

Weston Stakeholder Results

Cory Poris Plasch

Rapp Consulting Group

November 17, 2022

Cory's Background

10 yrs. in local government, 6 as a 911 Dispatcher

4 yrs. VP at a mission-driven tech start up (Polco/National Research Center)

Leadership roles in the Alliance for Innovation and the Wisconsin City/County Management Association

Presents at conferences nationally on innovation, use of data, and engaging hard to reach populations



Focus Group Results

Focus Group Overview

- As part of the Village of Weston's strategic planning process, three focus groups were conducted on October 6th and 7th, with an additional virtual focus group on October 20th.
- Participants self selected based on outreach from the Village and signed up in advance.

Focus Group Process

- A focus group is a small-group discussion guided by a trained facilitator.
- It is used to gather in-depth information about a community's thoughts and opinions about a designated topic.
- In the case of the Village of Weston's focus groups, the subject was strengths and challenges for the city.
- The meetings ran for approximately 60-90 minutes

Focus Group Questions/Areas of Exploration

1. When you think of what you like best about the village, what comes to mind?
2. When you think about Weston as compared to other nearby communities, what comes to mind about the challenges of this community?
3. What are the disadvantages of living in Weston as compared to other places?
4. What are the advantages of living in Weston as compared to other places?
5. If you could change things about Weston what would they be?
6. When you think about all of the things the Village does, what are the most important to you?
7. Of the important roles that the Village plays in helping to create a good quality of life, what are the most important to maintaining or creating a high-quality future?
8. If you could choose three things for the Village to focus efforts and resources on over the next five years, what would they be?

Summary of Major Themes

- **Location**
- **Schools**
- **Public Safety**
- **Village Services**
- **Village amenities**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Transportation**
- **Leadership**
- **Communication/Transparency**
- **Growth (residential)**
- **Growth (business)**

Location

- Proximity to North Woods and major cities like Milwaukee
- Near everything without big city problems
- Recreation possibilities are “endless”
- Independent businesses
- Mom and Pop restaurants
- Commercial airport is close
- “a nice mix of civilization and no civilization”

Schools

- Schools are a source of pride
- Referendums supported to keep up facilities
- Too much paid in taxes?
- Trades department of the high school gets kids off to a good start

Public Safety

- Weston is safe with no crime, homeless or drug problems
- Felt safe during COVID and riots that were happening nationally
- Fire department is great and full time ambulance is important for community
- Police are seen as responsive, but there are concerns if response time will increase as Weston grows
- Speeding and truck traffic, especially in residential areas and near schools, are growing concerns
- Is Weston prepared for a cyberattack?

Village Services

- Participants were split regarding how much code enforcement is needed
- Code enforcement on residences helpful to clear up junk cars and trash
- Snow plowing is adequate but could be improved
- Park services are “fantastic”
- Parks need updating, especially dog park
- Yard waste day is appreciated, paper shredding would be a good addition

Village Amenities

- Are there enough things for young people (14-20) to do?
- Input from young people (not their parents) needed to determine new activities
- New amenities such as an indoor water park or baseball fields for tournaments?
- Parks and trails need to accommodate both walking and biking
- Kayak launch pad with concrete slab desired
- Playground equipment needs to be good quality and then consistently maintained

Infrastructure

- Walking trails overall are really good
- Eau Claire River trail needs more maintenance
- Appreciate that trails are plowed in winter
- Clean, safe drinking water is a priority
- Internet should be considered “infrastructure” as it is a necessity
- Landscaping on medians is not maintained well

Roads and Transportation

- More sidewalks and walking trails next to roads needed
- How will traffic be handled to ensure safety near new municipal center?
- Designated truck routes needed
- Lack of public transportation is an issue for older adults
- Weston needs to become more bike friendly
- Several roads need better pedestrian walkways including Camp Phillips and Grand Ave
- Road conditions should be improved
- Roads with truck traffic need to be curbed, guttered, and constructed to handle the weight
- Truck traffic should be steered away from residential areas

Leadership

- One group discussed at length the advantages of having a village administrator
 - Keeps Village moving forward
 - Wausau mayors learn how to do the job and then are voted out
- Concerns that boards and committees are “overstepping bounds” and negatively impacting staff
- Staff morale is a concern, better onboarding and establishment of standards recommended
- Leadership retreat for the board helpful?
- More resident involvement desired
- Participants very positive about strategic planning process, want to make sure priorities were universal enough to last through election cycles

Communication/Transparency

- Communications from the Village (both staff and electeds) flagged as a major concern by several groups
- Small staff acknowledged as a challenge for communications, but solution needs to be found
- Focus groups were appreciated as a way to give feedback to the Village
- The new Village Hall came up repeatedly
 - Was it needed?
 - How was it paid for? Would taxes go up?
 - Too big, especially if fire and police are not housed there
 - Negatively impacted trust residents have in local government
- Weston Ave expansion is an opportunity for better communication- residents want to understand what is happening

Growth: Residential

- High density housing is a concern
- Diversity has increased with the growth of the community
- Need to draw in well educated young people and those who can create good jobs
- Continued growth is needed to keep taxes low
- People who grew up in Weston leave, but then come back for the community
- Housing needed for seniors (active retirement communities)
 - Need homes for sale, not just rentals
- Affordable housing discussed by two groups as a need not only in Weston but throughout area

Growth: Business

- Zoning is more restrictive than in other communities
- Need to be attractive for business since that tax base offsets resident property taxes
- Local businesses are invested and support community in many ways
- How can more industrial land be sold?
- Is a downtown needed? It might contribute to a community identity
- Village needs to be creative to support business growth
- Permitting process described as difficult by some participants
- Need to balance keeping the Village looking good and being receptive to new growth

Three Priorities for Weston?

- Smart growth (6)
 - Environmentally safe growth (1)
 - Targeted zoning for desired businesses (5)
 - More restaurants and/or retail (5)
 - Good jobs (2)
 - Becoming more business friendly (2)
- Public Safety (7)
- Bike and walk friendly (especially near busy streets) (7)
- Parks and recreational activities (7)

Three Priorities for Weston?

- Village communication/transparency (6)
 - Newsletter, better online access to information
 - Agenda posted sooner
 - City customer service
- Education (5)
- Updated infrastructure (4)
- Public transportation (3)
- Streets/better traffic flow (3)

Three Priorities for Weston?

- Environmental sustainability/sustainable infrastructure (2)
- Better code enforcement (2)
- Lower taxes (2)
- Rural internet
- Consolidation of services with other communities
- Better orientation for Village Board
- Long term planning (15-20 years) for Village
- Good family environment

Thank you!

Cory Poris Plasch
Rapp Consulting Group