

March 25 Review Sessions

Draft Economic Development Plan Comments

Mary Anglim 1pm session

Distrust between public and private sectors is very much a Wisconsin thing – not just a Madison thing – and it's deeply embedded in our political history and structures state-wide. It would be hard to change this culture on a local level.

I'm interested in preserving agricultural land in Dane County – Research Park II horrifies me. Nor do I get the connection between creating high quality jobs in industrial parks on the periphery and either employing more Madison residents or raising our tax base. Those new jobs are likely to be filled by people who live in new developments in Cross Plains, Middleton, etc. Thus contributing to more sprawl and more highways. Sounds like this plan should be tackled at a county level rather than the city.

Kate Moran 8:30am session

It was encouraging to see that Mr. Ticknor had dropped a lot of the antagonism he had towards politically progressive people that he displayed at the Alliant Energy Center.

Lyden Maurer 6:30pm session

There's a flood of economic development planned for Madison's east side, a flood of economic development for Madison's south side, a flood of economic development for the west side but only a trickle down effect for Madison's north side?

The north side needs an economic development plan too. We have Dane County's airport, we have several MATC campuses, we'll have an enhanced rail system... We have a lot of opportunity for economic growth to succeed. We'd like to have a TIF district on the north side at CV, ?Donwin.

Thomas Kozlovsky 1pm session

Madison's economic development plan

What will be the cost to the taxpayer for this plan?

TIF districts have already received millions of dollars, with few benefits to increase wages, health care and workers protections for jobs.

The City of Madison passed a living wage and immediately the Chamber of Commerce and business community went to the legislature and had it rescinded. The same, when the community tried to pass an ordinance requiring paid sick days for all employees in the city. It was opposed by the business community, even small business. This was after extensive meetings with business.

We need more regulation of business, not less. We are paying 2 million a year for operation of the convention center and over 1 million for the Overture Center. This money could be used for schools or other city services. This is in addition to their current debt, all done for the business community.

Look at Wal-mart, home depot and other big retailers, many are paying only minimum wage and workers depend on city services for food and shelter.

There is no guarantee the new business will bring good union paying jobs or the companies will stay here. How many local businesses closed due to the big box stores and franchises where all the money is sent from the city?

Under the free enterprise system, if they want to come here, they are free to do so, as long as the community decides if they are acceptable and provide benefits to the community and not just for profit of the business.

What kind of analysis have you done, to determine what taxes are paid by the current business, what taxes are due, especially property taxes, how many have closed in the last 5 years, what replaces them, how many living wage jobs were created, what happened to the workers who were laid off?

Do to the huge amount of university and state-owned property, which do not pay property taxes to the city, like religious organizations Madison is limited on how to raise revenue for municipal services of all types. How does your plan address this?

Does your plan have provisions for raising my revenue for not only the cost of your plan, but increasing city funds, with out increases in homeowners' property taxes?

How are minorities affected? Unskilled workers, laid off workers, small business, etc.?

Why do we need an economic plan? Who is going to pay for it? Isn't it the business community's responsibility to bring in business, not the city governments?

Doesn't Madison have enough business and won't continued growth only lead to more deficits and less livable conditions for the current residents?

A recession is coming, already we have seen business going bankrupted, specialty stores closing, home foreclosures, workers being laid off, unpaid taxes by business. Maybe it's time to wait and see what happens.

George Hagenauer 1pm session

A major weakness of the document is its misunderstanding of the role child care and early childhood education plays in economic development in this region.

Childcare should be viewed more like health care or elder care in the economic mix. An economic impact study that is currently under way shows that childcare produces over a \$162 million in direct revenue in Dane County. The larger impact is far beyond that especially when you consider the number of parents who are able to work as a result of those services.

This becomes especially important in a lower than average wage economy such as Madison/Dane County where families overall have one of the highest percentages of both parents working in the country. While the focus in the press and legislature is on low income families, over 75% of the children in early childhood programs are not low income.

It is these facts that are often ignored in discussions within the city about early childhood education and which cannot be ignored in the 3-5 year plan, because high quality early childhood education is one of the major areas that distinguish the city from all other places in the country. It is also the one quality of life indicator that directly impacts all other aspects of the economy. With an economy that needs to replace aging boomer workers with younger talent and which is focused on technological fields that require years of postsecondary training, we cannot afford to not use our early childhood advantage as part of our economic development strategy.

As such, I would list the fact that “The City of Madison has the only local early childhood accreditation program in the country resulting in half the children in the city being in high quality accredited care” under #2 Leading Current City Activities.

Under 3, childcare is also a business retention strategy. I am not sure how the several million each year in private sector dollars invested in new child care lines up alongside some of the other initiatives but the city subcontracts small amounts of funding to 4-C and Satellite that in turn leverages private sector investment in early childhood businesses.

I would list childcare in both the community and economic development columns as the low income focused care definitely fits into the community development column but the field overall is one of the strategies for overcoming economic obstacles.

Likewise the city’s office of childcare needs to be involved in the teams that are developing the implementation parts of the plan.

This approach will require changes in the way both people in the early childhood field and the economic development field but it is essential if this area is to be competitive in the coming decades. We have created a remarkable asset in our early childhood programs, we need to benefit from the years of commitment, effort and investment.

Delora Newton
Executive Vice President
Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further comment on the draft 3-5 year Madison economic development plan. The Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce (GMCC) appreciates the attention the City of Madison is giving to economic development and quality job creation. It’s a worthwhile endeavor and one that we support.

We have a few general comments and questions about the drafted recommendations. First, throughout the document there is significant emphasis on the creation and leverage of a public/private partnership. However, little is provided to further define how this group would function. More importantly, who will lead this initiative? At the March 25th Listening Session, Tom Ticknor indicated that it was unclear whose responsibility this would be. This demands further clarification or recommendation on how such a partnership would succeed.

The plan recommends a stronger and more strategic city economic development toolkit. The GMCC agrees. But among the specific recommendations are better utilization of the Community Development Authority and Community Development Block Grant funds. How will these funds be available to businesses? What is being specifically recommended? Do you believe businesses will see this strategy as advantageous to their needs?

Overall, there are some good observations made in this document and the GMCC is poised to work with the city to further these goals. Clearly our peer cities are spending more time, effort and resources on economic development initiatives. If the City of Madison is serious about implementing these goals, it will require strong leadership in several areas of city government. Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Delora