Creative Ways of Encouraging Economic Growth for Sheboygan's Future

By Chad Pelishek, Director of Planning and Development

The City of Sheboygan Strategic Plan identifies one of the six focus areas as economic development. What does economic development mean? There are numerous definitions of economic development. According to Wikipedia, economic development is the process by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people. Those of us in the profession use the terms economic development and business development interchangeably. Business development on the other hand entails tasks and processes to develop and implement growth opportunities within and between organizations. Business development is the key tasks that are completed to encourage new development, whereas economic development includes business development plus quality of life, public infrastructure, governing, basically the other focus areas of the strategic plan.

Developers Tour Attendees at North High Advanced Manufacturing Center

So what does the City of Sheboygan do to encourage new business development? For the past five years, we have partnered with the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation and Sheboygan Squared Business Improvement District to host a one-day exclusive behind the scenes tour of Sheboygan with developers, brokers, and architects and engineers. This year's event was held on Tuesday, October 10, 2017 and was attended by 22 developers, brokers and architects that are either developers themselves or work with clients that do new developments. Of the approximately 125 attendees over the past five years, we always hear how no other community hosts such an event to show key development sites and the quality of life measures of the community. The 2017 tour started out at the Stephanie Weill Center for the Performing Arts with introductions, and the showing of the Promise of Sheboygan County along with great food from Stefano's. Following was the tour of the new Encore Apartments and a trolley tour of the redevelopment sites in downtown Sheboygan. The tour included sites like the former Kingsbury property, Indiana Avenue, South Pier, armory, and the area around North 14th Street and the Sheboygan River. Lunch was provided at Sprecher's and the afternoon tour focused on single family development sites, commercial redevelopment sites, and the expansion of

the Sheboygan business center. A tour also included a spot at the North High School Advanced Technology Center. During the evening a networking reception was held at 3 Sheeps with other city and business leaders, and local realtors/brokers.

This one of a kind tour has provided successes in the past. The Oakbrook Corporation and LCM Funds, both which have and are developing multi-family developments in the downtown, have participated in this tour in the past and accredit the tour to sparking their interest in the market. One attendee called "rolling out the red carpet to them". Attendees on the 2017 tour have shown interest since the tour focused on the expansion of the Sheboygan Business Center and redevelopment sites in and near the downtown. This all-expense paid day is a very good return on the investment for the city considering we can spend equally as much money advertising in magazines and not actually being able to talk with interested parties.

Sheboygan's market is unique in that it is located between two large markets, Green Bay and Milwaukee, but far enough away from those markets that we cannot say we are associated with either of them. Therefore, city and county development leaders need to be aggressive and proactive to encourage interested developers to consider our market. The Metropolitan Statistical Area population (MSA) of Milwaukee is 1.57 million people and Green Bay MSA is 282,599. The MSA population of Sheboygan is 115,507. Retailers and other developers look at the MSA population when making a decision where to locate. Thus, Sheboygan development officials have developed a creative way of the portraying the great quality of life aspects to continue to foster new development opportunities for the community.