

Appendix

A

Community Engagement Input

Reasons to live in Elkhorn

- Good public schools: Good quality of education, not reflected in trend of test scores. High school scores are better than middle school; strong after school programs, extracurricular activities. People move to Elkhorn because of Lakeland School. Facilities are up to date, and well connected to the community.
- People feel safe in the community.
- Affordable housing- low cost of living.
- Elkhorn is a bedroom community- well located between Madison, Milwaukee and Chicago. Reflective of bedroom community nature, people expect to leave the community to buy goods. This can be a negative for the community if people assume that the City has high taxes due to less commercial uses.
- County seat - hence an employment center.
- Rural character.
- Older residents have a strong sense of community; new residents may have a hard time getting to feel like part of the community.
- Safe community / great library / good zoning / near Highways 12 and 43 / Not prone to natural disasters / Good proximity to Gateway Technical College/ good homes.
- Geographic location.
- Close to good regional recreational facilities.
- Healthcare is strong in Elkhorn. Both Aurora and Mercy are doing well.

Current and future needs

- Maintaining the existing tax base and the place of City in the local economy.
- Affordability of City services and facilities, like schools and parks.
- Concern about the mix of housing units and having too many rental units as compared to single family.
- City fire / EMS service are currently volunteer and likely needs to be a full time force in the future.
- Reinvestment in City facilities needed – particularly City Hall. Little/no expenditure on City facilities other than Police Station and Library.
- Improve the appearance of commercial corridors.
- Need for a water treatment plant.
- The City departments are busy with day to day service demands.
- The Police Department’s accreditation project is a priority.
- There is limited active participation from the community, but for the most part residents are satisfied with City services.
- Many children leave the community when they graduate. Some return, but many leave in search of jobs creating a “brain drain” to places like Madison.
- Retail is limited in Elkhorn - can’t buy a pair of socks in Elkhorn. Would be nice to have places to buy gifts, small things. It is sad for a community when businesses leave. Need more retail.
- Few entertainment options (particularly for children). There used to be a movie theater.
- Tax caps- competition for the tax dollars. Some programs that are mandated, but there is not enough money to do everything.

- Decrease in population.
- County relies on volunteers to provide services (have a coordinator). As they are getting older, hard to find younger people to step in as volunteers.
- Lower incomes and fewer available jobs reduce middle class greatly. High school diplomas not sufficient for good jobs anymore.
- Schools are looking at facility upgrades and need referendums to approve them.
- Towns and City trying to make do with less revenue; it is a challenge finding resources for funds. Some towns are even taking out loans.
- Fire Department services provided by volunteers. Difficulty finding and keeping volunteers. Considering adding one or more paid/on-premises or full-time staff person. Volunteers can't all leave their jobs for a call during the day.
- Library is great for the community. Share catalog accesses other resources.
- The County is evaluating open space and park needs.
- The County Fair – is privately run – is one of the largest and oldest in the State. In general it is losing money. Attendance is down- since it is expensive to go to, and families have less discretionary income. They also lack facilities to draw enough people. It is also weather dependent – which can affect attendance.
- Flea markets on Sunday (impacts other businesses that see a drop in business).

Third Places* in the Community (*where people gather)

- Schools that their kids go to.
- Churches.
- Do not see formal activities (like block parties) in neighborhoods.
- New pool at Sunset Park (has started to show movies in the park and other programs). Newer residents seem to be making most use of the pool. Some residents concerned that construction cost will impact taxes.

Business climate in Elkhorn

- Not enough foot traffic “critical mass” for local businesses.
- Downtown struggling (like in other communities). Moy’s restaurant seems to do well.
- Stronger ties to Gateway Technical College would be helpful
- People in Elkhorn do not shop in Elkhorn (go to Delevan and Lake Geneva), but grocery stores are available for residents in Elkhorn.
- Retail business district at north end of community doing well.
- Development approval process can be complex and take too long.
- Businesses self-promotes to increase clientele.
- Family owned businesses rely on their old clientele.
- Long time business owners are interested in downtown growing.
- Bielinski Homes have been in the area for many years. Sees strengths of the area as good school system, access to transportation and utilities (sewer and water system existing). Rate of sales has

been moderate but steady in the area.

- Gateway Technical College services three counties (Racine, Kenosha, and Walworth). As the Walworth County seat, Elkhorn is important and centrally located. Currently expanding and building a science program and tech building. Looking to serve manufacturing base with employee training. A technical college in the community is a good match with local manufacturing. Gateway partners with specific businesses for job training by doing customized training. Moving Job Center to Elkhorn. Dr. Bryan Albrecht, President of Gateway has been central to its success and growth.

Future needs

- A family style restaurant (national brand would be acceptable).
- Area with development potential is the Interstate 43 interchange – last undeveloped interchange.
- Northeastern part of planning area is most logical area for new development.
- There is a general expectation in the community that city government would stay downtown.
- Should better tie in with Gateway Technical College. More STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).
- Middle class jobs to create a higher income populations.
- Other events and shows to augment County Fair – horse shows, events for kids, sporting events. (Perhaps bring events in from northern IL).
- Variety of business growth.
- Recreation- connect White River Trail with downtown.
- Big employer needed - in turn provides middle income jobs, community, homes.
- More high-tech manufacturing.
- A variety of good quality housing (but currently not a lot of demand for housing). Senior housing would be desirable. City has its share of the area's low cost housing.

Downtown Elkhorn

- Businesses succeed by their own networking and promoting downtown.
- Limited amount of retail makes new retailers nervous to move downtown.
- Some feel the rules and procedures for business, development and signs are too strict.
- More open communication between City and businesses would be beneficial.
- Had a façade program downtown. Funding ended in 2013.
- Historic Preservation Commission can make renovation difficult by adding requirements.
- A downtown business network would help grow businesses.
- Downtown is service oriented, not much retail.
- Town needs an identity. Has “music town” and Christmas card town.
- Image impacted by people reading about criminal court cases in Elkhorn, thinking that's there the crime is.
- Groups that conduct activities (ie Rotary, Chamber, business owners) have little or no communication/ promotion of events.

- Not a lot of walk-in traffic because of limited retail.
- Image and sense of safety impacted by Nickel Plate Hotel- a halfway house in downtown concerns some and creates a stigma. City working to improve these impacts.
- Belief that the City has an ordinance that prevents signs/posters for advertising club/organization names and festivals.
- It's common that residents don't know what's going on downtown.
- Zoning ordinance limits signs – no sidewalk or blade signs (note: code recently changed to allow these signs).
- Parking limit of 2 hours not always enforced. Some business owners park in front of other businesses for the whole day. Keeps customers from coming in.
- Elkhorn does not have enough businesses to support the community. Hence needs to be extra business friendly.

Economic development in Elkhorn and Walworth County

- Overflow of hotels for events in County benefit local hotels and businesses. Elkhorn receives room tax (approx. \$80,000/year). New Hampton Inn is a highly rated Hilton property.
- New Development (Hampton Inn, Walgreens, Aurora and Mercy clinics.)
- People's perception is that economic development is new stores, but it is more than that.
- Need a market analysis for downtown to see what retail can be supported.
- The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) Vision 2050 plan.
- Expanding rail and bus service.
- Encourage manufacturing expansion.
- Elkhorn needs to find an identity. What do people want to see? Having an identity would help to sell and promote the community. Has good schools, churches and character as a bedroom community. New pool is an asset.
- The EEDA will be the point of contact for companies interested in Elkhorn (in lieu of City economic development staff.)
- Tourism- County is 5th in the state for tourism.
 - » Majority is Lake Geneva. It's within a good reach of other cities and people have second homes here in the County. Generally seasonal (summer) but now is more year round.
 - » White River trail, catamaran, water park
 - » Alpine Valley- will be having more music festivals and overnight events. Alpine resort - has a ski hill (reach their capacity of 5,000 people). Snow mobile show and races (event based in the winter.) The resort itself is dated.
 - » Golfing is popular in the County.
- Economy had rebounded, but recovering slowly.
- Need for high end restaurant and sit down family restaurant.
- Residents are concerned about taxes going up, but like that the city is a bedroom community.
- Housing market- had picked up, now has flattened out. Foreclosures are being turned into rental properties.

- Growth in school district is due to open enrollment- particularly Delevan. Younger populations has not been maintained. People leave to find jobs.
- Chamber of Commerce membership has been consistent at around 235 companies.
- Precision Plus' business has been strong. It has connected with the community and been focused on job training for young people (intern program) and has an existing business park development. Many of Precision Plus' employees not from Elkhorn. Getting invested in the school system would help create well trained employees.

List of key stakeholders interviewed on September 18th, 2014

MEETING 1 - City departments (1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.)

- Sam Tapson, City Administrator
- Rod Smith, Fire Chief
- Joel Christensen, Police Chief
- Wendy Ard, Parks and Recreation Director
- Martin Nuss, Public Works Operation Manager
- James Heilman, Finance Director
- John Murphy, Utilities Manger

MEETING 2 - Towns and taxing bodies (2:30 pm to 3:30 pm)

- Nancy Russell – Walworth County, Board Chair
- David Bretl, Walworth County, Administrator
- John Olson, Town of Delevan, Administrator
- Bill Trewyn – Elkhorn Area School District, Business Manager
- Judy O'Donell- Town of Lafayette, Supervisor
- Barbara Fischer- Town of Lafayette Clerk / Treasurer

MEETING 3 - Business Community (3:30 pm to 4:30 pm)

- Kathy Anderson, Derek Kreeda- Walworth County Economic Development Alliance
- Barry Butters- Precision Plus, Inc. Member / Secretary of EEDA (Elkhorn Economic Development Alliance)
- Chris Clapper- Executive Director, Elkhorn Chamber of Commerce (also on EEDA)

MEETING 4 - Local businesses and institutions (4:30 pm to 5:30 pm)

- Chris Clapper - Elkhorn Chamber of Commerce
- Michael O'Donnell – Gateway Technical College
- Cleo Filer – Dr. Halls' office
- Lisa Brown - Hair salon owner in downtown Elkhorn
- Cheryl Kullberg- Jeweler in downtown Elkhorn
- Linda Wolfe- St. Patricks' church
- Nancy Washburn- Bielinski Homes