

WAUKESHA COUNTY BUSINESS ALLIANCE

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February 11, 2021

Mayor Shawn Reilly & Waukesha Common Council
City of Waukesha
201 Delafield St.
Waukesha, WI 53188

Mayor Reilly & Waukesha Common Council,

The Waukesha County Business Alliance – the countywide chamber of Commerce for Waukesha County – is committed to collaborating with other partners to find solutions to the shortage of affordable homes in Waukesha County for workers and families. The Alliance has a broad and diverse membership representing everything from sole proprietorships to some of the largest employers in the region from a variety of industries. Our 1,200 member organizations represent more than 75,000 employees. As we work to strengthen the economy, it is important that we work together to tackle one of the biggest challenges facing our employers, which is finding enough qualified employees.

A 2019 survey of Alliance members found the following:

- 84% plan to expand their workforce in the next three years.
- Nearly 65% say staff recruitment is impacting their business (up from 58% in 2015).
- When choosing to locate a business, the top 2 most important factors are proximity to customers and availability of workforce.
- 75% of businesses report finding a skilled workforce to be the primary challenge they faced when starting or growing their business (up from 67% in 2017).

More recently, a statewide survey conducted in the fourth quarter of 2020 by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, asked employers to identify the top public policy issue facing their business. The biggest issue was labor shortage/lack of qualified candidates, which ranked even above COVID-19 regulations, healthcare costs, taxes and regulation. Even in the face of economic recovery coming out of the pandemic, the Alliance continues to hear from our employers regularly about the need for workforce. As a result, one of the Alliance's 2021 policy priorities is to "collaborate to find solutions to the shortage of housing in Waukesha County for workers and young families."

The City of Waukesha's housing study found that "Housing, employment and location are closely related to each other in the Waukesha housing market and just as relevant since the City's Comprehensive Plan and Central City Master Plan were written," and our members agree, which is why we believe the availability of housing for workers and families is a critical piece of the workforce solution.

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We are committed to working with other stakeholders to identify and implement solutions that address the shortage of affordable homes in Waukesha County, to provide more options for workers and families. As your community plans for future residential development and considers projects, such as the resolution to extend Tax Incremental District #14 to support workforce housing, we hope you will keep the business community's need for affordable homes top of mind.

Best,



Suzanne Kelley
President & CEO
Waukesha County Business Alliance, Inc.