



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



ENVISION
GREATER FOND DU LAC

From our Board Chair: Bob Benzinger

When the Board of Directors adopted the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, we did so with a clear understanding: meaningful progress requires focus, collaboration, and the willingness to measure ourselves against real results.

Over the past several years, Envision Greater Fond du Lac has brought together businesses, municipalities, educators, and community partners around a shared goal — strengthening the long-term economic vitality of Fond du Lac County. This work has never been about one organization acting alone. It has been about aligning people, ideas, and resources to move our entire community forward.

Through the efforts of our staff, volunteers, investors, and partners, we made measurable progress across several critical areas. We advanced conversations and action around housing and child care, expanded workforce and youth programming, and strengthened collaboration among municipalities across the county. Thousands of students, residents, and employers were engaged through Envision's programs, events, and initiatives. What this annual report demonstrates is that progress happens through steady, consistent work. It happens when organizations listen carefully, convene the right people, and follow through on the commitments they make.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank the many businesses, community leaders, and volunteers who invest their time and resources into this organization. Your support allows Envision to serve as a catalyst for collaboration and economic opportunity throughout Fond du Lac County.

The foundation built through the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan positions our community well for the work ahead. I look forward to the next chapter as we continue building a strong and resilient future for Fond du Lac County.



From our
President/CEO:
Sadie Howell

While this report reflects on the work completed through our 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, it also marks the beginning of our next chapter.

Economic development is not static. Communities either move forward with intention or they fall behind. Fond du Lac County is well positioned for what's ahead, with strong partnerships, growing trust, and real momentum.

Our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan focuses on three priorities that will shape the long-term strength of our economy: aligning our community around a shared economic vision, empowering entrepreneurs and innovation, and building a future-ready workforce.

We will also continue strengthening our entrepreneurial ecosystem. Programs such as IGNITE Rural and the WRNC Opportunity Fund are designed to help entrepreneurs start, grow, and scale their businesses here. A strong local economy depends on both attracting new investment and supporting the innovators already here.

Attracting and retaining talent will be critical to sustaining economic growth. Initiatives like our talent attraction program, workforce partnerships with educators and employers, and youth engagement programs are helping connect people to careers and communities where they can thrive.

This work is made possible by the businesses and organizations that invest in Envision. You are not just members, you are investors in the future of Fond du Lac County. And this future won't happen by chance. It is something we will continue to build together.



2025 New Members

Premier Partner

Volker Management

Advocate

Appleton Airport

Empeople Credit Union

Our Green Lake

Business Builder

Accent Wealth Management

Badgerland Connections

Birschbach Manufacturing

Bright Beginnings Academy for Kids

Dollar Loan Center

Hallway Consulting Group

Lotus Counseling, LLC

Rob Giese Construction Services, Inc.

Business Plus

Fogel Family Dentistry

Fond du Lac Living

Ledgeview Lanes

Mielke Cabinetry and Countertops, LLC

Small Town EV

The Pan and Parlor Restaurant & Bar

True North Title

Business Basic

Alter Metal Recycling
Athena Legal Solutions
Boudry Dental
Burg Homes
Campbellsport True Value
Capture the Moment Photography
by Kristel Stephany, LLC
CC's Chocolates
Central Barber
Chef Gus
Chimera Hobby Shop, Inc
Complete Care at Christian Home
Diverse Options

I Love Local
Kickin Up Dust Communications
La Belle FDL
Lillian Kast Boudoir
Loof's Landscaping and Snow
Removal Services, LLC
Lucky Dog Rescue
Marsh Haven Nature Center
Nicole Seidl Photography
Northwestern Mutual
Oasis Senior Advisors
Passageway Financial, LLC
Quasius Business Solutions

Dretske Law Office
Elkay Interior Systems
Exchange Club of Fond du Lac
Family Connect of Wisconsin
Family Heritage - Willow Financial Group
Fond du Lac Beer Company
Georgetown Cleaners
Glamour Shop
Good Karma Brands - Beaver Dam Market
Guild Mortgage
Harborview Dentistry
Home Sweet Home Real Estate
Huth Properties

R&R Insurance
Rewired Dynamics
Roberts Homes
Schmitz East Branch Dairy
Soul Patina
Swing Zone Fond du Lac
The Center Uniting Mind, Body, and Spirit
The Wild Boar
Theisen Supply
T-Mobile
Waupun Youth Baseball Association
Wellness 360 Spa Inside Hotel Retlaw
Wisconsin Biomedical Services Inc

2025 Recognition



Business Excellence Award

Vines & Rushes Winery

Eden-Schneider Award

ADVOCAP

Volunteer of the Year Award

Jeff Montsma

Entrepreneur of the Year Award

Mike Leb

Young Professional of the Year Award

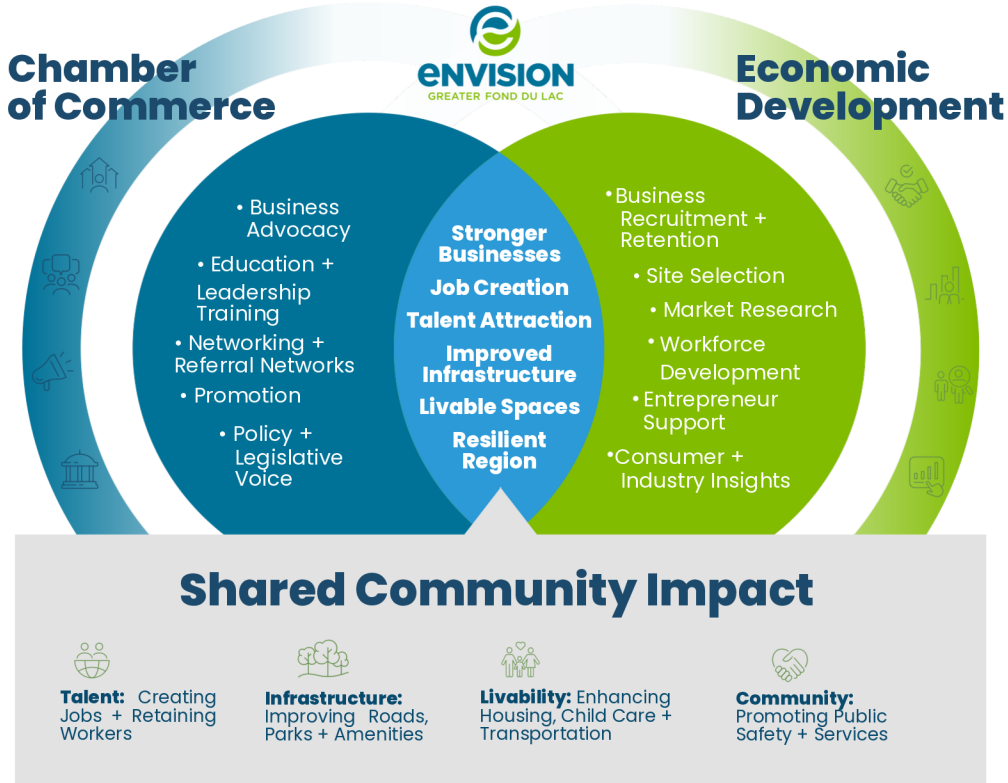
Megan Schueller

Allen J. Buechel Lifetime Achievement Award

Mike Shannon, Sr.



Where Local Business Success and Regional Strength Meet





Connect

Bringing people, businesses, communities, and leaders together to build relationships and collaboration.

Inform

Educating, sharing information, and increasing awareness so businesses, residents, and students can make better decisions.

Innovate

Creating new solutions, launching initiatives, and advancing strategies that move the community forward.

Connect

Municipality Relationships

Met with leaders from all

33

municipalities to share updates and strengthen collaboration

Hosted 28 ribbon cuttings celebrating new businesses and community investment

Retained 88% of members and 93.5% of membership revenue, demonstrating strong engagement from the business community

70%

of Fond du Lac County municipalities invested financially in Envision's work

Student Engagement

The Focus Forward breakfast **connected 150+ high school students with young professionals** to explore career and life pathways after graduation

14,000+ K-12 students connected to career exploration opportunities

Connect

Leadership
Fond du Lac County

28

participants completed
the 2024-2025 program

5

teams implemented community
improvement projects across
the county, **investing \$22,000**
into community projects

8

local participants completed the third
annual Public Office Preparation
course, preparing future community
leaders for civic service



Young Professionals of
Greater Fond du Lac

1,400
young professionals
engaged through YPF
programming.

Raised an additional
\$26,750
in sponsorships to support
programming and events.

Inform

Advocacy & Public Policy

Advocated in Madison for business tax credits, tax increment district (TID) reform, and child care solutions.

67 partnerships with employers, child care providers, and state leaders to address child care crisis.

Hosted 10 Legislative Forums connecting policymakers with the business community.

Convened a Business Roundtable with the new State Senator for District 13.

Hosted candidate forums for Fond du Lac City Council and Fond du Lac School Board races.

Testified before the State Senate and Assembly in support of the Business Development Tax Credit.

Career Connections Academy

Over 1,000 students

explored career pathways with
30+ business and community
presenters

Project G.R.I.L.L.

5 high schools partnered
with 11 manufacturers to
build customized grills while
learning advanced
manufacturing skills

Fond du Lac R.O.C.K. Program

150+

high school students

toured 13 businesses
across the county

Inform

Housing Education

Envision convened **10 municipal leaders** and **21 housing developers** from across Wisconsin for a countywide housing forum, creating direct connections between communities and builders and **accelerating local conversations** about new housing development across Fond du Lac County.

Agri-Business Council

Through school programs, community events, and hands-on experiences, the Agri-Business Council helped

16,000
residents and students

better understand and appreciate the impact of agriculture on Fond du Lac County's economy and way of life.

Summer Intern Series

94

college interns and co-ops

explored the community through programs highlighting career opportunities and quality of life

Innovate

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

150

entrepreneurs and small businesses received direct technical support and resources

Conducted small business workshops on marketing, HR, and business planning

Connected with

185

newly formed LLCs

10

local startups participated in the launch of Ignite Rural, a five-week business accelerator program, **first of its kind in the county**

Capital Access

The WRNC Opportunity Fund provides startup and expansion funding to help small businesses launch and grow in Waupun, Ripon, North Fond du Lac, and Campbellsport.

Awarded \$50,000 in prize funding to local entrepreneurs through the Ignite Rural pitch competition.

Innovate

Talent Attraction

Submitted a
\$500K
grant application
to WEDC to launch a
talent attraction initiative

Established a goal of attracting

44

new households
to Fond du Lac County
within two years

Designed a program to
immerse families and
young professionals in the
community's amenities
and quality of life

Housing Strategy

Partnered with housing
consultant Brian Doudna to
design a **countywide
housing accelerator
program**, with next steps
focused on implementation.

**Convened employers,
developers, lenders, and
municipalities** to define
housing opportunities.

Connect

Inform

Innovate



2025 Executive Committee

Krista Ebbens, J.F. Ahern Co., Chair
Bob Benzinger, National Exchange Bank & Trust, Vice Chair
Bonnie Baerwald, Moraine Park Technical College, Past Chair
Andy Winget, Mercury Marine, Treasurer
Sam Kaufman, Fond du Lac County
Rich Doyle, Grande Cheese
Michael Leb, Leb Insurance Group

2025 Board of Directors

Amy Collett, Society Insurance
Cyndi Hintz, Vesta
Jeff Liddicoat, Horicon Bank
Craig Molitor, Destination Lake Winnebago Region
Joe Moore, City of Fond du Lac
Sara Muhlbauer, Lakeland Care Inc.
Jeff O'Brien, Legacy Express
Kathy Schlieve, City of Waupun
Tony Schmitz, East Branch Dairy
C.J. Smith, C.D. Smith Construction Co.
Shane Smith, SSM Health & Fond du Lac Regional Clinic
Matt Steinbarth, Fond du Lac School District
Heidi Strand, Blue Door Consulting



ENVISION
GREATER FOND DU LAC





Innovate

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

- Nearly 150 entrepreneurs and small businesses received direct technical support and resources
- Connected with 185 newly formed LLCs
- Conducted small business workshops on marketing, HR, and business planning
- Launched Ignite Rural, a five-week business accelerator program, first of its kind in the county

Capital Access

WRNC Opportunity Fund

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- Established a goal of attracting 44 new households to Fond du Lac County within two years
- Designed a program to immerse families and young professionals in the community's amenities and quality of life

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- Convened a Business Roundtable with the new State Senator for District 13
- Hosted candidate forums for Fond du Lac City Council and School Board races
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- Intern Engagement

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