton
Cedarburg

What does successful economic development look like in Waterloo?

- Buildings filled
- People on the street
- It's a destination
- Attractive
- Downtown has uniform look and feel
- Broader jobs base
- Planned events/activities, enthusiasm
- Fireman's Park
- Trek
- Residential properties – appearance
- Downtown – appearance
- Places to eat

Random ideas:

- Work with Marshall
tri-county area
greater region
- Promote 2 county parks with bicycle trails
- Promote McKay – Enhanced Tree City