



*Conferences that Inspire Solutions*

## **Challenges that Come with New Development and Rapid Growth**

### **Key Takeaways from Mike Kazmierski's Session**

Taiwan-based electronics manufacturer Foxconn will be opening an advanced manufacturing campus in Mount Pleasant in just two years' time. As the world's largest producer of electronics, Foxconn manufactures products for a wide range of clients in the U.S. and abroad, with notable examples including Apple, Microsoft, and Sony. Although the company may not be a household name in the U.S., finding someone who doesn't own at least one product manufactured by Foxconn is liable to prove challenging.

With Foxconn bringing one of the largest development projects in the nation's history, there are many ways in which Racine stands to benefit – lower unemployment numbers, higher wages, and youth retention chief among them. However, in order to fully take advantage of these opportunities, local leaders must recognize that they come with a number of challenges. Failing to address these issues in a timely manner can lead to far-reaching consequences that affect everyone who lives and works in our community.

A prospective housing shortage is among the most pressing issues presented by the Foxconn deal. The company will ultimately bring tens of thousands of new residents to the area, and at present, there simply aren't enough units to accommodate everyone. Additionally, while their facilities are being constructed, the community will see a large influx of construction workers in need of temporary housing. Because the current supply is insufficient to meet demand, this can lead to a dramatic increase in rental rates and home prices. As such, construction of new units must begin posthaste, prioritize density, and emphasize multi-family units. Temporary residents and Millennial members of the workforce tend to favor multi-family units over single-family homes, making new apartment buildings and condo developments particularly important. Furthermore, new construction shouldn't be limited to residences. With a sizable increase in population

comes a sizable increase in traffic, so road construction should also be high atop the community's to-do list.

Although all signs point to Foxconn being a boon to local employment numbers, community leaders must take steps to ensure that jobseekers are qualified to work in advanced manufacturing. This entails developing good relationships with universities and technical schools and helping them introduce curriculums that are relevant to the types of positions Foxconn is looking to fill. If the company is unable to find a qualified workforce locally, they'll have no choice but to search elsewhere. Reaching out to young people at high school job fairs and on college campuses is an effective way to make them aware of the unique opportunities Foxconn has to offer. Internships are another great avenue for attracting fresh talent. Despite being underutilized by many companies, internships essentially serve as extended job interviews and provide workers with invaluable hands-on training.

Messaging and public perception can play a vital role in keeping communities on board with projects like the Foxconn development. This is why it's imperative for local leaders to stress the benefits – both long and short-term – of this deal at every available opportunity, particularly at public events and on social media. Creating a regional coalition can also help in this endeavor. By making neighboring communities understand how they stand to benefit from this deal, Racine can build a solid regional support network that will aid in keeping our message on-point.

Racine is projected to undergo decades' worth of growth in just a few short years. While this will prove beneficial to the community in many different areas, it will also present a wide range of challenges that need to be promptly addressed. By understanding these challenges and getting on top of them before they become unmanageable, we'll be in a much better position to capitalize on the opportunities Foxconn will bring. As Reno quickly learned after Tesla set up shop, once you're in crisis mode, it's already too late. Time is our enemy, and the clock is ticking.