



ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MEETING #1

July 9, 2015

1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

City of Grand Rapids Parking Services
50 Ottawa NW, 49503

WORKGROUP MEMBERS PRESENT: Tara Carr, Sue DeVries, Jarrett DeWyse, Ashley Garrigan, Betty Beth Johns, Ben Johnson, Scott Johnson, Kwan McEwen, Bill Pink, Kurt Reppart, Kevin Stotts (Co-Chair), and Marolyn Villalobos.

STAFF PRESENT: Erin Banchoff, Connie Bohatch, Jonathan Klooster, Johanna Schulte, and Kara Wood.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: Kevin Stotts (Co-Chair)

Mr. Stotts welcomed workgroup participants and facilitated member introductions. The group reflected on the June 12, 2015 Workgroup Kickoff meeting notes. Members are to notify Erin Banchoff (ebanchof@grcity.us) if new workgroup members need to be added to the list.

Kara Wood mentioned wages, job training, and educational attainment were identified as being important factors.

SWOT ANALYSIS:

Mr. Stotts led a SWOT Analysis. The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified.

Strengths:

- Educational institutions – GR has many
- Cost of living
- Diverse economy
- Strong base – manufactures, agriculture, healthcare
- Benevolent community – strong philanthropic and foundation community
- Culture, quality of life – both cultural and natural resources exist in GR
- Neighborhoods – some strong neighborhoods attractive to residents
- Public education – GRPS is improving in many measurable aspects
- Investment - Challenge Scholars program recently implemented
- Job training – broad range of job training programs and state support
- Wage growth – reported recent increase in wages from many employers
- Business, entrepreneurship – strong culture of entrepreneurship
- Collaborative nature – public/private partnerships
- Transit System – improving in many areas
- City policies support diversity
- City Commission support
- National recognition – many “top 10” lists and media coverage

Weaknesses:

- Transit system - schedules and routes still present barriers
- Racial disparity - Economic opportunity for African Americans and other minorities, wage gaps, skill and education gaps
- Educational attainment (pockets)

- Wage disparity
- Employers and housing not felon-friendly – barrier to employment for employable individuals
- Lack of affordable housing – decreases stability and employability
- Lack of housing inventory for all incomes – potential difficulty meeting demand
- Not enough proactive, long-term effort from employers
- Adult population – skill development
- Skills gap – risk for long-term unemployment

Opportunities:

- Collaboration with staffing, community, employers, job training, and housing resources
- Availability of diverse housing inventory – neighborhoods
- Incentives for employees living close to place of employment (EAH)
- Childcare – employers, collaboration with schools
- Collaboration between employers and developers of new commercial space
- Community benefit agreements
- Employer incentives for job training and education
- Serving immigrant, refugee population – new businesses (entrepreneurial)
- Housing types that meet needs of employees
- Connect adults not in labor force with job training and employers
- Reduce barriers to education
- Non-traditional employment opportunities – map and legitimize multiple pathways to success
- Housing barriers for non-traditional students – many do not qualify for subsidized housing by virtue of being defined as a full-time student
- Dual enrollment – potential to expand in order to reduce cost barriers to educational attainment
- Public schools – improving, but still critical to maintain trajectory
- Mayor's 100 – recently expanded from Mayor's 50, potential for further expansion?
- Demand for less than a 4-year degree
- Younger, commuter workforce

Threats:

- Regional/national competition for talent attraction and retention
- Balance between retention of existing employees and attraction of new talent
- Rapidly aging workforce (working for longer; tipping point); skills not being transferred
- Millennials choose location before job, then need housing – must provide attractive quality of life
- Millennials perceptions and demand for housing
- Available land for development – particularly industrial
- Limited ability to provide economic incentives – recently reduced state incentives, threat of further reductions
- Racial disparity and segregation
- Transit system; combined cost of housing and transit
- Federal funding cuts

PLANNING AND ANALYSIS:

The group decided to revisit the overall goals of the workgroup process. The group decided it would be useful to have a matrix encompassing the SWOT conversation and organized by the

themes of talent attraction, retention, and development. The group also identified public policy, the role of employers, and place-making as being important themes.

At the next meeting, the group intends to break into groups to review wages, education, job training, and housing. Short, medium, and long term goals will be identified.

The group discussed fostering a focus on youth in Grand Rapids to transition young residents into the local job market.

Next Meeting: July 23, 2015 1:30-3:30 pm