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## Common sense should trump consultants' plan

An editorial  
March 13, 2008

Madison spent \$75,000 to have a Chicago-based firm draw up a strategic economic development plan to guide the city's approach over the next three to five years.

Having reviewed the first draft of the plan prepared by the firm Ticknor & Associates, we have some advice for Mayor Dave Cieslewicz on economic priorities:

Stop spending city money to fund ridiculously expensive plans that invariably read like boilerplate repeats of every other report of this kind.

To call the observations contained in the draft plan "vapid" is to insult the inconsequential.

The draft report offers these insights:

"Good jobs matter."

"Economic development is competitive."

Long-term strategies "build competitive advantage."

Leadership can be built through "public-private partnerships."

It's a good idea to "have effective staff capabilities and program resources to implement the strategy" the city develops.

Well, duh.

Even by the absurdly low standards that must be applied when reviewing reports from consultants, the strategic economic development plan as drafted is a disappointment.

Is that the fault of the Chicago firm that prepared it? Not really.

Consultants are consultants. They collect money to write reports that have as their best possible value a future role supporting the uneven leg of a chair.

The problem here lies with city officials.

They have able economic development specialists on staff. Those specialists are well trained, keep up with current trends, attend conferences and, most importantly, know the unique character of

Madison.

Having city staffers prepare a plan for consideration by the mayor and the City Council would have been a good idea -- especially now that the council includes several able analysts of economic development strategies.

If there was a concern about having city economic development staffers draw up a plan they might have to implement, the city should have turned to the Center on Wisconsin Strategies at the University of Wisconsin. Internationally respected for its groundbreaking research, innovative thinking and leadership with regard to so-called "high-road" economic development strategies, the center has for years studied and commented on economic development issues in Wisconsin. Its able staff, which is deeply rooted in Madison but which is in the thick of national and international debates on economic policy, could have produced proposals that went far deeper and offered Madison a far better set of strategies for the future.

Madison is an unusual community. It is blessed with a great location and terrific public institutions, including those tied to state government and the UW. As such, it prospers when other communities do not. Unfortunately, this prosperity has sometimes prevented Madison from getting serious about economic development. At a time when the public sector is under stress, economic development that aims to attract new private sector jobs is important. This matters especially for low-wage workers who want to begin climbing what the Center on Wisconsin Strategies refers to as "career ladders."

Madison should get serious about building those ladders by establishing smarter and better training schemes and by attracting the family-supporting jobs that skilled workers can and will want to fill. That's an easily defined goal that does not require a \$75,000 "plan." What is required is a more realistic and serious local government that relies more on common sense than Chicago consultants.

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## Economic plan faces tough questions

Mary Yeather Rathbun  
March 5, 2008

Several members of the Madison City Council on Monday questioned the basic premise of consultant Tom Ticknor's strategic economic development plan.

Prepared for the city's Economic Development Commission, the draft focuses on ways the city can stimulate "quality job creation." Ticknor said he equated the phrase to mean "basic sector jobs" that serve markets beyond Madison, bringing in money from outside the region.

Council members from both sides of the political spectrum repeatedly challenged Ticknor's report during the more than 2-hour special committee meeting Monday.

Ald. Judy Compton wanted the plan to encourage the establishment of retail stores in new residential areas being developed in the city and to encourage residential development throughout the city in proximity to the places new jobs were being created. "If we are encouraging walkable neighborhoods, we have to have jobs of all kinds there," she said.

Ticknor explained that neither the kinds of jobs Compton was talking about nor residential development were part of the "basic sector," so the plan was not about encouraging them. Moreover, "jobs in coffee shops, restaurants and retail generally don't pay family-supporting wages, offer competitive benefits or provide promotional and human growth opportunities," Ticknor said, so they don't fall under his definition of high-quality jobs.

When Ald. Michael Schumacher, a small business owner, noted the omission of strategies to deal with small businesses, Ticknor said, "A disproportionate number of small businesses are in the non-basic sector so we don't try to work with them."

In response to Ald. Marsha Rummel's concern that the plan did not seem to foster the city's goal of increasing density, Ticknor said the focus on the basic sector of the economy would inevitably lead to increased density.

Ticknor also explained the construction industry was considered a non-basic sector and so the plan did not contain components to foster it.

Ticknor said the plan was a work in progress, including a section not in the Feb. 27 report presented to the EDC entitled "Potential Benefits," which identified the plan's proposed qualitative and quantitative outcomes.

In response to Commissioners Ed Clarke and Vicky Selkove's request for

specific numbers, Ticknor said the plan would "positively impact the creation/retention of 15,000 Madison jobs in the next 10 years." However, he stressed this meant "impacted, not created" and that the 15,000 was not a "net number."

Ticknor also acknowledged that his qualitative outcomes would be very hard to measure. They are: leverage employers/allies, build staff capabilities to be more aggressive/nimble/bigger picture, and a broader agreement on economic development/quality of life linkage.

Ticknor said Monday he would be looking to incorporate specific suggestions made by council members.

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## Give us goals, planner told

Mary Yeater Rathbun  
February 29, 2008

After studying consultant Tom Ticknor's economic development implementation plan for five days and listening to an hour's presentation on it, three of Madison's six economic development commissioners still want him to make some big changes.

Economic Development Commission members Vicky Selkowe, Ed Clarke and Ralph Kauten, who heard the presentation Wednesday, want the plan explained in concrete terms of what Madison would get if it carries out Ticknor's recommendations.

However, commission chair Susan Gleason agrees with Ticknor that identifying outcomes, such as how many companies will relocate here or how many jobs would be created as a result of taking the actions Ticknor outlines, would be a mistake.

"There are so many factors outside your control that could mean you don't meet specific goals," she said.

Pointing to surprises like a locally owned paper company going out of business or GM deciding not to manufacture a specific vehicle and consequently closing a manufacturing facility, Gleason, who works for the state in workforce development, said it is too risky to make specific promises.

"I don't want this plan to be seen as a failure in five years," she said.

Clarke responded, "I wouldn't want to have this plan responsible for the unemployment rate in Madison, but let's look at trends. How many state jobs will be left in five years, and how do we plan to replace them?"

Clarke works at MATC, which is deeply entrenched in the Learning College movement. That movement places great value on measurable goals and outcomes.

However, it was Selkowe, a poverty lawyer, who was the most outspoken advocate of identifying specific goals and outcomes.

"We need more than just a feel-good communication effort," she said. "We need to do more than meet five times and have the right players in the room. We need to identify how many jobs we want to create . . . We need a vision of what we would look like if we succeed and how we will know we are there. I don't see the vision of where we are going in the plan."

Ticknor said, "We can identify the number of calls made in the retention and expansion effort . . . but we can't say the number of jobs and

income there would be without the plan and with the plan."

Kauten, the CEO of a biotech firm, shot back, "Well-written goals can motivate people. We need clear, powerful goals."

But Gleason argued, "the idea is to do everything you can to try to make sure when choices are made" that they benefit Madison, not to identify specific results.

Next, the council

Ticknor will brief the Madison City Council next. While the Economic Development Commission is the agency that actually commissioned Ticknor's \$75,000 plan, it is the City Council that will have to adopt it and authorize the more than \$8 million in new spending it calls for.

Ticknor will lead a special meeting from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 3, in the Council Chambers, Room 201, City-County Building, 210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. He said the version of the plan he will discuss will have been revised to reflect the EDC members' concerns.

Ticknor said a copy of that revision will not be available online to council members and city residents until Monday afternoon or maybe even Tuesday, given how much he will have to revise after Wednesday's comments.

Following the council briefing, Ticknor said he will revise the plan again before presenting it to the public in three identical sessions on Tuesday, March 25: 8:30 to 11 a.m., 1 to 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 to 9 p.m. in the Wisconsin Studio in the Overture Center, 201 State Street.

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## Draft plan set for city development

Mary Yeater Rathbun  
February 26, 2008

The time has come for city of Madison officials and the public to begin tweaking the economic development plan that Tom Ticknor has spent the winter putting together.

Ticknor, a Chicago-based consultant who has been working for the city's Economic Development Commission since September, will walk the EDC and interested citizens through the 50-page draft plan at 5 p.m. Wednesday in the Evjue Boardroom of the United Way of Dane County, 2059 Atwood Ave.

His "3-5 Year Strategic Economic Development Implementation Plan" replaces one written in 1983. And, as the draft plan points out, much has changed in the past 25 years.

The private sector is a much more important part of the local economy, according to Ticknor. "Old habits of relying on state government and education to carry the economy are outmoded," the plan says.

Government and education jobs fell from 45,000 in 1980 to 40,000 in 2006. Meanwhile, the population of Madison grew 31 percent, from 170,000 to 223,000.

That means that the relatively small reduction in numbers of government and education jobs translates into a large drop in comparison to the population growth. Government and education jobs dropped from 34 percent of the Madison employment base to 20 percent.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison has continued to grow its research functions, and dozens of new technology companies have been born, while some traditional manufacturers have closed. And some of the new technology companies, such as Epic Systems and Promega, have relocated to surrounding communities.

The portion of Dane County outside the city limits is growing faster than Madison in terms of population and jobs, and families who live outside the city make increasingly more money than city residents, according to the plan. Adjusted to 2006 dollars, real median-family income for Madison residents rose from \$60,760 in 1980 to \$69,709 in 2006.

For residents in the rest of Dane County, real median-family income went from \$61,719 in 1980, close to that for Madison, to \$82,770 in 2006, 34 percent higher than the income for Madison families.

### Six areas

The plan predicts that there may be even more outmigration, especially

by the more affluent. "New office parks have opened on the far east and west sides and the downtown office market no longer dominates as it once did," the plan reports.

The plan identifies six areas where the city can work in the next three to five years to create high-quality jobs in the face of these new conditions. The plan defines high-quality jobs as ones that pay at least a living wage, have competitive benefits and have promotional and human growth opportunities.

- The first area the plan urges the city to take action in is priority setting. Ticknor recommends the city pay more attention to economic development, elevate its importance within the mission statements of its relevant departments, adopt his plan and then convene and energize a public-private partnership to implement key tasks in the plan.
- The second area identified for action is regulation, customer service and business climate. It includes everything from completing the modernization of the city's zoning code to getting the City Council to consider the business climate when it makes decisions on all kinds of things.
- Business retention and expansion is the third area. Here, Ticknor, as in all the areas, stresses partnering with the private sector.

According to the report: "Cities and economic development organizations do not create jobs and tax base. They create the climate and remove the barriers so that private and nonprofit basic-sector employers create jobs and tax base." Basic-sector jobs are jobs that serve markets beyond Madison, according to Ticknor.

- The fourth area, physical priorities to foster quality basic-sector job creation, includes helping to develop University Research Park II, making the East Washington Capital Gateway Corridor a focus of basic-sector employment and using city land assembly and tax incremental financing to promote industrial and applied technology development in the Southeast Industrial Area.
- The fifth and sixth areas, respectively, are to expand and revise the city economic development "toolkit," and organizational change to implement the strategy outlined in the plan.

The plan spells out specific actions that could be taken related to each area.

Ald. Zach Brandon, the only council member on the EDC, said Monday there would be an opportunity for the public to speak at Wednesday's meeting, but that the EDC wants to hear from people who have read the report. It is available on the city's Web site at [www.cityofmadison.com/Business/economicDevelopmentPlan.cfm](http://www.cityofmadison.com/Business/economicDevelopmentPlan.cfm).

"I only got my copy Friday and haven't read it all yet," Brandon said.

### **Public hearings**

- **Council hearing:** Consultant Tom Ticknor will present his economic development plan to the Madison City Council on Monday. The hearing will be in Room 201 of the City-County Building, 210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The public is welcome to attend.



- **Overture sessions:** The public also can speak with Ticknor at three sessions on Tuesday, March 25, in the Wisconsin Studio at the Overture Center, 201 State St. The identical sessions will begin at 8:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Once the March presentations are complete, Ticknor will revise the plan and submit a final version to the Economic Development Commission.

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## Goal: Increase city jobs, tax base

By Dean Mosiman  
608-252-6141  
February 25, 2008

Madison must be aggressive and invest to create good jobs and increase its tax base, the city's first new economic development plan in 25 years says.

But some say the plan itself isn't bold enough.

The city, criticized for being ambivalent and even hostile to business, is spending up to \$75,000 for the three-to-five year strategic plan, intended to help guide the city as public jobs decline and the private sector becomes more vital.

The 47-page draft plan, prepared by Ticknor & Associates of the Chicago area, applauds city initiatives such as rewriting its archaic zoning code and creating an Economic Development Division.

But the city doesn't try hard enough to attract quality jobs or build its tax base, the plan says.

Madison "lacks a strategy to build competitive advantage in hard economic terms," it says.

In terms of investing in business recruitment and public-private partnerships, Madison compares poorly to peers such as Austin, Texas, Ann Arbor, Mich. and Lexington, Ky., it says.

And despite economic successes, Madison's median family income of \$69,709 in 2006 was only slightly above the state and national averages, it says.

The plan offers a series of recommendations, such as more partnerships with UW-Madison and others, restoring the East Washington Avenue corridor as a major jobs center, and taking a more aggressive posture in attracting business.

The plan will be presented to the city's Economic Development Commission on Wednesday, with additional public presentations on March 3 and 25.

"It's been overdue," said Mario Mendoza, aide to Mayor Dave Cieslewicz. "It confirms a lot of good things that we're doing right. However, it can help us take a fresh look and look at new ideas."

Goal

Continued from Page D1

Jennifer Alexander, president of the Greater Madison Area Chamber of Commerce, said, "I think it 's great the city has gone through this exercise and they 're making economic development a priority. We 're moving in the right direction. We 're still going to have to deliver on the plan. "

Alexander is pleased the plan recommends the city work closely with a new eight-county regional development group called THRIVE. She also likes that the plan connects economic development and quality of life.

The plan is welcome but has shortcomings, said Ald. Zach Brandon, 7th District, an EDC member.

In many cases, the plan simply encourages the city to complete efforts it 's started, such as the zoning code rewrite, he said.

At first blush, "it really looks like an execution plan, executing what you 've already started, rather than a vision plan, " he said. "We almost handicapped ourselves. You can 't get bold in three to five years. "

Brandon said he 'd like the city to consider longer-term strategies, such as directing some investments to help expand Madison-based companies.

After hearing comments, the consultant will flush out details and costs, Mendoza said.

## **PUBLIC SESSIONS**

What: Presentation and discussion of Madison's draft three-to-five year Strategic Economic Development Implementation Plan.


When and where: Economic Development Commission, Wednesday, 5 p.m., United Way of Dane County, Evjue Board Room, 2059 Atwood Ave. City Council, March 3, 6 p.m., City-County Building, Room 201, 210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

General sessions: 8:30-11:00 a.m., 1:00-3:30 p.m., 6:30-9:00 p.m., March 25, Wisconsin Studio at the Overture Center, 201 State St.

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SAT., MAR 8, 2008 - 10:44 AM

### Don't ignore key points in city plan

A Wisconsin State Journal editorial

Madison's new economic development plan should be required reading for city officials.

It provides good recommendations and strategies for improving Madison's economy, most of which are already underway but need follow-through.

The plan promotes job creation and growth. It emphasizes strong public-private partnerships. It seeks skilled, business-savvy leaders and employees to be effective champions for the city and region.

The city paid \$75,000 to Chicago-based Ticknor & Associates to draft a strategic economic development plan to guide the city for the next three to five years. The firm unveiled a first draft of the plan last week. Here are a just a few key snippets from it:

- "Good jobs matter."

They build a strong tax base to support public services and protect our quality of life.

- "Economic development is competitive."

With a state Capitol and major university, Madison has long enjoyed heavy government employment. But those jobs aren't increasing like they used to.

The best-paying jobs of the future are in the highly-mobile financial, technology and service sectors. Cities worldwide are competing fiercely for them. And many of Madison's peer cities — such as Ann Arbor, Mich. — are better prepared for the challenge.

- "Implement a long-term strategy to build competitive advantage."

Madison has too often gone out of its way to rile the local business community. The city and region also have lacked go-to people with the resources and know-how to help companies succeed. The city can't respond haphazardly to opportunity that arise.

Madison needs a coherent plan and creative strategies to grow businesses and good jobs. Some of these efforts are under way, a bright spot in the draft plan. Yet leaders still must follow through with huge tasks such as overhauling the city's archaic zoning code.

- "Build leadership through public/private partnerships."

The city has to work ably with economic development organizations such as the local Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce and the regional THRIVE, UW-Madison and business leaders. These partnerships need to be based on cooperation, trust and open communication with all sides working on



File photo

The Hilldale Theater was torn down late last year. It will make way for Hotel Indigo, one of three projects in the second phase of redevelopment of Hilldale Shopping Center.

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common strategies.


- "Have effective staff capabilities and program resources to implement the strategy."

Job creation must be a priority at City Hall, with a one-shop stop for business that Mayor Dave Cieslewicz has committed to.


The draft economic development plan is a good start toward a more competitive city. But a lot of work and bold thinking lies ahead.



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