



# CITY OF JANESVILLE

*Wisconsin's Park Place*

## Comprehensive Plan Update

### Focus Group Discussion: Economic Development

#### Basic Ground Rules:

- **Highlighted questions** are topics that facilitators will focus on during the in-person event. Facilitators will do their best to keep the conversation moving, while also encouraging some back and forth within the groups. If time allows, the remaining questions will be posed to the group.
- In general, please limit your responses to 2-minutes or less to allow all participants the opportunity to participate.
- City Staff are in attendance to take notes and listen to community feedback on the topics.
- Written comments are welcome, and encouraged, for all of the questions and can be provided to City Staff at [www.janesvillewi.gov/comprehensiveplanupdate](http://www.janesvillewi.gov/comprehensiveplanupdate) or by email to David Salmon – [salmond@janesvillewi.gov](mailto:salmond@janesvillewi.gov). Comments must be received by Thursday August 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm.

#### Next Steps for Comprehensive Plan update:

- Feedback from this discussion will be incorporated into the draft chapters of the plan.
- Final steering committee meeting in late August to review draft chapters.
- Public Open House in September
- Public Hearing and action to recommend adoption at the Plan Commission in October
- Public Hearing and action to adopt the plan at the City Council in November

## Discussion Topic 1: Economic Growth: Retention, Expansion, and Recruitment of Industries

1. **Local** Governments in Wisconsin have a limited set of tools to recruit new businesses and support expansion of existing businesses. Those tools include Tax Incremental Financing Districts, State and Federal Economic Development Grants, Jobs incentives for new developments, and Downtown programs including Business Improvement District Façade Improvement Grants and a Revolving Loan Fund among others. Limited general funds can be used to support development, as recently occurred with the purchase of agricultural land on the far south side of Janesville with plans to market this land for industrial development. **What else can the city, and partners in the area, do to help attract, and retains businesses within the Janesville Area? What do companies need to grow and expand locally?**
  
2. **The** City of Janesville is planning a long overdue major update to the Zoning and Subdivision Code starting in 2024. Previous meetings of the Comprehensive Plan Update Steering Committee addressed housing and neighborhood development and the need to re-orient these land use regulations to increase the housing supply and affordability. **What should the city consider with respect to zoning in commercial and industrial areas? How does the current zoning code hinder development and re-development? In what ways can the development review and approval process better support business attraction, retention, and growth?**

3. **Healthcare**, Food Processing, Warehousing/Distribution, Metal Production, Medical Tech, and Retail are the major industries clustered in and around Janesville. **What are the strengths or weaknesses of these clusters? If the City were to continue to diversify its economy, what other industries should be targeted?**
  
4. Janesville and Rock County are part of a larger economic region that includes major research, healthcare tech, and state agencies in Madison, as well as a large manufacturing and distribution employment base in Beloit, Rockford, and other smaller cities in the area. **How should the city seek to capitalize on this proximity? Should the City seek to align with these industries or differentiate itself and why?**
  
5. Janesville has many successful local businesses in the Downtown district and scattered throughout the community. **What do small businesses need to succeed in Janesville? How can the city better support small businesses in competing in this era of e-commerce?**
  
6. The Janesville Innovation Center has been operating since 2012, and other state and local programs provide support for entrepreneurship and business startups. **What else is needed in Janesville to support entrepreneurship, startups, and economic innovation? Who is missing out on these opportunities?**

## Discussion Topic 2: Workforce Development: Education, Training, Recruitment, and Retention

1. **Wisconsin** has one of the lowest rates of working age adults not being actively employed in history, in other words more working age adults are working now than ever before. Despite this, employers are experiencing shortages of workers to fill a wide range of jobs including service jobs and the kinds of jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree but requires some additional training. **What conversations does Janesville need to be having to support the pipeline of workers for these skilled workers coming through the local K-12 system and Technical Colleges? From your perspective, what kind of workforce does Janesville need to attract new employers and future growth industries?**
2. **High-school** graduation rates have improved in Janesville over the past decade and more residents have some form of post-secondary degree (whether an associates, bachelors, masters, or PhD). Despite this, there remains a shortage of workers trained and ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow. **From your perspective, what barriers exist currently for people in accessing employment, education, or workforce training?**
3. The Country is beginning a transition to a cleaner energy future, which means opportunities for employment in the green energy and green transportation industries. **Should Janesville seek to get on the front end of this transition to bring more worker training programs to Janesville related to green energy and other industries?**

### **Discussion Topic 3: Community and Economic Development: Sustainability, Equity, Community well-being, and Quality of Life**

1. **Over** the past decade, significant public and private efforts have gone into revitalizing Downtown Janesville and establishing a stronger Downtown identity. Areas on the South Side, West Side, and Milton Avenue Corridor have not received as much focus. These areas are tired and have long since passed their heyday as highly productive retail areas. **What kinds of placemaking efforts would help to redevelop and revitalize them? What are some important focus points for redevelopment and revitalization? If you had to prioritize, which areas are in most dire need?**
  - a. Some re-development initiatives could include: Food Access, Third Spaces, Public/Private Outdoor Event Spaces, Food Truck Parks/Entertainment Districts, Mixed-use residential and commercial/office space, public/private parcel assemblage to allow for larger footprint re-developments.
  
2. **The** City of Janesville has adopted a slogan of “Wisconsin’s Park Place” to reflect the significant amounts of greenbelts, parkland, and other open spaces in the city. Most people who enter Janesville along Humes Rd, Milton Avenue, or Center Avenue may not fully get the sense that Janesville is a city full of parks. **What should the City’s brand be moving forward? What efforts should be taken to positively impact visitors, and residents, perceptions of this community?**

3. **Recent** federal legislation has provided a significant, and unprecedented, investment into improving the safety of the transportation network, encouraging transit ridership, building better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and broadly seeking to reducing the nations carbon emissions. A wide range of federal funds are flowing directly to Janesville through “formula grants” through the Carbon Reduction Program and Surface Transportation Block Grant Program while other funding is available through competitive grants. **How does transportation safety and the environmental impacts of Janesville’s travel behaviors influence the City’s long-term sustainability, community well-being, and quality of life? How should Janesville seek to capitalize on these investments? In what ways should the community be working towards reducing carbon emissions and increasing the community’s environmental sustainability?**
  
4. Over the past decade, significant public and private efforts have gone into revitalizing Downtown Janesville and establishing a stronger Downtown identity. Shine Medical Technologies has recently expanded their campus near the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Airport and located their professional staff on that campus. This has led to a loss of a larger employer from Downtown Janesville. **What can the city do to recruit more employers to locate offices in Downtown Janesville?**