

Driftless Development INC

Fall 2019 Board Retreat

REPORT



DRIFTLESS
DEVELOPMENT INC



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
CRAWFORD COUNTY

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Jim and Jessica identified key points of data collection throughout the DDI Retreat schedule, and the highest quality data we collected was during the table discussion portion of the retreat. We asked table leaders to take notes of the conversations, and this report analyzes those notes.

The following six sections identify the key themes of each Discussion Topic. Topics included: Housing, Workforce Development, School-to-Work, Downtowns, Poverty, Leadership & Collaboration. The final section points out the emergent themes that appeared across many of the discussion topics.

Housing

The table discussion around Housing identified many key opportunities and actions to help address the housing crisis in our community. These opportunities include:

- **To collaborate with cities, villages, and county to establish our housing needs, then define avenues of possible revenue and funding (grants, incentives), and then propose a pilot project with our four school districts.**
- Working with communities to establish incentive programs to help sellers and buyers.
- Incentivizing investors & entrepreneurs to establish housing
- Defining needs:
 - Types of housing needed
 - Programs available for home purchase
- Addressing affordability of property tax, by creating worker committees

EMERGENT THEMES. The housing issue was brought up at several of the other discussion tables as well. The key themes that emerged from the data are that:

- **Youth are a big part of the solution to our housing crisis.** Therefore, we need to involve youth as decision-makers in housing programs, but also use the housing issue as an opportunity for youth to gain real-life skills. For instance, DDI can initiate and/or coordinate a pilot house-building program at our four schools.
- **Education - (for both youth and adults).** There is a perceived educational gap for both adults and youth when it comes to the realities of home buying and home ownership.
- **Affordability.** DDI can initiate and/or coordinate programs to increase access to the knowledge and resources needed to own (or build) a house, to incentivise home ownership, and to increase the housing stock for both middle and low-income buyers.

Workforce Development

The table discussion around Workforce Development identified key actions to help address the workforce shortage in our community. These opportunities include:

Connecting Job Seekers to Businesses, by:

- **Increasing access to work experience.** This means helping youth and unskilled labor “just get in the door,” through youth apprenticeship and temporary workers.
- **Building awareness of local jobs.** This can be done at local schools, job fair, and through businesses hosting community open houses and tours.

From this discussion, it is clear that **DDI should continue the HR Masterminds group**, so that employers can continue to share best practices. Additionally, DDI can support this group by initiating and/or coordinating a the creation of a shared incentive program, that would increase local businesses’ capacity to retain employees.

EMERGENT THEMES. The key highlights from this discussion are to:

- Involve youth when thinking about workforce development.
- Create mentoring opportunities for both youth and adults.
- Focus on skills building, both soft & hard skills.

School-to-Work

The table discussion around School-to-Work was very similar to the discussion of Workforce Development. The primary opportunity identified was to:

Connect Students to Businesses, by:

- Bringing Businesses into classrooms, and by
- Bringing Students into businesses.

DDI can initiate and/or coordinate the creation of a program that connects schools, students, businesses, colleges, and community members to ensure these student-to-business connections happen for all of our area youth.

EMERGENT THEMES. Two key themes that emerged from the table discussions are:

- **Our Youth are a powerful resource!**
- Therefore, we should **Involve youth in the decision-making** when creating any programs meant to serve them.

Downtowns

The table discussion around Downtowns identified many additions to our existing downtowns. The additions identified include:

- Add retail and services
- Add events
- Add programming to help build resources for businesses (new & existing)
- Add Amenities

Specifically, DDI should:

- **Continue Pop Up Shops and events, build Main Street Program!**

EMERGENT THEMES. In analyzing the data across discussion topics, **Downtown conversation had the fewest overlaps with other topics.** This means that people currently see Downtowns as an isolated issue, and that we need to better connect downtown work to other issues/solutions in our community.

Poverty

The table discussion about Poverty yielded many interesting points of discussion, all of which overlap with other areas of discussion. The Pathways to Poverty Reduction identified include:

- Lower Barriers for Childcare Providers
- Build School to Work Connections
- Increase Access to Affordable Housing
- Increase Wages
- Build Awareness of Issues of Poverty in our Community
- Build Collaboration Capacity
- Develop Social Justice Leadership & Youth

EMERGENT THEMES. In analyzing the data across discussion topics, it is extremely clear that **Addressing poverty is linked to every issue we're facing as a community! This means that every DDI program should clearly address the role poverty plays in both creating and solving the problem.**