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La Crosse • Wisconsin
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August 13, 2018

Memo

To: City of La Crosse Economic Development Commission
From: Jason Gilman, Director of Planning and Development
RE: Role of the Comprehensive Plan in Economic Development

Dear Commissioners:

Andrea Schnick asked me to prepare a memo outlining the typical role a Comprehensive Plan plays in economic development policy and strategy in a City since I am unable to attend in person.

Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 and 62.23 enable cities in Wisconsin to adopt a Comprehensive Plan to guide to the physical, social, and economic development of a local governmental unit. 66.1001 (2) (f) further states that an economic development shall be one of the nine elements of the plan:

Economic development element. A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to promote the stabilization, retention or expansion, of the economic base and quality employment opportunities in the local governmental unit, including an analysis of the labor force and economic base of the local governmental unit. The element shall assess categories or particular types of new businesses and industries that are desired by the local governmental unit. The element shall assess the local governmental unit's strengths and weaknesses with respect to attracting and retaining businesses and industries, and shall designate an adequate number of sites for such businesses and industries. The element shall also evaluate and promote the use of environmentally contaminated sites for commercial or industrial uses. The element shall also identify county, regional and state economic development programs that apply to the local governmental unit.

Generally Comprehensive Plans are intended to give cities the necessary tools to effect policy in a holistic way for a period ranging from 5 to 20 years. Comprehensive Plans are typically crafted through a series of steps that are considered to be best practices in planning including:

- Data collection (Background Element) and the analysis and evaluation of data
- Identification of challenges and opportunities in the City and Region
- Public engagement (Typically an extensive and lengthy public participation strategy inviting stakeholders to participate in the planning process)
- Goal identification based on the preceding steps
- Objectives Identification and strategies and tactics
- An implementation plan specifying a critical path and responsible parties

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With regard to economic development, it is a chance to update the City's data, engage key stakeholders and the public, determine the challenges and opportunities of the next 5 to 20 years and prepare a road map to address these challenges and opportunities strategically.

Upon adoption, the plan is put into action by professional staff and citizen planners who make recommendations to policy makers based on the plan's data, analysis and evaluation of data, and the findings including goals and objectives.

Potential outcomes of such an undertaking could include topics such as:

- How to address labor scarcity
- Whether the return on investment of public incentives are best used in local expansions, start-ups, or the attraction of outside business investments
- Where redevelopment and development opportunities exist
- Where capital or technical support is needed to assist business with growth
- Workforce housing deficiencies and solutions
- Industry cluster opportunities
- Regulatory reform to encourage investment
- The importance of start-ups or other sectors in contributing to the local economy

.....and many other topics.

The Plan provides support for legislators decisions by capturing the public's vision and priorities along with valuable data to consider about the City, providing a defensible foundation for legislative decisions.