

Business Focus Groups

What is one thing that you enjoy about the City of West Allis?

Themes

- Growing Diversity
- The start of the Renaissance of Greenfield Avenue (i.e. Six Points)
- Strong sense of small community
- Great Medical Services
- Walkable and Safe Community
- Growing Number of Quality Restaurants

How do you desire to use technology to engage with departments and their services?

Themes

- One Stop Shop is needed for all services. All service fees need to be in one package.
- Reduce all the trips required to city hall and the health department by being able to pay for services online (i.e. paperless statements, except electronic credit card payments for all services, like the fact we can pay tax payments online, technology needs to be on par with the private sector).
- City Website is a good resource; we use it a lot.

In your opinion, why is West Allis a desirable place to conduct business?

Themes

- Large Labor Market: 500,000 people in a 5-mile radius
- Easy access to West Allis, Conveniently Located
- Growing Diversity
- Restaurants are an important amenity
- Renaissance of Greenfield Avenue and Redevelopment

What encourages you to keep your business operations in West Allis?

Themes

- City police, fire, development and health services departments (Good relationships and collaboration)
- City provides businesses with a favorable impression, City government is accessible, small town feel, Mayor is accessible when needed and follows-up
- Manufacturing is still viewed with importance by City government
- to continue it we need (maintained rail spur, enhanced electrical capacity, an image reform = manufacturing is no longer blue collar, technical training is a critical part of manufacturing, good paying jobs)

Overall, how do you feel that the City of West Allis could improve services provided to businesses?

Themes

- To continue to maintain manufacturing we need maintained rail spur, enhanced electrical capacity, an image reform = manufacturing is no longer blue collar, technical training is a critical part of manufacturing, good paying jobs
- Better communications and consistency on inspections (i.e. Building, Fire) Building Inspectors need to understand that our building stock is older. We are not Brookfield.
- Development Dept. and Building Inspection Services need to be aligned. Easy to work with Development Dept. and very difficult to work with Building Inspection Services.
- More police presence in the day time (perception of increasing public safety issues in the daylight hours).

What would help you grow your business?

Themes

- Workforce Development
 - City needs to promote skilled labor in partnership with K-12 and MATC. These institutions need to support apprenticeships and co-ops for trades and manufacturing.
 - Alignment of MATC training with manufacturing skilled trades = want classes in West Allis.
 - MATC needs larger welding building in West Allis.
 - Carpenters, plumbers, electricians, welders, HVC Techs = big need
 - Soft skills are not taught any more (i.e. showing up on time and customer service).
 - We need classrooms in businesses not in schools; work and Learn initiatives.
 - Substance abuse in the workforce; city needs to continue involvement in a coalition partnership to address this issue.
- Transportation
 - Rail services and reliable rail service
 - 70th and Greenfield, we need streets to be able to accommodate industrial traffic patterns
- Regional Labor Force Issues
 - Realize that West Allis is in a regional labor force and what happens in the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County impacts West Allis
 - Huge unemployment in Milwaukee that could be recruited to West Allis for good paying jobs in the trades.

How do you as a business attract and develop talent?

Themes

- Training
 - We bring in people and teach them what they need to know.
 - We need the best young adults in training programs.
- Retention
 - Health care easy to find a job – need to retain these employees.
 - How are we engaging the largest workforce group being age 20 to 49 in West Allis and retaining them?
- Career Exploration
 - Expose K-12 students to different career options.
- Housing
 - Housing stock = We want workers to live in West Allis as well
 - Not only starter homes, we need a full range of housing
 - Opportunities to move up to another home in the community is necessary
 - If they move out, attracted to other employment as well = complete loss

What strategies should the city consider to attract or create more businesses?

Themes

- Image
 - Changing image of West Allis, more than just a new logo and tag line
 - Have not developed and implemented a replacement image for Allis Chalmers. We still live in the shadow of Allis Chalmers and it has been closed for almost 40 years. What do we as a city want to be next?
 - The first thing a person see's while coming off the I-894 freeway into West Allis is an adult toy store. Does that portray a positive image for our community?
- Comprehensive Development Plan
 - How do we as businesses make certain that the comprehensive development plan is being followed?
 - Is city Development plan relevant and aligned with changes in the regional and national economy?
 - Mile and a half radius from hospital = how would we redevelop area to meet needs of millennials
 - What is the city's definition and vision for business development, West Allis is a great place for business start-ups and business growth?
 - Manufacturing jobs are declining, what does the city want to be and how does the city develop a clear business portfolio?
 - Need more investment in 60th street area, 50th and Burnham, and I-894 corridor and Miller Park Way.

- Need to know what new needs we need to address over the next 30 years (in 5 to 10 year increments)
- We want a mixed use land use vision for the city (heavy Industry, retail, office, residential, light industry, warehouse, service) with continued easy access.
- Retention of Millennials is critical for our future workforce and well-being
 - Study what Bayview is doing to retain millennials.
 - Local, non-chain restaurants with the ability live near them and walk to them. Walkable communities. This is what attracts and retains millennials.
- As a City we need to be Competitive
 - Partnership with Milwaukee 7, at the end of the day we need to learn how to play together and cooperate better. Milwaukee 7 needs more synergy and less competition, this will help us keep our taxes in check as well.

What efficiencies might you suggest to reduce cost of service?

Themes

- Broader picture/vision of where as a city we want to be.
- Community has to be committed to moving forward, the sense of urgency to move forward needs to be clearly communicated. Allis Chalmers is history. It is part of our city's heritage. What is next?
- Need more enforcement in neighborhoods before small issues become big issues that then cost a lot more money to correct.

How can businesses enhance their engagement in the community?

Themes

- Realize that life/career commitment for millennials is five years or less before moving on to another opportunity. They are looking for shorter term opportunities to engage in the community.
- More outreach is needed to women and minority owned businesses in West Allis to make them feel welcome and included. They need to be asked to participate and engage in the community.