

2010

**Development
Corporation
of Fort
Dodge and
Webster
County**

IOWA

**FORT DODGE
WEBSTER COUNTY**

**Analysis of the Development Corporation
of Fort Dodge and Webster County 2010
Employer Survey**

Completed By



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Introduction

The Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County requested the assistance of the Institute for Decision Making (IDM) at the University of Northern Iowa to gather input from Webster County employers regarding initiatives launched by the Development Corporation since 2007 and to find out the employers' greatest needs for the future. Employer input was sought utilizing a survey which was jointly developed by the Development Corporation and IDM (see **Appendix A**). In June 2010, a cover letter and survey was mailed to 137 of the Development Corporation's investors and other key employers. Each employer was given the option of completing a paper copy of the survey and returning it directly to IDM or to complete the survey online. A total of 45 employers completed the survey.

Background of Survey Respondents

The 45 survey respondents represented at least 14 different industry sectors (see **Table 1**). The most frequently identified industry sectors were finance and insurance (15.6 percent), manufacturing (11.1 percent) and professional and technical services (11.1 percent). Four other industry sectors were represented by multiple employers. Nine respondents, (20 percent of the respondents) did not identify the industry they are in or identified themselves as "unclassified."

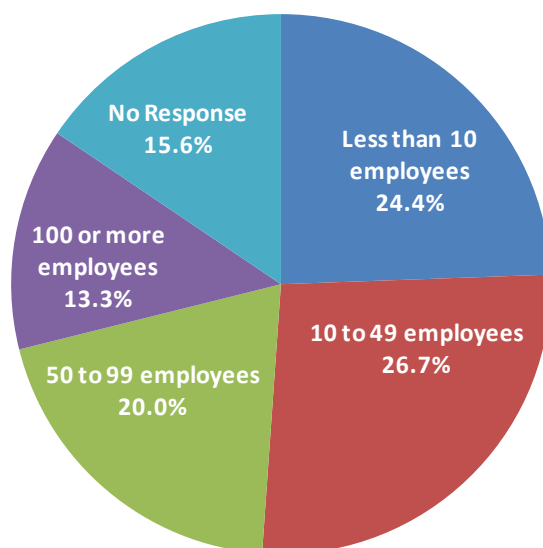
Table 1
Employer Respondents by Industry Sector

Industry	Count	Percent
Mining	1	2.2%
Utilities	3	6.7%
Construction	1	2.2%
Manufacturing	5	11.1%
Wholesale Trade	1	2.2%
Retail Trade	3	6.7%
Transportation & Warehousing	1	2.2%
Finance & Insurance	7	15.6%
Professional & Technical Services	5	11.1%
Educational Services	3	6.7%
Health Care & Social Assistance	3	6.7%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	1	2.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	1	2.2%
Public Administration	1	2.2%
Unclassified	3	6.7%
No Response	6	13.3%
Total	45	100.0%

The employment levels among the survey respondents ranged from 2 to 861 employees. In total, the respondents employed 4,090 individuals. The respondents averaged 107.6 employees and

the median number of employees was 29.5 employees. **Figure 1** provides a breakdown of the survey respondents, grouped by employment levels. It shows that the largest group of respondents had 10 to 49 employees (26.7 percent). Nearly a quarter of the respondents (24.4 percent) had fewer than 10 employees.

Figure 1 - Respondents by Employment Size



Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County Initiatives

Survey respondents were asked their opinion on the level of progress made by the Development Corporation on the nine initiatives it launched following the study completed by RA Smith in 2007. Table 2 breaks out by percentage the employer responses for each of the initiatives. For six of the nine initiatives (Marketing, Retention, Ag Industrial Center, Image, Trails and Workforce), a majority of the respondents felt that at least some progress had been made on the initiative. This means the respondent gave a rating of 3 or lower. For the Event Center initiative only 31.7 percent of the respondents felt that at least some progress had been made. Just over 47 percent of the respondents felt at least some progress had been made on the Housing initiative and 47.4 percent of the respondents felt at least some progress had been made on the Retail initiative.

Seven employer respondents felt that no progress has been made on the Event Center initiative or the Retail initiative. The Housing initiative was the only other initiative to have multiple employers state that they felt no progress had been made on the initiative.

It should be noted that for each of the initiatives there were employers who stated that they had “no idea/no opinion” about the initiative. Ten employers (23.8 percent) had “no idea/no opinion” when evaluating the Workforce initiative and six employers (14.3 percent) stated this

for the Housing initiative. This may indicate that increased communication efforts are necessary for the Development Corporation to inform area employers of progress which has been made on these two initiatives, or possibly all nine initiatives.

Table 2
Evaluation of the Development Corporation's Progress on Each Initiative

	1 – Very Significant Progress Has Been Made	2 – Significant Progress Has Been Made	3 – Some Progress Has Been Made	4 – Little Progress Has Been Made	5 – No Progress Has Been Made	Total
Marketing - The development of leads, with strong emphasis on recruiting potential companies to our county for the purpose of creating significant job growth	5.0% (2)	15.0% (6)	52.5% (21)	25.0% (10)	2.5% (1)	100.0% (40)
Retention - Program to strengthen relationships with current employers assisting with issues/needs	10.0% (4)	22.5% (9)	40.0% (16)	27.5% (11)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (40)
Ag Industrial Center - The development of approx 500 acres three miles west of Fort Dodge	7.9% (3)	18.4% (7)	39.5% (15)	34.2% (13)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (38)
Event Center - Focusing on the development of an event center/ recreation complex to enhance quality of life in our area	0.0% (0)	2.4% (1)	29.3% (12)	51.2% (21)	17.1% (7)	100.0% (41)
Housing - Implementing a feasibility study to determine demand on housing needs in our area	0.0% (0)	5.6% (2)	41.7% (15)	47.2% (17)	5.6% (2)	100.0% (36)
Image - Working to improve the appearance of Fort Dodge and Webster County	7.5% (3)	35.0% (14)	37.5% (15)	17.5% (7)	2.5% (1)	100.0% (40)
Retail - Negotiating with major developer through a consultant to improve retail options in area	0.0% (0)	7.9% (3)	39.5% (15)	34.2% (13)	18.4% (7)	100.0% (38)
Trails - Providing one avenue for an improved quality of life in our area	7.5% (3)	40.0% (16)	37.5% (15)	15.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (40)
Workforce - The development of a specialized website that addresses needs of a trailing spouse	3.1% (1)	18.8% (6)	59.4% (19)	15.6% (5)	3.1% (1)	100.0% (32)

Survey respondents were also asked what level of priority they felt the Development Corporation should place over the next three years on six of the initiatives (see Table 3). The vast majority of the employers (82.5 percent) who answered this question believe that the Development Corporation should increase or significantly increase the level of priority it is placing on the Image initiative. Well over two thirds of the employers also believed that there should be an increase or significant increase in the level of priority placed on the Retail initiative (78.6 percent) and the Workforce initiative (73 percent). This is not surprising since these two initiatives had the highest percentage of employers stating that there had been no progress made toward them.

For three of the initiatives there were employers who stated that the Development Corporation should reduce or significantly reduce the level of priority it places on that particular initiative.

Nearly 20 percent of the employers (19.5 percent) who had an opinion felt the priority level for the Event Center initiative should be reduced. Over 14 percent of the employers (14.3 percent) felt the priority level placed on the Trails initiative should be reduced.

Table 3
Level of Priority the Development Corporation
Should Place on Each Initiative

	1 – Significantly increase the level of priority	2 – Increase the level of priority	3 – Maintain the current level of priority	4 – Reduce the level of priority	5 – Significantly reduce the level of priority	Total
Event Center	14.3% (6)	28.6% (12)	35.7% (15)	14.3% (6)	4.8% (2)	100.0% (41)
Housing	22.0% (9)	31.7% (13)	36.6% (15)	2.4%(1)	4.9%(2)	100.0% (40)
Image	35.0% (14)	47.5% (19)	17.5% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (0)
Retail	35.7% (15)	42.9% (18)	21.4% (9)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (42)
Trails	23.8% (10)	21.4% (9)	40.5% (17)	11.9% (5)	2.4% (1)	100.0% (42)
Workforce	23.1% (9)	46.2% (18)	25.6% (10)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (37)

Survey respondents were also asked what other initiatives the Development Corporation should consider undertaking over the next two years. Fourteen employers provided suggestions for the Development Corporation and those suggestions are summarized in **Box A**. Several employers believed the Development Corporation should increase its focus on assisting existing local businesses and/or assisting small businesses and start-ups. Other suggestions that were provided by multiple employers included enhancing communication efforts to existing employers, investors and the public and focusing on renewable energy industries. **Appendix B** contains the employers’ specific suggestions.

Box A
Suggested Other Initiatives

- More consistent communication with the community and investors of the Development Corporation
- Increased communication to the public
- Lead generation and closure of leads
- Continue marketing initiative
- New jobs and industries
- Create a better atmosphere for start ups and existing businesses
- Support for small-medium business development
- Focus on local companies
- Focus on existing small business and spend less time recruiting companies
- Increase focus on new and existing businesses
- Development Corporation should focus strictly on recruitment, retention and start ups
- Focus on wind energy, bio-fuels and recycling
- Alternative energy development
- Incentives for job creation
- Develop incentives to attract capital investment
- More workforce training
- Emphasize airport utilization
- Upgrade the downtown

Future Workforce Needs

Figure 2 shows that 18 employers (40 percent) stated that their organization expects to have job vacancies over the next three years. Unfortunately, five employers skipped this question, so the percentage of employers who will have vacancies could be slightly higher.

Figure 2 - Employers Expect to Have Job Vacancies Over Next 3 Years

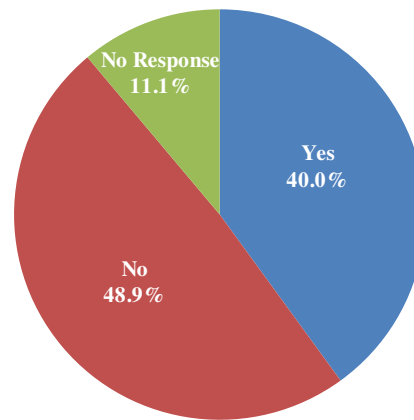


Table 4 provides a breakdown of the employers by employment level and whether they expect to have job vacancies in the next three years. There were employers in four of the groupings that expect to have vacancies. Only two of the 11 respondents with less than 10 employees expect to have vacancies. Half of the employers with 10 to 49 employees and a majority of the employers with 50 to 99 employees expect to have vacancies. Nearly all of the employers with 100 or more employees expect to fill open positions over the next three years.

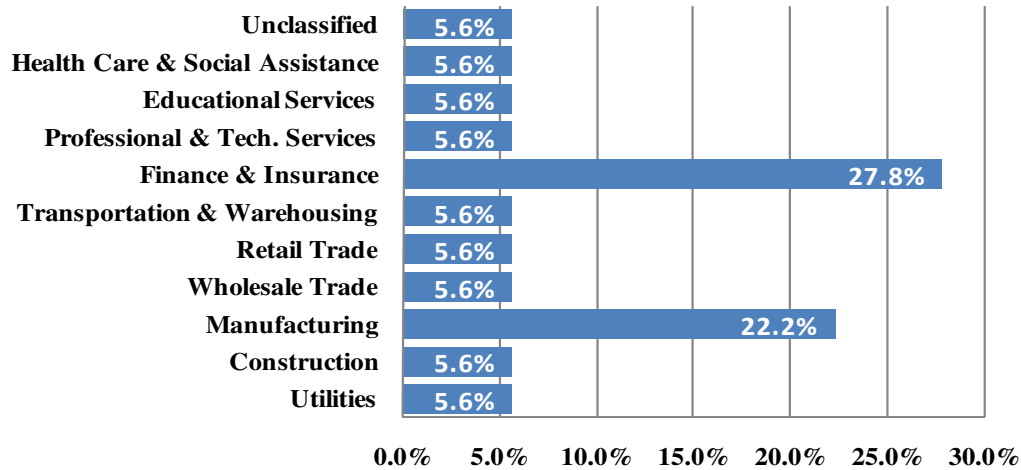
**Table 4
Expected Job Vacancies in Next 3 Years
by Employment Level**

Employer Size	Yes	No	Total
Less than 10 employees	2	9	11
10 to 49 employees	6	6	12
50 to 99 employees	5	4	9
100 or more employees	5	1	6
Total	18	20	38

Among the employers who stated they expected to have vacancies over the next 3 years, over a quarter of them (27.8 percent – five employers) were in the finance and insurance industry (see **Figure 3**). Another 22.2 percent of these employers (four

employers) were manufacturers. Another eight industries are represented among the employers expecting to have vacancies. One employer identified their organization as being in an unclassified industry.

Figure 3 - Employers Expected to Have Vacancies over Next 3 Years by Industry



If an employer stated their organization will need to fill vacancies over the next three years, they were asked to provide details about vacancies which would be professional, skills or semi-professional positions that will pay over \$35,000 a year. Employers expect to have 89 full-time openings and 50 part-time openings for professional, skills or semi-professional positions that will pay over \$35,000 a year. Five employers reported they expect to have job vacancies in the next three years but did not provide details about those positions. One can assume that these employers expected openings would pay below the \$35,000 a year threshold.

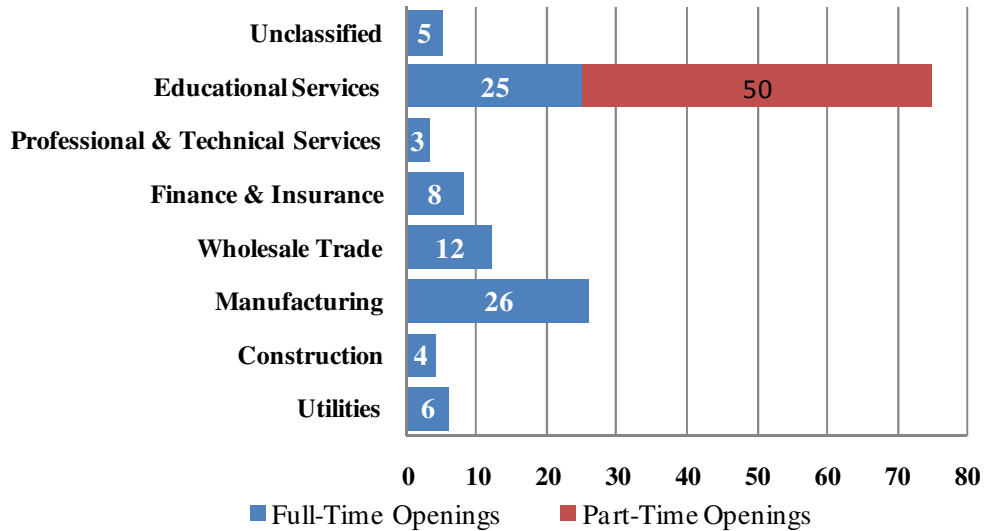
Table 5 provides a breakdown of the number of expected openings by employer size. The largest number of expected openings is with employers with 100 or more employees (89 full-time vacancies and 50 part-time vacancies).

**Table 5
Expected Vacancies in Next 3 Years by
Employment Level**

Employer Size	Full-Time		Part-Time	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 10 employees	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
10 to 49 employees	20	22.5%	0	0.0%
50 to 99 employees	33	37.1%	0	0.0%
100 or more employees	36	40.4%	50	100.0%
Total Job Vacancies	89	100.0%	50	100.0%

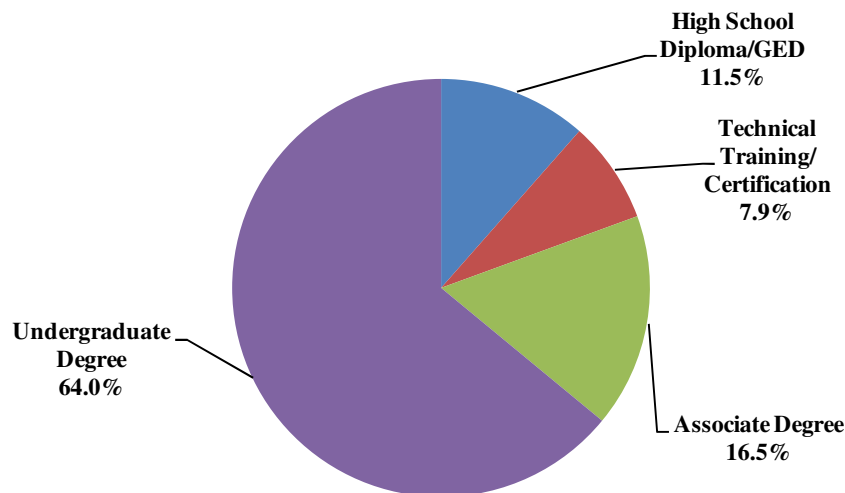
Figure 4 breaks out the anticipated 139 vacancies by industry. The educational services industry expects to have 75 openings over the next three years; 25 full-time and 50 part-time openings. The manufacturing industry expects to have 26 full-time openings. The wholesale trade sector was the only other industry expecting to have more than 10 openings over the next three years.

Figure 4 - Number of Vacancies by Industry



Nearly two-thirds of the 139 expected vacancies (64 percent) during the next 3 years will require at least an undergraduate degree (see **Figure 5**). Another 16.5 percent of the vacancies will require an associate’s degree and 7.9 percent will require technical training or a specific certification. Only 11.5 percent of the vacancies will require only a high school degree or equivalent.

Figure 5 - Educational Requirement for Vacancies



Employer respondents were asked to provide the position title for each of the vacancies their organization expects to have over the next three years which meet the criteria of paying over \$35,000 a year and being professional, skilled or semi-professional occupations. Table 6 provides a breakdown of those positions with the exact job title provided and the level of education required for each position. For some of the expected vacancies, the job title is easily understood, such as electrical maintenance or sales manager, while other expected vacancies are rather vague, such as “professional” or “skilled.”

Table 6
Job Titles of the Expected Job Vacancies in Next 3 Years

Job Title Identified by Respondent	Vacancies		Level of Education Required
	Full-Time	Part-Time	
Service Technicians	6		Technical Training/Certification
Controller, Project Manager	4		Undergraduate Degree
Skilled Maintenance	6		Associate Degree
Electrical Maintenance	6		Associate Degree
Mechanical Maintenance	6		Associate Degree
Certified Professional Drivers and Plant Management	5		High School Diploma/GED
Supervisory/Managerial	3		Associate Degree
Sales	4		High School Diploma/GED
Warehouse	4		High School Diploma/GED
Drivers	4		Technical Training/Certification
Professional - Skilled	3		Undergraduate Degree
CSR staff	2		Associate Degree
Licensed insurance agent	1		High School Diploma/GED
Professional	2		Undergraduate Degree
Skilled	1		Technical Training/Certification
Professional	25	50	Undergraduate Degree
Publisher	3		Undergraduate Degree
Sales Manager	2		Undergraduate Degree
Total Job Vacancies**	87	50	

*(** One survey respondent did not provide a job title for a position they expected to have two vacancies for over the next three years.)*

In addition to identifying the level of education required, respondents were asked if there were other specific skills or training required for each of the vacancies they anticipate over the next three years. All of the driver positions identified will require a Commercial Drivers License (CDL). Several employers identified computer skills or knowledge for their positions. The electrical maintenance position will require program logic controller (PLC) knowledge.

Appendix B contains the specific skills or training identified by respondents as being required for each of the occupations.

Housing Needs

Employers were asked the level of difficulty their employees have in locating housing in the area. They were asked to rate the level of difficulty from “no difficulty” to “major difficulty” for six different employee types. Respondents were also given the option that the question was “not appropriate” or that they did not have an opinion on the housing situation. The employers’ responses are broken out in **Table 7**. An overall examination of **Table 7** leads to a conclusion that there are challenges in locating housing in the Webster County area. For all six of the employee groups, multiple employers felt their employees had major difficulties in finding housing. Not surprising, the upper management group had the highest number of employers stating that locating housing in the area was a major difficulty. The lack of upscale housing is a common concern identified by employers across Iowa.

What is somewhat surprising is the number of employers who stated their retail/service employees and general/labor/service employees have moderate difficulty or major difficulty in locating housing. Combined, one-third of the employers who answered the question said their retail/service employees faced a moderate or major difficulty finding housing. A slightly higher percentage (35.1 percent) of employers stated their general/labor/service employees have moderate or major difficulty locating housing.

Table 7
Level of Difficulty Locating Housing in the Area by Type of Employee

Type of Employee	1 – No Difficulty	2 – Minor Difficulty	3 – Moderate Difficulty	4 – Major Difficulty	Not Appropriate/ no opinion	Total
Retail/Service	18.2% (6)	9.1% (3)	21.2% (7)	12.1% (4)	39.4% (13)	100.0% (33)
General/Labor/ Service	27.0% (10)	13.5% (5)	24.3% (9)	10.8% (4)	24.3% (9)	100.0% (37)
Office Support Staff	32.4% (12)	13.5% (5)	29.7% (11)	13.5% (5)	10.8% (4)	100.0% (37)
Entry Level Professionals	25.0% (9)	25.0% (9)	22.2% (8)	16.7% (6)	11.1% (4)	100.0% (36)
Middle Management	23.7% (9)	28.9% (11)	23.7% (9)	15.8% (6)	7.9% (3)	100.0% (38)
Upper Management	27.0% (10)	18.9% (7)	21.6% (8)	21.6% (8)	10.8% (4)	100.0% (37)

Employers were also asked to rate the level of priority from 1 to 5, which should be placed on creating different types of housing for their employees. A 1 was “high priority” and a 5 was “low priority.” The two highest priority housing types were “move-up housing for sale” and “entry level housing for sale.” Over 58 percent of the employers who answered the question gave a 1 or 2 for “move-up housing for sale” (58.4 percent) and “entry level housing for sale” (58.3 percent). Close to half of the employers (45.9 percent) also felt “rental housing” was important and rated the priority level as a 1 or 2 for the housing type. One employer stated that a high priority should be placed on “other” housing, but there were no specific details provided regarding what that “other” housing should entail.

Table 8
Level of Priority for Creating Housing

	1 - High Priority	2	3	4	5 - Low Priority	Total
Entry Level Housing for Sale	22.2% (8)	36.1% (13)	19.4% (7)	8.3% (3)	13.9% (5)	100.0% (36)
Move-Up Housing for Sale	27.8% (10)	30.6% (11)	27.8% (10)	5.6% (2)	8.3% (3)	100.0% (36)
Rental Housing	24.3% (9)	21.6% (8)	24.3% (9)	13.5% (5)	16.2% (6)	100.0% (37)
Seasonal Housing	2.9% (1)	8.8% (3)	17.6% (6)	20.6% (7)	50.0% (17)	100.0% (34)
Other	11.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	22.2% (2)	0.0% (0)	66.7% (6)	100.0% (9)

Other Needs

Retail Stores

Survey respondents were provided the opportunity to identify what type of new retail stores they felt would be attractive or appropriate for the community. Twenty-five survey respondents provided specific suggestions for new retail stores they felt would be attractive or appropriate for the community. **Box B** contains a summary of the respondents' suggestions.

Box B Suggested Retail Stores	
<p>Clothing/Apparel (19 respondents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kohls • Old Navy • Gap • TJ Max • Women's fashions • Mid priced department store <p>Electronics (12 respondents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Buy <p>Restaurants/Coffee Shops (6 respondents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee shop • Pancheros • Outback Steakhouse • Maidrite • Jimmie Johns • "Sitdown" restaurants <p>Home Improvement (6 respondents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Depot • Lowes 	<p>Recreation/Sporting Goods (6 respondents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabela's • Scheels • A golf shop • Camper & RV service/sale center • Boat retail & parts-service center <p>Books (4 respondents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnes & Noble <p>Wholesalers (2 respondents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sam's Club • Costco <p>Other Retail (2 respondents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bed & Bath • Michael's • "Upscale specialty stores" <p>Services (1 respondent)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small engine repair <p>Discount Stores (1 respondent)</p> <p>Grocery store (1 respondent)</p>

The most frequently suggested retail store was clothing/apparel stores with 19 respondents identifying stores such as Kohls, Old Navy and the Gap. An electronics store, specifically Best Buy, was the second most common suggested retail store. Restaurants/coffee shops, home improvement stores and recreation/sporting goods stores each had six respondents identify them as an attractive or appropriate store for the Webster County area.

Community Image

Employers were asked what they would recommend for improving the image of Fort Dodge and Webster County to prospective residents and businesses. A variety of suggestions were made by 27 of the respondents. Out of the recommendations provided by employers, several themes arose that are highlighted in **Box C**. The most common suggestion focused on improving the appearance of Fort Dodge and the other communities in Webster County. Several respondents acknowledged clean up and beautification efforts that are underway and encouraged those efforts to be continued or expanded. Directly related to the community's physical appearance are several suggestions from employers for increased street and road improvements in the community.

Box C
Themes From Recommendations for Improving Community Image

Improve Physical Image/Appearance

- Expand clean up and beautification efforts
- “Remove poor quality properties”
- Improve the downtown area
- Enforce existing ordinances

Improve streets and roads

- Highway 169 corridor
- 5th Avenue South

Enhance Quality of Life

- Finish existing projects
- Continue to emphasize it
- Support unique events for residents and visitors
- Reduce crime

Market and Communicate

- More consistent marketing theme
- Reverse historical reputation of Fort Dodge
- Gather input from area graduates and target audiences

The enhancement and promotion of quality-of-life attractions, facilities and events was recommended by several survey respondents. Webster County and Fort Dodge have a variety of attractive quality of life amenities and a few respondents believed marketing and communication efforts should be expanded to inform area residents and potential visitors, businesses and residents of the quality of life that is available in the county and the progress being made in the county. The specific recommendations from all of the survey respondents for improving the community's image are included in **Appendix B**.

Other Suggestions for the Development Corporation

The final question survey respondents were asked was if they had any other suggestions or comments for the Development Corporation. Many of the suggestions echo the feedback provided earlier in the survey regarding additional initiatives the Development Corporation should consider undertaking over the next two years. Multiple respondents felt the Development Corporation should continue or increase its efforts on job retention and creation by working with existing businesses. Expanded job creation, including the enhancement of economic

development incentives in order to be more competitive, was also suggested by several respondents. Other suggestions include increased communication with investors and the general public, more long-term planning for the community and facilitating collaboration among area development groups to avoid duplication of efforts and costs. **Appendix B** includes all other suggestions or comments for the Development Corporation from the survey respondents.

Key Observations and Suggestions

The 45 employers who completed the survey employed nearly 4,100 employees at the time of the survey in 2010, which represent a significant part of Webster County's employment base. These employers provided some very useful insights and suggestions that the Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County and other key community organizations should consider. Overall, the survey results show the Development Corporation in a positive light with the community's employers. There were few, if any, negative comments about the Development Corporation or its economic developments efforts. Based upon the input provided by these employers, IDM has developed the following observations and suggestions for the Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County's Board of Directors and staff to discuss and evaluate.

1. ***“Validate the Findings”*** – The Development Corporation's Board of Directors and staff should thoroughly review and discuss the survey results and suggestions provided by IDM. It is important to recognize that the observations and suggestions provided by IDM are based upon input from a small pool of Webster County employers. As the Development Corporation moves forward it might want to consider gathering additional feedback on key findings from the survey from targeted employers.
2. ***“Help Wanted”*** – Job vacancies are anticipated by a significant number of employers; an estimated 137 full- time and part-time positions over the next three years. Almost all of the positions identified by employers will require at least an associate's degree or technical training and a significant number will require an undergraduate degree. The challenge for the Development Corporation and the community is ensuring that there is the workforce to meet the demand of area employers.
3. ***“Communicate, Communicate, Communicate”*** – The Development Corporation should examine its communication efforts to investors, area employers, economic development partners and allies, and the general public to determine where enhancements and tweaks could be made. Providing constant effective communication is an ongoing challenge for most economic development organizations.
4. ***“Do We Narrow Our Focus?”*** – Multiple employers commented that they felt the Development Corporation should narrow the focus for its primary initiatives, or fields of activity, to business retention and expansion, business attraction and entrepreneurial development. All of the Development Corporation's current initiatives were identified as a priority when they were launched and are likely still critical for Webster County's economic development efforts. Therefore, if the Development Corporation does narrow its fields of activities, it may need to encourage other community organizations to take a lead role in addressing the priorities which the Development Corporation will no longer have a focus on. If other community organizations are not willing or able to step up and

take leadership then the Development Corporation will have to reevaluate its role in addressing a priority.

5. ***“Continue to Improve Our Image”*** – Many of the respondents believe that Webster County and Fort Dodge need to continue to improve their image, both to internal and external audiences. It is clear that efforts are underway and progress has been made but more needs to be done and 82.5 percent of the respondents feel the Development Corporation should increase or significantly increase the priority placed on image efforts. The respondents’ comments and suggestions focused both on the physical image and appearance of the community and the reputation of the community. A community’s reputation can be difficult to change but if there is a positive story to be told it should be shared and promoted.
6. ***“We Want to Shop!”*** – Based on the level of retail store suggestions provided, employers believe the retail mix in Webster County needs to be enhanced. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents feel the Development Corporation should increase or significantly increase the priority placed on retail development. Retail development is not a traditional activity for many economic development corporations; however, the Development Corporation may want to consider actions to spur additional targeted retail offerings in the community. An enhanced retail mix could improve the attitudes about or perceptions of the community by existing area residents and potential residents.
7. ***There are Housing Challenges!*** – The availability and affordability of housing is a problem in communities across Iowa and Webster County is no exception. Employers feel their employees are experiencing challenges in locating housing in the area and many feel the Development Corporation has made little or no progress toward addressing the community’s housing issues. The housing challenges are not limited to any single employee type. A majority of the respondents believe the Development Corporation should increase or significantly increase its efforts related to housing. However, the respondents feel a priority should be placed on “move-up housing for sale” and “entry level housing for sale.”



Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County Employer Survey

Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County (DCFDWC) Initiatives

In 2007, RA Smith completed a study of our Primary Sector Companies. Based upon those results, the Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County (DCFDWC) focused its resources on nine initiatives (listed below).

1. In your opinion, how would you evaluate the Development Corporation’s progress on each initiative?

	1 – Very Significant Progress Has Been Made	2 – Significant Progress Has Been Made	3 – Some Progress Has Been Made	4 – Little Progress Has Been Made	5 – No Progress Has Been Made	I Have No Idea/No Opinion
Marketing - The development of leads, with strong emphasis on recruiting potential companies to our county for the purpose of creating significant job growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retention - Program to strengthen relationships with current employers assisting with issues/needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ag Industrial Center - The development of approx 500 acres three miles west of Fort Dodge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Event Center - Focusing on the development of an event center/ recreation complex to enhance quality of life in our area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing - Implementing a feasibility study to determine demand on housing needs in our area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Image - Working to improve the appearance of Fort Dodge and Webster County	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retail - Negotiating with major developer through a consultant to improve retail options in area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trails - Providing one avenue for an improved quality of life in our area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workforce - The development of a specialized website that addresses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

needs of a trailing spouse						
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2. In your opinion, what level of priority should the Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County place on each initiative (listed below) over the next three years?

	1 – Significantly increase the level of priority	2 – Increase the level of priority	3 – Maintain the current level of priority	4 – Reduce the level of priority	5 – Significantly reduce the level of priority	I have no idea/no opinion
Event Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Image	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workforce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What other initiatives should the Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County consider undertaking over the next two years?

Company Background and Future Workforce Needs

4. Please identify your company’s industry (select the most applicable category):

- Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing/Hunting
- Mining
- Utilities
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Transportation & Warehousing
- Information
- Finance & Insurance
- Real Estate, Renting/Leasing
- Professional & Technical Services
- Management of Companies & Enterprises
- Administrative & Waste Services
- Educational Services
- Health Care & Social Assistance
- Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation
- Accommodation & Food Services
- Public Administration
- Personal Services
- Unclassified

5. How many employees do you currently have in each category?

Full-Time: _____

Part-Time: _____

Seasonal/Temporary: _____

9. Please rate the level of priority that should be placed on creating the following types of housing for employees

	High Priority - 1	2	3	4	Low Priority - 5
Entry Level Housing for Sale	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Move-up housing for sale (for current homeowners needing a larger or newer home (e.g., increasing family size, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rental Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seasonal Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If Other, please describe: _____

Other Needs

10. What type of new retail stores do you think would be attractive or appropriate for our community?

11. What recommendations do you have for improving the image of Fort Dodge and Webster County to prospective residents and businesses?

12. Do you have any other suggestions or general comments for the Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY



Employer Survey Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Question 3 What other initiatives should the Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County consider undertaking over the next two years?

- Work harder on a more consistent communication structure with community and investors of the Development Corporation. The lack of communication leads to the appearance that work is not being done. Just because there is maybe not much to report is not an excuse for regular communication. We must do a better job of marketing everything we do.
- The development corp should first focus on actually closing some of the leads they have had on the books - or take them off the list - they are real or no deals - focus on closing! The second focus needs to be on developing new leads we have a chance on getting Create a better atmosphere for start ups- and existing business growth - access to capital - I do not think the develop corp should be involved in all the other stuff that should be lead by the chamber or the city - we need new chamber thinking that aligns with growing our city and cooperation between he two entities - they are too fragmented
- I feel the ones that are in place are fine. Focus on local companies should be a priority and right not it looks like it's not from the Dev Corp. The City is calling locally but not the Dev Corp.
- Focus on helping existing small business to grow. Great time is spent courting outside entities while existing business is ignored. Funds are found for larger companies in the name of job growth. Recently a local company received over \$300,000 low interest loan funds and some in forgivable funds to generate 8 new jobs. I ask for assistance to develop 20 new jobs and I get, "Sorry there just are not any programs for your Company". Our City Manager claimed "we have existing programs for current small business". Uh, what are those David?
- Wind Energy and Bio-Fuels. Also, more focus on recycling.
- Increase in potential business new and existing, Increase trained workforce by working with Iowa Central
- 1. Emphasize the need to utilize our airport for out of town travel. 2. Work on upgrading the downtown.
- Tax advantages to employees new to the area and to business/industry adding jobs.
- alternative energy industry development rebuild the hydroelectric dam to lessen cost of electricity direct marketing the community to wealthy parties to look for endowments-donations lower the local tax burden
- new jobs/industry
- Only the above..
- Develop economic development incentives to attract capital investment not just jobs
- Follow through takes too long to get projects finished once started. Should be more info to the public as to what is happening or not happening
- Small-medium business development support for growth
- Continue 100% marketing initiative.

Question 7. If you responded "Yes" to Question 6, please tell us about the positions your company will need to fill in the next 3 years. Please only list professional, skilled or semi-professional positions/occupations that will pay over \$35,000 per year

Industry Name	Position Title	Estimated Number of Openings		Level of Education Required	Specific skills or training required
		Full-Time	Part-Time		
Utilities	Service Technicians	6		Technical Training/Certification	Minimum 5 years telephone/access installation and repair experience. 2-3 years DSL installation and repair experience. Basic knowledge of FTTH and data networking. Must be able to perform complex hardware/software research and provide first level technical support. Advance knowledge of plant service center, central office and outside plant functions. Must possess basic PC skills: Excel, Word, Power Point and Outlook.
Construction	Controller, Project Manager	4		Undergraduate Degree	
Manufacturing	Skilled Maintenance	6		Associate Degree	Industrial / Mechanical Maintenance
Manufacturing	Electrical Maintenance	6		Associate Degree	PLC, Industrial wiring
Manufacturing	Mechanical Maintenance	6		Associate Degree	Basic electrical, fabricating
Manufacturing	Certified Professional Drivers and Plant Management	5		High School Diploma/GED	CDL
Manufacturing	Supervisory/Managerial	3		Associate Degree	Supervisory
Wholesale Trade	Sales	4		High School Diploma/GED	
Wholesale Trade	Warehouse	4		High School Diploma/GED	
Wholesale Trade	Drivers	4		Technical Training/Certification	Commercial drivers license
Finance & Insurance	Professional - Skilled	3		Undergraduate Degree	Finance and sales
Finance & Insurance	CSR staff	2	0	Associate Degree	computer wise!
Finance & Insurance		2	0	High School Diploma/GED	Computer skills, ability to multi

Industry Name	Position Title	Estimated Number of Openings		Level of Education Required	Specific skills or training required
		Full-Time	Part-Time		
					task, handling of cash.
Finance & Insurance	Licensed insurance agent	1		High School Diploma/GED	Computer & customer service knowledge. Sales experience a plus. Must be willing to study & pass the state insurance exam.
Professional & Technical Services	Professional	2		Undergraduate Degree	Professional Licensure
Professional & Technical Services	Skilled	1		Technical Training/Certification	
Educational Services	Professional	25	50	Undergraduate Degree	
Unclassified	Publisher	3		Undergraduate Degree	
Unclassified	Sales Manager	2		Undergraduate Degree	
Totals		89	50		

Question 10. What type of new retail stores do you think would be attractive or appropriate for our community?

- Another lumber/hardware store. Campers & RV service/sale center. Small engine company (riding mowers - lawn mowers - parts - service). Boat/pontoon retail & parts-service center
- Best Buy Home building supply store
- Best Buy, Old Navy, Scheels, Kohls, Outback Steakhouse
- Best Buy, Sam's Club or Costco
- Clothing such as Kohls, Old Navy, It needs to be low cost with high quality. We need to either commit to the mall or downtown to add these businesses.
- Costco
- Discount stores
- Electronics chain Another Home Improvement Store Higher end sit down restaurant Book store Dept. Stores (Kohls) Specialized men's stores
- I am in the process of starting a higher end outdoor recreation product retail store on the NW main entry.
- Kohl's, Best Buy, TJ Max....good quality, value merchandise
- Kohl-----best buy
- Kohl, Best Buy, grocery stores, Lowes or Home Depot
- Kohls Barnes & Noble Best Buy
- Kohls Best Buy Old Navy Gap Lowes Home Depot Restaurants (Not fast food)
- Kohls, Barnes and Noble bookstore, old navy, etc.....
- Koles Best buy Rancheros Maidrite downtown coffee shop
- Looking at a retail service level similar to Spencer and what they have done to drive and develop their retail area.
- Major clothing retailers
- Mid priced, nationally known, department store
- Really miss Svana's, House of Williams, Osweillers. Ladies quality shops
- Specialty Shops (infill types), Jimmie Johns, Pancheros, golf, coffee shops, books stores Kohls, Best Buy, ect.
- sporting goods women's fashion restaurants-not much for good restaurants in 50501
- The Big Box stores - Kohls, Michaels, Bed & Bath Best Buy Lowes
- TJ Max Kohls
- Upscale retailers and stores like Kohl's, Cabela's, north face, etc
- Upscale specialty stores to add a little class to the mix.
- Upscale/high end: Kohl's, Cabela's
- We have a tired Mall that is in need of a make-over.

Question 11. What recommendations do you have for improving the image of Fort Dodge and Webster County to prospective residents and businesses?

- Doing what the city is doing now, removing the poor quality properties in highly visible areas. The corridor project is putting a much needed facelift on the community.
- Understand that if you set up a website that it must be maintained and updated. Work harder on a more consistent theme with marketing and improving our image. Too much confusion as to what we have and what we offer even amongst ourselves. Develop a stronger customer service image. Customer Service development will increase image perception as well as improve the personal opinions of our work force.
- Continue to stress and enforce business/residential clean-up resurface road/streets as often as possible
- paint the railroad bridge on highway 169 at old 20 clean up and weed out all the new improvements on the corridor develop housing incentives to spur new development - city's current philosophy is so outdated and it shows - fix it!
- keep dropping the junky buildings
- Streets need immediate attention Contact the graduates of both high schools that have returned to FD as to why they returned to FD and also those that have not returned as to why they are not returning. Especially those that have gone on to be young professionals. They hold the key to our future and the promotion of our image.
- Encouraging businesses and private owners to maintain their property - have a "house of the week/month" or "business of the month" featured in the newspaper
- I feel we have several projects that just need to be completed. 5th Ave South looks good but we have weeds growing in the median and in general not well kept in areas we just improved. If we can't maintain these areas don't plant item just use sod and mow.
- Continue to clean up 5th Ave. South!!!
- Starts with the leadership. We need professional City Council and Mayor that understand business and the business environment of today. Petty issues take up too much time and if necessary should be handled in private. Once a decision is made, everyone should be on board to make it succeed and not work behind the scenes to destroy the opportunity.
- continue the great efforts underway
- Recycling, more city parks, Reduction in Crime.
- Continue to improve the downtown area.
- Clean up some of the areas in town that look trashy. Clean up downtown (which is being done). Need garbage cans on downtown streets so people stop throwing trash on the ground. Figure out a way to stop the endless amount of plastic bags & garbage over by Walmart & Target. Even though we have special projects to clean up that area it still often looks terrible.
- The Fort Dodge community has a reputation for be rough. I think quality of life things that bring people to the county so people can see that we have a good place to live and raise a family. Bike trails that go throughout the county, the atv park, and the convention center. Continue to clean up Fort Dodge and surrounding communities.
- Reduce the amount of low and moderate income housing. Eliminate the FD Housing Agency. Increase redevelopment and improvement projects. Reduce the spread of new development. Improve infrastructure. Increase maintenance of existing facilities (PICA has

done a great job, similar tasks) New roundabout and beautifications will look crappy if they are not maintained.

- Improve communication that projects (i.e. trails, corridor, etc) are being completed.
- I believe we need to focus on the down town area to improve it's image. Fareway moving downtown should improve that area and traffic flow, Vacant buildings and those with poor curb appeal should be renovated to improve overall image of downtown. If the owners will not do this, city should have done at a reasonable cost and the bill added to the property taxes of the business or individual.
- Two items need to be worked on. First the historical reputation of Fort Dodge from its meat packing days needs to be reversed. When interviewing potential candidates they have generally already been given the preceding reputation of what Fort Dodge is like and tell us that their friends and family ask them if they are sure they want to relocate to Fort Dodge. Second, is the beautification effort that has begun in Fort Dodge. The effort needs to be continued and extended beyond just the 5th Avenue South corridor
- Find what type of people you want to attract, and make sure they are aware of the offerings that would appeal to them. how do you plan on advertising 50501 to potential businesses and professional? Where do you plan to advertise and market?
- Continue cleaning up major traffic areas - tear down eyesore buildings - FINISH the trail system and aquatic center.
- Continue to place emphasis on "quality of life" developments in the area and take advantage of the outdoor recreation/sports opportunities in the area.
- Encourage and enforce any existing ordinances on appearance of properties. Continue and expand corridor project. Riverfront project. Revitalization of downtown area. Entertainment venues.
- Finish the entry signs coming into the city at jct 169 & Business 20. Spruce the streets up with boulevards (see what Spencer is doing)
- Quality of shopping & restaurants. Quality of art fair-type events. Support unique events for tourism, i.e. Blues under the Trees, etc.
- Clean up, take some pride in appearance
- Put in place a "Clean Up the Trash" campaign and encourage people to stop littering and to pick up any trash they see. Encourage people to keep their yards and home clean; and encourage area businesses to do the same. Improve our main streets in town and set them as priority in keeping them properly maintain and painted.

Question 12. Do you have any other suggestions or general comments for the Development Corporation of Fort Dodge and Webster County?

- You're on the right track but I am concerned the corp is too focused on issues not specifically related to job generation. Unfortunately you have had to lead some initiatives the city needs, but it is time to get other groups involved in developing projects like the rec center, retail, etc - the development corp needs to work hard to generate new leads and work closely with the business affairs office in retaining existing businesses. Still need to replace the negative minds on the council (and supervisors) - sad but the DW's of he world thwart all the good efforts you are trying - Until the business community REALLY gets active (and that means seats on the council - not just funding candidates) Fort Dodge will struggle. Best of luck!
- Call, Call and Call. Investors like to see the person in charge!!!

- Work with everyone, not just the favored few. Place part of your focus on existing business. Work together with other agencies and governmental units to develop a small business assistance program that includes how you navigate through all the hoops our county and city government impose on a small business owner. This isn't the Lisa Shimkat program it has to be real monetary assistance through tax credits, loans and grants. Get some new blood in the system. Some people have been involved for years and quite frankly have not got the job done. Others would serve they just are not asked and sometimes I would surmise that's because they disagree with the current direction. There is a general perception that the DC has its own agenda and that agenda is not shared with the business community. Contact of existing business is poor. Break the mold.
- keep focus on helping existing industry expand while looking at bringing in new industry
- Future planning for 20 years out no more band aids for our infrastructure, ie roads, sewer, power citizens want to know their taxes dollars are getting all they can get not offering enough to bring new businesses in need to sweeten the pot to compete with other states and communities- steady jobs should be the goal-manufacturing, retail, restaurants, energy, construction, ag & livestock, technology cover some overhead burden, build or offer space- find out what's going on for potential development or opening of new/moved businesses in Des Moines, Ames, Ankeny, Sioux City and steal it away from them- get aggressive-
- We need good paying jobs, retail and restaurants as well as an event center.
- Continue to facilitate discussion with other development related groups in Fort Dodge and Webster County area with focus on developing an "umbrella" organization that directs and/or assigns the work to be done. Individual groups can still maintain their identities but streamline to avoid duplication of effort and costs.
- The need for a skilled workforce as it will be a challenge for years to come especially with the possibility of new business growth.
- More up front with the public on what is going on or progress made. More updates on why they did or did not locate to Fort Dodge.
- Keep supporting Leadership Fort Dodge.
- Continue on with programs