



GREEN LAKE COUNTY

571 County Road A, Green Lake, WI 54941

Original Post Date: 2/24/2025

Amended Post Date:

The following documents are included in the packet for the Economic Development Corporation Committee Meeting on February 27, 2025:

- 1) Agenda
- 2) Minutes: 11/21/2024
- 3) Spark Towns Invoice
- 4) Green Lake County Economic Energy Plan presentation



GREEN LAKE COUNTY

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

Elizabeth Otto
County Clerk

Office: 920-294-4005
FAX: 920-294-4009

Economic Development Corporation Meeting Notice

Date: Thursday, February 27, 2024 Time: 8:30 AM
The Green Lake County Government Center, County Board Room
571 County Road A, Green Lake WI

AGENDA

Corporation Members

Scott Mundro, Chair
Scott Sommers
VACANT
Harley Reabe
Mary Neubauer
VACANT
VACANT

Elizabeth Otto, Secretary

Virtual attendance at meetings is optional. If technical difficulties arise, there may be instances when remote access may be compromised. If there is a quorum attending in person, the meeting will proceed as scheduled.

This agenda gives notice of a meeting of the Economic Development Corporation. It is possible that individual members of other governing bodies of Green Lake County government may attend this meeting for informative purposes. Members of the Green Lake County Board of Supervisors or its committees may be present for informative purposes but will not take any formal action. A majority or a negative quorum of the members of the Green Lake County Board of Supervisors and/or any of its committees may be present at this meeting. See State ex rel. Badke v. Vill. Bd. of Vill. of Greendale, 173 Wis.2d 553, 578, 494 N.W. 2d 408 (1993).

1. Call to Order
2. Certification of Open Meeting Law
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Minutes: Review & Approval of 11/21/2024
5. Public Comment (3 minute limit)
6. Approval of Spark Towns Invoice
7. Green Lake County Economic Energy Plan presentation
8. Treasurer's Report
9. Presidents Report/Discussion
10. Committee Discussion
 - Future Meeting Dates: TBD
 - Future Agenda Items for Action & Discussion
11. Adjourn

This meeting will be conducted through in person attendance or audio/visual communication. Remote access can be obtained through the following link:

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 243 024 251 542

Passcode: F4LB6hm9

Dial in by phone

+1 920-515-0745,,660623036# United States, Appleton

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 660 623 036#

For organizers: [Meeting options](#) | [Reset dial-in PIN](#)

Please accept at your earliest convenience. Thank you!

[Org help](#) | [Privacy and security](#)

Kindly arrange to be present, if unable to do so, please notify our office. Elizabeth Otto, County Clerk

Please note: Meeting area is accessible to the physically disabled. Anyone planning to attend who needs visual or audio assistance, should contact the County Clerk's Office, 294-4005, not later than 3 days before date of the meeting.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

November 21, 2024

The regular meeting of the Green Lake County Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors was called to order by Chair Scott Mundro at 8:33 AM on Thursday, November 21, 2024 at Green Lake County Government Center, County Board Room, 571 County Road A, Green Lake, WI. The meeting was held both in person and via remote access. The requirements of the open meeting law were certified as being met. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Present:	Scott Mundro	Absent:	Scott Sommers
	Harley Reabe		Chris Foos
	Mary Neubauer (remote)		
	Liz Otto		
	Tim Ludolf		

Also Present: Greg Wright

MINUTES

No vote taken to approve the minutes due to lack of quorum present per EDC bylaws (remote access not allowed to vote).

PUBLIC COMMENT – none

WELCOME NEWLY APPOINTED EDC MEMBERS

Tim Ludolf introduced himself as the Community Development Director in the City of Berlin. Scott Mundro stated that Chris Foos is absent but provided some background information on him stating that he is a City of Green Lake alderperson as well as with the Green Lake Economic Development board.

DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON GREEN LAKE COUNTY ECONOMIC ENERGY PLAN WITH GREG WRIGHT

Greg Wright presented an update to his plan which included 4 options that EDC should consider moving forward. Wright went over the benefits and challenges of each option:

- 1) EDC hires a person to manage all aspects of economic development
- 2) Hire or sign on with an existing economic development organization in the area to explore territory expansion that includes Green Lake County. Wright recommended looking at the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation.
- 3) Look to existing organizations within Green Lake County to expand services and collaborate as one group
- 4) EDC identifies any immediate work and carry it out via contractors by putting out RFP's.

Discussion held with #3 considered as the best option at this time per general consensus of the committee. No funding in the 2025 budget for a position. Wright requested that each member send him an email with names of potential people to contact.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON 2025 BUDGET

This item was covered under the previous item.

UPDATE ON HERITAGE TOURISM GUIDE

Scott Mundro presented the draft guide that he has completed. He stated he has much more work to do such as gathering pictures and will be prioritizing this in the future.

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

No updates.

TREASURER'S REPORT

County Clerk Liz Otto stated that the balance in the housing grant account as of October 31, 2024 is \$45,845.94 and \$9,598.69 in the EDC checking account. No accepting vote taken with no quorum.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT AND DISCUSSION

No updates.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Next regular meeting: December 19, 2024 @ 8:30 AM.

Future Agenda Items for action & discussion:

ADJOURNMENT

Scott Mundro adjourned the meeting at 9:11 AM.

Submitted by

Liz Otto
County Clerk



INVOICE #: 072

TO: Green Lake County Economic Development Corporation


DUE: 02/17/2025

RE: Final Payment

ITEM	COST
Payment to complete work on the GLC Economic Energy Plan, which provides a strategic plan for economic development in Green Lake County.	\$4,640.00
TOTAL	\$4,640.00

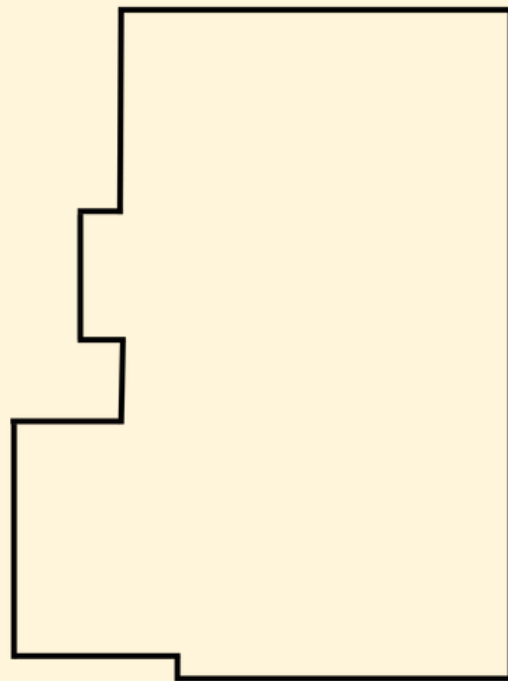
Make out and send checks to: Spark Towns, LLC
PO Box 421
Princeton, WI 54968

Contact Greg Wright at greg@sparktowns.com with any questions or for ACH information.



GREEN LAKE COUNTY

ECONOMIC ENERGY PLAN



Green Lake County is an incredible place.

It is rich in outdoor attractions and history, with great people building special communities. But like many other historically agricultural and manufacturing small towns, it is a county in need of economic direction.

Three central data points paint the best picture of what is happening. Green Lake County is losing workforce while it is growing in population, a shift accelerated by the pandemic. Simultaneously, the population moving in is increasing the average age and making Green Lake County one of the oldest counties in Wisconsin, a state with its own aging-population struggles. This combination means that the economic base of the county is shrinking while costs and demand for services are growing. It impacts access to housing as properties that would normally support the workforce become second homes and rental properties. The lack of affordable housing makes it even harder to find workers, encouraging businesses outside of the seasonal economy to look at other markets for employees. This cycle keeps feeding itself.

Across Green Lake County, communities and organizations have hired consultants to complete plans in hopes of establishing a new direction. Often times, the reports returned are rich with data and options but fail to articulate clear step-by-step strategies that position the county for success. Moreover, these plans often overlook the organizational structure and ownership required to move key ideas forward.

This report aims to provide straightforward directions and recommendations intended to move Green Lake County beyond planning to a place of long-term vitality.

A SHIFT IN APPROACH

No significant economic development strategy will move forward in Green Lake County without first addressing the organizational structure required to attach key projects to clear ownership and to ensure that ownership is supported with expertise and capacity.

To facilitate this result, we strongly recommend a shift in approach across economic development positions that focuses on hiring experts to work within clear lanes that then serve all communities in the county instead of hiring community-specific positions designed to be overwhelmed by too many job responsibilities.

There is, at times, a sense across Green Lake that its various communities are too different to work collaboratively, but the behavior of residents within the county challenges that premise. Most residents live, work, shop, and play across multiple municipalities. They often treat the various cities more like districts within their community than separate places entirely. Many residents are regularly crossing county lines to round out aspects of their day-to-day lives.

With a total population under 20,000 people, the demand for specific economic development services across all municipalities, especially when leveraging local partners, is often manageable for a single position. Many of the communities don't have enough demand even to justify a position or organization. This approach will expand access while streamlining investments and improving collaborations. Moreover, it will enable a comprehensive look at the best-fit locations for investments, which will have positive impacts on housing, recreation, marketing, and business development.

RESPONSIBILITIES

**POSITIONS BY
COMMUNITY**

Job in Princeton	Job in Markesan	Job in Green Lake	Job in Berlin

**POSITIONS BY
EXPERTISE**

COMMUNITIES SERVED

POSITIONS BY EXPERTISE	Placemaker & Project Manager	Event Coordinator & Marketer	Workforce & Housing Director	Entrepreneur & Business Coach
	Berlin			
	Green Lake			
	Markesan			
	Princeton			
	GLC Towns			

WHY A NEW ENTITY?

Efforts to move this work forward through a county committee are being hampered by that very structure. In its current format, the EDC struggles to move any work or initiatives forward between meetings, and the formality of its meeting structure makes it difficult to have in-depth conversations about the work. The EDC then has trouble getting beyond an advisory role, but they aren't advising any organization, entity, or position of influence.

WHAT ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY?

This new entity should still include advisory boards made up of local-economy stakeholders from each community. These advisory boards should set the goals and metrics for all employees, and its bylaws should create mechanisms for these boards to flag employees for reevaluation should their work fail to have impact in every community. We also recommend separate bank accounts by community so that community's can raise and invest funds for projects knowing that those funds will be spent on their own projects.

HOW COULD IT BE FUNDED?

Capacity building grants from organizations like the WEDC or WI Fast Forward, past county funding for the EDC, and private sector funding like CRA dollars could support the launch of a robust EDO that serves the county well. We also recommend looking at existing economic development spending/positions (UW-Extension, Chambers, etc.) and expanding room tax into additional municipalities.



**RIGHT
SIZING**



REGION



COUNTY



LAKE DISTRICT

The most immediate challenge to collaborative economic development will be in right-sizing the organization so that it is both set up for success and ready to have the greatest impact. While we recommend a countywide organization, we want to share two other models and our rationales behind them.

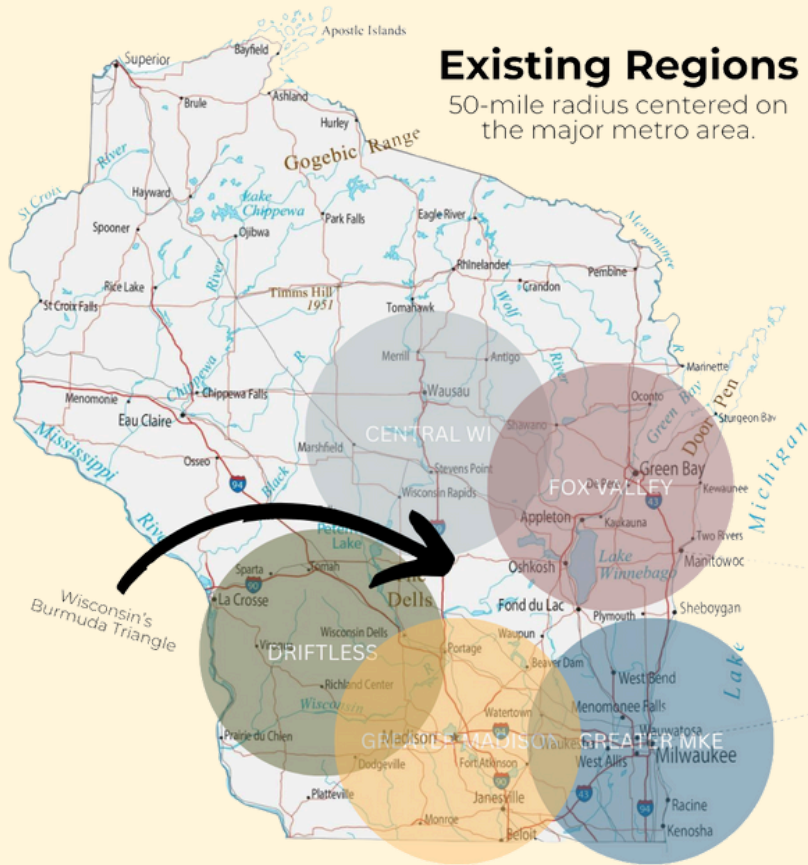
REGIONAL

The first looks at broader collaboration through a regional entity. More collaboration will lead to greater impact. It will streamline resources, increase access to high-capacity staff, and grow the reach of marketing and development efforts.

LAKE DISTRICT

The second looks at a smaller lake district entity. It acknowledges historic challenges to collaborate across the different communities and economies in this county but starts the collaboration process by pulling together the municipalities that are experiencing the most similar economies.

The highest number of participating communities will have the greatest impact. That said, collaboration won't work if the participating communities aren't ready to work together. This effort will succeed when it finds the most communities and entities that are excited to shift to this approach, when it support those groups in defining clear policies and procedures for participation, and when it leaves the door wide open for others to join the collaborative process when they are ready.



As part of our research, we asked stakeholders questions about their regional identity and how they saw Green Lake County communities fitting into the bigger WI picture. We heard varied answers that led us to map out regions in relationship to Green Lake County. Centering 50-mile-radius circles over each identified region produced the map to the left.

Green Lake County often feels removed from attention and resources. This map helps to explain why. Green Lake County communities are, at best, on the outer periphery of these regions with population sizes that are unlikely to draw much attention from economic development professionals typically posted at regional centers.

The existing regions map gives cause for considering a new identity that would create an autonomous rural region, pulling together other small communities on the peripheries of these larger metro areas. Stakeholders talked often about the Driftless Region and Door County as economic development peers, but those regions bring together far more communities than any Green-Lake specific entity could.

A similar approach could exist for this region, however, if it built an identity around the towns of the Upper Fox River Basin. More than a dozen towns are in similar positions to the communities in Green Lake County. They exist on bodies of water that feed into the Upper Fox, they were established initially in relationship to that waterway, and they are now navigating the same transition from manufacturing and agriculture to tourism and entrepreneurship.

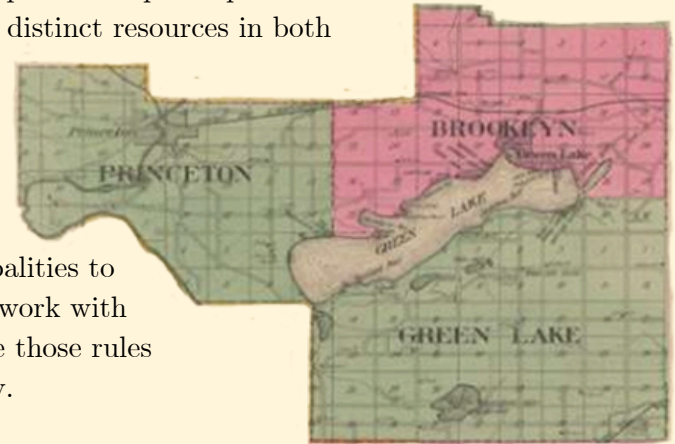
To be clear, the relationships likely don't exist yet to pull this off, but there is value in having this target on the horizon and in using this effort to initiate the conversations that may eventually make regional collaboration possible. The Office of Rural Prosperity could be a great partner to help and would support a summit and/or other initiation and exploration efforts.



In full disclosure, our interviews revealed some concerns about whether the relationships and trust exist even for a successful countywide economic development organization yet. We heard valid concerns that any collaborative effort would likely focus too much on the lake and its communities or would fail to recognize the distinct challenges facing each local economy, especially those less reliant on tourism.

It may be smart, then, in recognizing the validity of that critique, to leverage it as an opportunity. The easiest path to greater collaboration may be in forming a Lake District economic development organization. In practice, this would likely start by pulling together the cities of Green Lake, Markesan, and Princeton, and the towns of Brooklyn, Green Lake, and Princeton into a single economic development entity. As with any structure, the door would remain open for other municipalities to participate from the beginning or at a later date. This approach would keep distinct resources in both Berlin and the Lake District, which could work together when it makes sense and build trust over time. This could lead to further alignment that supports a single countywide entity eventually.

The big thing: not everyone has to be on board for municipalities to start collaborating. Start by figuring out who is ready and work with each other to establish the right goals and guidelines. Share those rules of engagement broadly and let others join as they are ready.



TO BE CLEAR, WE RECOMMEND A COUNTYWIDE ORGANIZATION.

These other models offer alternative paths based on readiness, but we recommend a countywide organization. However, we also see the best path to success in moving forward with the coalition that is ready to collaborate, leaving the doors open for others to join over time.



**GREEN LAKE COUNTY HAS ALL THE ASSETS NEEDED
TO EVOLVE FROM A TOURISM ECONOMY INTO A
THRIVING ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM.**

TOURIST CONVERSION FUNNEL



Contemporary economic development is a team sport. Communities that thrive aren't just aware of the players on the field. They are also investing in the right coaching staff to proactively improve that team of players.

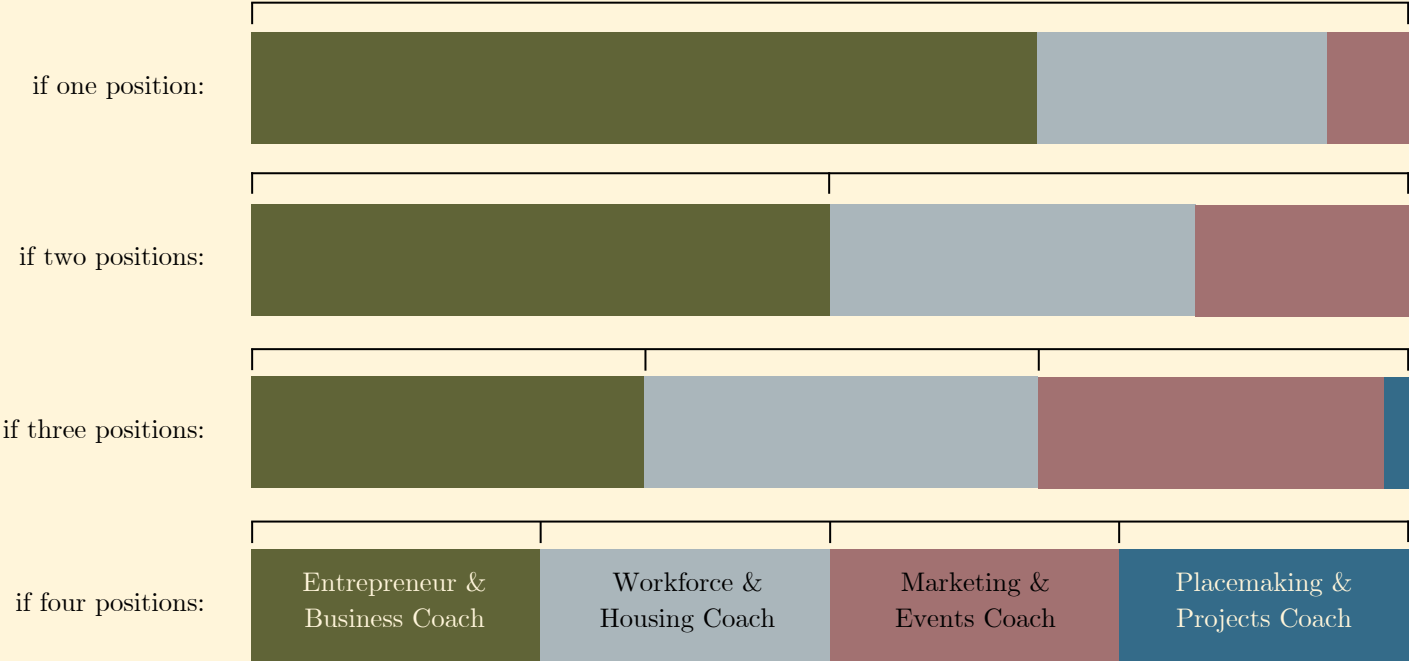
This is a fairly obvious missed opportunity in Green Lake County. While the demographic shift here is challenging, it is also bringing exceptional experience and opportunities into the county. So many entrepreneurs, business owners, and remote workers are vacationing and retiring here. Those people have ideas and resources that are the heart of robust entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The Brookings Institution talks about quality of life as the key determinant to small town economic development. Green Lake County has quality of life in spades, but the economic development mindset still sees these human resources as visitors and tourists only, not as potential residents with businesses to start or move. In the digital economy, people don't need to wait to retire here, but they need that coaching staff to invite and support them if they are going to make that leap.

THIS PLAN FOCUSES ON PUTTING TOGETHER THAT IDEAL COACHING STAFF (IN ORDER) AND IDENTIFIES PLAYS AND SCORECARDS EACH SHOULD FOCUS ON TO GROW THE GLC TEAM.

STAFFING PRIORITIES

Given the unknowns regarding funding and participation, this plan lays out rough priorities to inform hiring decisions as this future entity takes shape. The following pages describe these priorities in greater detail.



FIRST COACH: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, the chief economic development focus through the Green Lake County EDC has been on marketing and tourism. While those are undoubtedly important ingredients, we recommend considering a different prioritization that sees your highest return in entrepreneurship and business development.

Green Lake County will always attract visitors. The natural resources here do that work for you. If anything, what is challenging even the tourism industry is a shortage of local businesses adding to both the visitor and resident experience. Too much of a focus on tourism can reinforce the very economic trends that are challenging long-term vibrancy in Green Lake County.

Green Lake County needs an “opportunity broker” that feels responsible for the entrepreneurship ecosystem. In our research phase, we ran into tech-sector businesses flying under the radar, small business owners looking to relocate to the county, remote workers open to home-basing here, and existing businesses with ideas for expansion. All of that economic potential already exists in this county. It is just waiting for the right infrastructure and invitation to help it integrate into the Green Lake County economy.

With the resources it attracts in expertise and investment potential alone, Green Lake County could be a model for rural entrepreneurship and innovation. More 21st Century businesses will mean more year-round job opportunities and less strain on natural resources, both of which will further support tourism businesses as well. A point person responsible for launching and growing businesses would have immediate impact.

ENTREPRENUERSHIP PLAYBOOK

Complete an asset inventory and gap analysis to map out entrepreneurship resources.
Run a summer pitch competition that is open both to residents and visitors.
Develop accelerators, revolving loans, and other entrepreneurship supporting programs.
Build a mentor library that leverages expertise in retired or late-career professionals.
Support investor pairing to match local entrepreneurs with high-wealth locals and visitors.
Keep a single portfolio of countywide real estate locations with target business types identified.
Connect with and understand the remote worker ecosystem and work to increase their time in community.
Support cooperative resources like the community butcher shop or makerspaces.
Map out and grow other co-working and innovation center resources across the county.
Provide business development support through a unified chamber for the county.

SCORECARD

Advisory boards should be tracking the registration rates of new businesses and the occupancy levels of key commercial districts as key data points to evaluate someone in this position. The staff person should be able to report on their touch points with local business owners and entrepreneurs, breaking down that recorded information by location to ensure that services are reaching all participating municipalities.

SECOND COACH: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING

Green Lake County has agricultural and manufacturing sectors that out perform national averages. While it is valuable to invest in new businesses and entrepreneurship, it is equally important to understand where the economy is already strong in order to support and grow those existing businesses.

We heard repeatedly from manufacturers that have concerns about the future of the workforce. From companies moving jobs to other parts of the country to others that would expand if they could find workers to meet increased demand, the need for workforce development was top of mind for many of the bigger businesses in Green Lake County.

An employee tasked with this work would centralize key communication necessary to develop the right initiatives. They would serve as a liaison between businesses reporting out their experiences and local educational entities (school districts, tech and four-year colleges, Boys & Girls Clubs, etc.) looking to grow new curricula, apprenticeships, internships, and other training programs to respond to workforce needs.

In addition, advocating for and identifying right locations for affordable workforce housing would address a significant gap impeding workforce attraction and retention. With growing demand for rental and retirement homes even off-lake, potential workers interested in moving to the region are often unable to find housing. A countywide housing study and a scatter plot development project could help to address this shortage and inject new energy into less tourism-focused parts of the county.

WORKFORCE PLAYBOOK

Establish a central point of contact for workforce development.

Meet with major employers in agriculture and manufacturing to understand workforce challenges.

Meet with education providers to understand their capacity for workforce training.

Identify highest need training gaps and work across groups to design and pilot new programs.

Ensure that high-need job openings align with training and education at county schools.

Work with the state agencies to secure grants (e.g. Fast Forward) in support of these programs.

Ensure regional higher ed programs reach Green Lake County especially with internship placements.

Evaluate housing stock and available land for affordable workforce housing developments.

Communicate with potential developers to understand barriers to building affordable homes.

Work with WHEDA on a scatter-site workforce housing project to address shortages.

SCORECARD

Advisory boards should be tracking employment levels to ensure that they surpass participation in the workforce from prior to COVID. If successful, we should see more people working in Green Lake County and fewer residents leaving the county for work. Data should also show the average resident age start to drop.

THIRD COACH: MARKETING & EVENTS

Green Lake County is and should be a tourism economy. In that sense, it may seem strange to put events and marketing third on the priority list. While this work is vital to the region, these investments have less opportunity for big economic return than launching and growing local businesses supported by a strong workforce (also living here). Moreover, the work of marketing and events can often be supported through volunteers or partnerships that elevate local businesses in the region.

On that second point, we have seen real estate firms and other businesses benefit from an “in-the-know” reputation. They often become great community marketers and have resources and capacity to put out great content. Similarly, events hosted in or by restaurants, bars, and other establishments help drive customers to those businesses. Events take a lot of time. The return on an event for the county will always be less than the return from a new business, resident, or piece of infrastructure. The return for a specific business that hosts events, however, can be huge!

That said, this county would benefit from a high-capacity marketing professional working with and across all communities. The across part is the investment of highest value. For a small area, Green Lake County is producing too many unique marketing materials, putting a strain on local businesses asked to pay to advertise in each of them. A single countywide visitors guide would serve the county (and its visitors) more effectively. This marketing coach, then, could focus on collateral that helps people move across communities and find the wealth of things to do here: like trail maps, shopping guides, weekend itineraries are more!

MARKETING PLAYBOOK

This position should likely run the countywide chamber. In that position they should coordinate and support events and marketing efforts. They could also...

- Develop a strong brand for the county or region that includes strong brands for each downtown.
- Run social media for the county and its communities.
- Work on a single and comprehensive visitors guide for all of Green Lake County.
- Promote the various recreation areas, campsites, trail systems, and more!
- Pull together partners to participate in higher cost marketing investments like Discover Wisconsin.
- Put together packages and itineraries that help people move across towns and spend more time here.

Note: This is a retail destination. Retail, like ag and manufacturing, out performs national averages. The more visitors know they can bounce from community to community to fill out shopping weekends, the more time they will spend here and the more all communities will benefit. This could lead to the growth of related businesses and manufacturing.

SCORECARD

Advisory boards should be tracking tourism spending as a whole as well as room tax (if collected) by municipality. They should also be looking at vacancy levels in key commercial districts and visitor numbers at hotels, campgrounds, and other attractions identified by each community.

FOURTH COACH: PLACEMAKING & SPECIAL PROJECTS

If the resources exist for additional staff, this entity would benefit from someone focused on placemaking and special projects. While we see residents moving across the full county to meet their needs, the communities they interact with are still distinct places with their own identities and offerings. Each community in Green Lake County will thrive best when their commercial districts have their own developed brand and identity that integrates into the cohesive marketing approach.

For instance, Berlin's downtown would do well as a maker district, Green Lake benefits from its resort-town charm, Markesan can lean into its Amish connections, and Water Street in Princeton makes sense as the arts district. Each of these identities has connections both to rich history and current businesses in those communities. Signage, public art, complementary businesses, community spaces, and other placemaking investments will help to strengthen these identities.

There are also a number of special projects that would expand tourism and recreational infrastructure in the county and deepen the overall sense of place. Often these projects work across or tie together multiple communities and would benefit from project management that can also span boundaries. The Fox River, vast nature areas, bike trails, and other outdoor recreation would give residents and visitors even more to do when they visit, making it easier to extend their length of time in the county.

PLACEMAKING PLAYBOOK

Beyond general placemaking efforts like public art, signage, and other place-based branding, some of the unique projects that came out during interview include:

- More recreational use of the Fox River
- Trails and boardwalks in Berlin's new conservation land
- Greenways bike trails, especially the old railroad bed running from Ripon to Neshkoro
- More ATV trails and a countywide trail map (added onto apps as well)
- Berlin City Pool
- Princeton Riverwalk
- The Future of the Fairgrounds
- Foxhead Regenerative Agriculture Project

SCORECARD

A position like this could easily be contracted out on a project-by-project basis or tied to grant funding to support planning and execution of such projects. Success would be tied directly to the completion of these projects.

LEVERAGE CONSULTANTS AND CONTRACTORS

Green Lake County has a transient population. People move into and out of the county for stretches of their lives, often bringing in valuable skills. Too often, the county is building around these high-value individuals permanent infrastructure that then exists for years after they have left town. Green Lake Country is a great example of that phenomenon. The entity has struggled to have impact ever since its founder moved away from the county.

Contract work that has specific parameters and deliverables can help to focus efforts. It will reduce long-term costs and prevent unnecessary infrastructure that continues to tax the county for years after its peak impact. In many ways, one central organizing employee, a strong board, and effective use of project-specific contractors could produce the greatest results for the county given its human resources.

Under this model, board members would work with staff to identify research or projects that would have specific time frames and outcomes. They would then pay experts to take on those specific tasks. This approach would keep the work task- and outcome-focused and would be more cost-effective than salaried employees. This model could also respond to unique talent as it moves into and out of Green Lake County.



COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

If this strategy is deemed valuable, it could also inform the economic development sections of the comprehensive plan. It would translate to goals that focus on:

- strengthening Green Lake County's capacity to support and scale entrepreneurship,
- investing in strategies that ensure a strong workforce for existing ag & manufacturing sectors,
- understanding and supporting the needs of a growing remote worker population,
- developing a marketing strategy and projects that emphasize countywide tourism,
- supporting key projects that add recreational infrastructure and strengthen community identity, and
- improving collaboration across municipalities to provide more efficient economic development services that reach all parts of the county.



This plan was developed for the Economic Development Corporation of Green Lake County by Spark Towns.



SPARK TOWNS