



Response to County Board Resolution No. 22-91 Seeking Funding Options for Richland Economic Development

September 28th, 2022

Resolution No. 22-91 - A Resolution Notifying The Symons Natatorium And Richland Economic Development Department Of Future Funding Reductions And Directing The Symons Natatorium Board And Richland Economic Development Board To Consider Services, Develop Options And Propose A Recommendation On Future Operations.

The Richland Economic Development Board hereby submits this document in response to County Board Resolution No. 22-91 which provided the following direction;

“2. Encourage the RED board to explore a public private partnership where public sources make up half and private sources make up half of the Economic Development budget; and return to Finance and Personnel Committee with a report by October 31st 2022.”



Summary

9/28/2022

The RED Board has conducted research and assembled information regarding four possible funding models for Richland Economic Development. For reasons outlined throughout this document, the **Unanimous Recommendation** of the Richland Economic Development Board is to retain the current model of funding with **RED funded 50% by the County and 50% by the City**. While the actual budget documents for this model shows the County funding (60%) and the City (40%), the City provides office space and other amenities which, when factored, are intended to equally spread the cost of operations at 50% / 50%.

Past economic development efforts, and now Richland Economic Development have yielded substantial positive and measurable contributions to the County's economic position. These contributions come in ways that are both direct (increased property tax base, injection of grant money) and indirect (additional sales tax, more jobs, more students in our schools, new community amenities, and a positive outlook for the future).

There must be deep consideration of the fact that if the County and the City are not engaged in economic development then they are falling behind all counties and municipalities that are. This is almost universally understood, by governments, municipal and regional planning professionals, academia, and private industry alike.

Throughout the past year and a half, through numerous strategic planning efforts that have been conducted by Richland County and facilitated by Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, it has been clearly communicated that governments cannot solve their budgetary dilemmas through cuts alone. A complete action plan requires allocation of resources to economic growth. Richland Economic Development is, in fact, the primary entity that spurs on and facilitates growth for the County.

It is also critical to note that Richland Economic Development is one of the few county departments that has the capacity to generate revenues that cover all of the associated cost of the department. Once departmental costs are covered, the Economic Development Office produces profit. The RED Board has discussed and reviewed data and believes that it is reasonable to postulate that Richland Economic Development, approximately 2 years and 5 months into its current structure, has already generated enough new repeat yearly revenue for the County and City to pay 100% of its operating costs (See Exhibit B). This means that all future revenues that are generated from projects that Richland Economic Development helps facilitate should be understood to be 100% profit. These profits can now be used to fund other departments and services that are unable to produce revenue streams through their operations.

Cutting funding and jeopardizing the stability of Richland Economic Development is likely to increase the property tax burden on every land owner in the County, not reduce it.

Thank you for your thorough review and consideration of this recommendation and the documentation that is provided.



A Letter from the RED Board

August 8, 2022

RE: General Statement - Alternative Funding for Richland Economic Development

The Richland Economic Development Board, (“RED Board”), is aware of Richland County’s difficult budget considerations, we understand the complexity of the situation, and we appreciate the restrictive nature of state law with regards to municipal funding for rural communities.

We understand the County is in the process of searching for funding options, and considering possible cuts across multiple departments and services, we realize the need for difficult choices, and we offer our support to everyone involved.

This letter is our direct response to any consideration of defunding the Economic Development Director position.

“Strongly Opposed.”

Since the creation of this position, a joint effort between Richland County and the City of Richland Center, our community has added the new dialysis center/pharmacy building, the TechCom Building, multiple new homes, the Lone Rock Village Center Park, and the addition of an elevator to the Richland Center City Auditorium.

These projects have provided the County with increased property tax revenue, increased sales tax revenue, increased local employment opportunities, and a much-needed psychological boost for local residents, following an extended period of stagnation.

Jasen Glasbrenner, our current Economic Development Director, has been a critical player in every one of these positive developments. His expertise and experience have helped move each of these possibilities from simple ideas to tangible realities. We believe a decision by Richland County to remove support for this position would not only send a harshly negative message to worried friends and neighbors; it would also lead our community backwards, as we saw when economic development was defunded at both the city and county levels.

The RED Board strongly encourages Richland County to maintain financial support for the critically important Economic Development Director position.

Sincerely,
The RED Board



Richland Economic Development Board Report to Richland County Board and Committees on Funding Alternatives

Date: September 12, 2022

Re: Report from RED Board regarding restructuring and funding alternatives

Following are four potential models for the funding of Richland Economic Development as we move forward. The County Board requested RED to evaluate models that might work instead of the existing model. The profile for each model includes a brief description of the model, the governance, and the financing. The pros and cons of the model are stated and then a recommendation from the RED Board is included.

The four funding models below are ranked in the order of most desirable to least desirable and are as follows;

Models:

- 1) **Recommended** - RED is funded 50% by the County and 50% by the City. (This is the Current Model) - The actual budget documents for this model shows the County funding (60%) and the City (40%). However, the City provides office space and other amenities which, when factored, are intended to equalized the cost at 50% / 50%.
- 2) RED is funded 100% by the City. This models assumes that the City decision makers would agree to this concept and that funding could be identified within the City budget.
- 3) RED is funded 50% by the County and City (The Public Sector) and 50% by Private Businesses (The Commerce Sector). This model assumes businesses will be willing to give large donations and that there is a large enough pool of businesses to raise the money from.
- 4) RED becomes a Self-Funded Private Non-Profit Entity having to raise 100% of the funds necessary to operate. This model requires RED to approach all local government entities and businesses on a one on one basis to try to gain the necessary funding of operate. This model presents the highest level of risk and uncertainty to the success of RED and economic development in Richland County.

Qualifying Statement regarding the Models:

1. With regard to Model #2 - The City has not agreed to fund RED entirely if the County dropped out as a funding partner.
2. With regard to Model #3 and #4 - No private (commerce sector) businesses have been approached regarding soliciting contributions.
3. With regard to Model #4 - There have been no efforts to incorporate or file for an IRS 501(C)(3) tax exempt status.



Model #1 - Maintain the Current Model of Shared County and City Funding

Governance

At the present time the RED board has four (4) permanent representatives from government, two (2) from the City of Richland Center and two (2) from Richland County. In addition, there are 5 citizen members representing different economic sectors. There would be no change to government representation or the board structure.

Funding

There would be no change from the current funding model.

Considerations

Pros

1. The County and City would continue to fund their contributions to RED as in the past which would provide continuity. This is a role proper to government. There would not be favoritism, real or perceived, shown to any private entity or municipality.
2. The structural document will not have to be changed and approved by the Richland Center City Council and the Richland County Board of Supervisors.
3. Sector representation will remain the same.
4. The working relationship between the city and county is better than it has been for a very long time. It is important to recognize, nurture and support this improving relationship.

Cons

1. The County will have to find other areas of the budget to cut.
2. If Richland County chooses to not support RED, the lack of monetary (visible) county government support may have a negative psychological impact on businesses who wish to expand, relocate to Richland County, or start up.

Commentary

An example of the power and potential of economic development is the Bear Creek Solar Project which will provide Richland County with \$116,667 of unrestricted funds on an annual basis. It is important to note that this project is the direct result of a part-time citizen driven economic development effort which made the solar farm a reality at no cost to the taxpayers. It was completed prior to the creation of RED. This revenue stream is scheduled to start in 2023 and is expected to continue for 30 years. The revenue from this economic development effort alone exceeds the county contribution to RED with the current Richland County contribution at \$73,859.54.



The document “Net New Construction by County” (Exhibit A) indicates that Richland County has lagged all other identified counties in a 5-year average in net new construction. Iowa county leads at 1.59%. Richland County is lowest at 0.83%. This demonstrates the importance of investment in Economic Development for Richland County.

There has been noticeable new construction activity in the City of Richland Center. A positive attitude is beginning to embrace the community. The Mayor is receiving regular contacts from businesses expressing interest in the community. Much of this has started since the creation of RED. It is important for the county to recognize the importance of RED and provide financial support.

Fiber optic cable throughout rural Richland County is going to enhance lives for current residents. It will also make the area more attractive for those considering relocating. RED has played a significant role to foster installation of fiber optic cable. In addition, recent utilization of CDBG Close grants (≈ \$1.2 million) to enhance the City Auditorium and the Village of Lone Rock would not have taken place without RED.

It is critical to recognize that many economic development efforts have a cumulative effect. Stated another way, once a building is constructed and goes on the property tax rolls, the revenue generated is recurring year after year for as long as the building is in existence. This means that revenues from economic development efforts are always sustained and increasing. An economic development department is one of the few governmental departments that can operate at a consistent profit with the ability to support other departments that are unable to generate a profit.

Please see (Exhibit B) below for a brief overview of the financial involvement that RED has already had for Richland County and Richland Center. It appears that the revenues generated through economic development activity and projects are already in excess of what the County and City have invested since the inception of the department. At this point, yearly costs could be considered 100% covered by the yearly revenues that economic development efforts and RED have been substantially involved in securing. In any business model, this department would be considered for additional funding, not less.

Recommendation

The RED Board strongly recommends maintaining the current funding, governance structure and sector representation of RED.



Model #2 – RED is Funded 100% by the City

Governance

As dictated by the adopted Structural Document, the RED Board contains four seats for governmental representatives. Both the County and the City are assigned two seats each. If financial contributions were withdrawn from the County, the composition of the RED Board may change in the following ways:

1. As the County's representatives, the County Administrator and County Board Chair may be removed from their seats and lose voting authority. City representatives may fill the vacancies.
2. As the County may still have a vested interest in the work of the RED Board, their representatives may remain on the board with or without voting power.
3. The RED Board may alter their structure by reducing their size, eligibility requirements for representatives (E.g., city residents only), or disband entirely.

As the structure, composition, authority and purpose of the RED Board are set forth by the Structural Document requiring adoption by both the City and County, any significant alteration, such as the County withdrawing from the agreement, necessitates significant modifications to the Structural Document and readoption. At such time the County extricates itself, the City would set forth the prescribed governance or dissolution.

Funding

The current departmental budget for Economic Development is approximately \$130,000 per year of which the City is currently responsible for 40% or about \$56,000. The City has and will continue to provide office space and other amenities for the department.

To absorb the full cost of the Economic Development Department, the City would need to allocate approximately \$75,000 additional dollars for the first year. This would be an ongoing annual cost subject to a variable increase based on several economic factors (E.g., wage increases, inflationary impact to the cost of goods, equipment replacement, etc).

The City does not have a funding source identified for this additional expense. However, several options are available for consideration such as: reallocating funding from other department budgets, increasing fees, terminating current contributions to Symons (to be considered if funding is withdrawn by the County), requiring the Economic Development Director to seek and obtain grants allowing for administrative costs to be recovered, and so on. Given the revenue generated by the Economic Development Director has largely exceeded the actual expense of the department, all-potential funding options available to the City will be explored to ensure economic development continues within the City.



Considerations

Pros

City continues to vigorously pursue economic development without a loss of momentum.

1. Full dedication to pursuing economic development interests within the City.
2. Ongoing projects will be seen to completion.
3. The Director's time is spent on high value projects rather than fundraising.
4. Streamlined reporting process for the Director.
5. Scope of work is narrowed and strategically focused as determined by the City.
6. The County continues to receive benefit of city based economic development as about 1/3 of tax revenue generated within the City is received by the County.

Cons

1. The County may lose representation and influence on the RED Board.
2. Ongoing and future economic development projects/initiatives within the County would be at the full expense of the County. On a case-by-case basis, the City may elect to contract out the Economic Development Director to the County at an hourly rate. This may prove to be cost prohibitive depending on the scope of work contracted.
3. Independent from the County, a town or village may be compelled to utilize the services of the Economic Development Director. If so, they would be subject to paying the hourly contract rate which may be cost prohibitive.
4. Without a collaborative approach as is in effect now, the potential for relationship building and strategic planning in collaboration with the County may be impeded. Unintended side effects or inefficiencies may present themselves.
5. With less access to County officials and department heads, the exchange of information and opportunity for knowledge sharing may be diminished. Although the director's focus would be city-centric, preserving a communication pathway would be essential.
6. Potential risk of alienating entrepreneurs outside of the City.
7. Towns and villages routinely struggle gaining access to the vast number of resources that may be available to them given their part-time or volunteer status. Additionally, without the necessary technical expertise and adequate time/staffing, managing grants and other programs can be quite challenging for a part-time or volunteer staff. Removing economic development from the County may prevent towns and villages from much needed assistance and support thus impeding their goals as well as the County's.
8. Self-imposed regulation like local ordinances have a tremendous impact on economic development within a community. Without an Economic Development Director on staff, the ability to address regulatory barriers and create an environment favorable to economic development would be severely impeded within the County.



Recommendation

The RED Board does not recommend this Model. While the City would experience several benefits from a city-centric approach to economic development, the cost the County would be tremendous. The Economic Development Director has a proven track record of success within the City and County. This success has allowed the department to generate more revenue than expenses. The department provides both direct and indirect financial value and it creates no burden to the County's overall budget.

Given the importance of continued economic development throughout the entire County, and great challenges a separation would create, it is the recommendation of the RED Board to maintain the current structure and organization of the Economic Development Department. Any proposed change would create an undue burden to the entire County at large.

Model #3 – RED is funded 50% by the County and City (The Public Sector) and 50% by Private Businesses (The Commerce Sector)

Governance

The private and public governance model will include representatives from the government sector and the commerce sector. Presently the RED Board has four permanent representatives from government, two from the City and two from the County. That representation would not change unless the County discontinues funding RED. In such a case, the County may lose their seats on the RED Board and those seats could be redistributed to the City and Commerce sectors. For the sake of the commerce sector contributors, RED would likely need to be organized under a non-profit 501(C)(3) corporation.

Funding

Equalized funding would mean the RED budget of approximately \$130,000 per year would have one-half of the contributions from the government sector (\$65,000) and one-half from the commerce sector (\$65,000). This split would mean the City would be responsible for approximately \$32,500 and the County for approximately \$32,500. Each year the funds would need to be reallocated from the government sector and the commerce sector. There is also the matter of office space and equipment. This model presumes the City would continue to grant usage of office space and equipment.



Considerations

Pros

1. The County and City would significantly reduce their contributions to RED.
2. There would be greater participation financially by the commerce sector in RED. This may tend to increase the buy-in from the commerce sector.
3. RED could operate as a 501(C)(3), which has some benefits in receiving grants.
4. The operations of a 501(C)(3) would be more nimble and less encumbered by governmental regulations.

Cons

1. Funding through the commerce sector takes considerable time and resources to raise and maintain. The scarce resources of time that already tax the Economic Development Director (EDD) would be used for fundraising instead of bringing new commerce into the area.
2. The City and County would significantly decrease their investment in RED which may translate into less concern for economic development.
3. The EDD will have less opportunity to create relationships with governmental offices that will help them to streamline projects.
4. The EDD will have less capacity to influence governmental bodies and government regulations to become favorable to growth and development.
5. The potential for not raising enough funds from the commerce sector could be a reality, especially in economic downturns. In this case, there may be a struggle to continue full operations of economic development in the county.

Recommendations

The RED Board does not recommend this model. While this model of ED structure is used in some counties, and has some measure of success, it also has several limiting factors. It takes a substantial amount of time to raise and maintain funding from the commerce sector and there is a real potential that funding efforts fall short. This creates uncertainty and a potential for failure.

Model #4 - RED becomes a Self-Funded Private Non-Profit Entity having to raise 100% of the funds necessary to operate.

Governance

The Richland Economic Development Board would essentially reorganize to a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and form a board of directors. The board of directors would be responsible for overseeing the operations and control of the newly formed non-profit.



This option will restructure the current make-up of the members and the size of the RED Board.

Funding

Funding for a non-profit economic development organization would come from private donations from local industries or individuals or from grant monies applied for and received from local, state or federal entities.

Considerations

Pros:

1. The benefit from adopting a privately funded RED Board would potentially eliminate the funding coming from the City and County funds.

Cons:

1. This type of board structure would require either the board of directors, volunteers, or the economic director to spend time generating the funding. The time spent trying to find funding sources would take away from essential time being used to cultivate and develop working relationships that directly impact economic development within our community.
2. The community tried this type of structure in the past and the experience had was a disconnect between the Economic Development and their board, the City Council, and the County Board. The ideas and visions between the 3 groups could not align and ultimately the Economic Development Board dissolved.
3. There's also a risk that funding this type of model with private donations from local industry will not succeed within our smaller community as we have fewer resources from industry than in larger communities. There's concern that either smaller businesses may not have the ability to provide funding and/or may not fully understand or have the 'buy in' to the idea of being a long-term funding source since the financial benefits are not always obtained immediately; they are gained over time as our community grows. There is a concern of a lack of long-term sustainability with this model.

Recommendation

The RED Board does not recommend this model. The RED Board's recommendation is to continue having both the county and city fund 100% of economic development to maintain the collaboration between the 3 groups and continue to build upon the successes that have develop over the past couple of years. Our current model, having the Economic Director as a liaison between the RED Board, the City, and County, has shown to have the most success in our smaller community with our current financial situation.



Exhibit A

Net New Construction by County - Increase in Richland, surrounding, and similar counties by percent.

Grant	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	
	1.06	1.06	0.82	1.47	1.71	5-year average 1.16%

Lafayette	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	
	1.35	1.35	0.91	1.16	1.93	5-year average 1.34%

Vernon	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	
	1.70	1.42	1.04	1.03	1.47	5-year average 1.33%

Sauk	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	
	1.29	0.95	1.33	1.47	1.37	5-year average 1.28%

Iowa	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	
	2.24	1.27	1.34	1.56	1.56	5-year average 1.59%

Crawford	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	
	1.13	0.96	0.74	0.73	1.16	5-year average 0.94%

Richland	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	
	0.94	0.67	0.83	0.69	1.00	5-year average 0.83%



Exhibit A – (continued)

Net New Construction in dollars by municipal entity in Richland County, as a percent of the total, and 5-year average.

	2022		2021		2020		2019		2018	
Townships	8,560,000	70%	7,160,100	90%	6,136,000	61%	5,701,400	71%	6,952,200	61%
Villages	418,400	3%	271,700	3%	773,400	8%	(120,200)	-1%	456,400	4%
City	3,337,000	27%	525,400	7%	3,071,800	31%	2,398,100	30%	3,913,400	35%
Total	12,315,400		7,957,200		9,981,200		7,979,300		11,322,000	

5-year average NNC

Townships	6,901,960	70%
Villages	359,940	3%
City	2,649,140	27%
Total	9,911,040	



Exhibit B - Richland Economic Development Impact Tracker

Project	Total Project Value	Direct & Indirect Benefits	
CDBG Close Grant – Lone Rock Park and RC Auditorium	\$1,200,000	Increase in Sales Tax, tourism, removal of blight so property values and community attractiveness increase.	
		New Renter @ Auditorium	≈ \$3,000 / month
		2 to 5 New Jobs	
Dialysis and Pharmacy in RC	\$1,210,000	Repeat Property Tax Income every Year	≈ \$34,800
		One time Sale of Land	\$100,000
		New and retained jobs, sales tax,	
Tech Com Building	\$585,900	Repeat Property Tax Income every Year	≈ \$35,090
		One time Sale of Land	\$25,000
		New and retained jobs, sales tax	
Phoenix Center Covid Relief Grant – made aware and assisted in pursuit	\$200,000	Retained and expanded businesses and economy	
Richland Locker Grant – assisted in pursuit	\$200,000	Retained and expanded businesses and economy	
Richland Locker RLF – assisted in pursuit	\$200,000	Retained and expanded businesses and economy	
Starlite Theaters Grant – assisted in pursuit	\$43,800	Retained and expanded businesses and economy	
TIF Extension for Affordable Housing - facilitated capture of dollars for fund that can be used to improve housing in the City	≈ \$115,000	Dollars to be invested in Richland Center	\$115,000



Exhibit B – Richland Economic Development Impact Tracker (Continued)

Project / Fund	Total Project Value	Direct & Indirect Benefits	
Wedgewood Development Lots – 2 Duplexes and 1 Home	≈ \$1,000,000		
		Facilitated receipt of land by donation and then sale of land	\$63,500
		Development Agreements for Net New Construction value of ≈ \$900,000. Repeat Property Tax income every year	≈ \$35,100
WEDC Idle Sites Grant for Rockbridge Childcare Facility	≈ \$150,000	Supports families and work force / provided jobs	
Facilitated Sunshine and Giggles Childcare arrival in RC		Supports families and work force / provided jobs	
		Repeat Property Tax income every year	≈ \$7,800
Main St. Bounce Back Grants	≈ \$150,000	Facilitated the application and receipt of grants to approx. 15 businesses in Richland County.	
County Housing Authority – Lost Fund Recovery Effort	≈ \$80,000	Assisted Administrator in identifying and working to recover lost / idle funds that were defederalized	\$80,000
Bear Creek / Savion / Alliant Energy Solar Field -	\$116,000 / Year for 30+ years	This project was not developed under RED. However, revenue streams are just coming on line and this project is a direct result of focused economic development efforts of the community members on behalf of the county.	



Exhibit B – Richland Economic Development Impact Tracker (Continued)

Project / Fund	Total Project Value	Direct & Indirect Benefits	
New Dollar Tree	\$800,000	Repeat Property Tax income every year	\$23,200
		Job creation retention and sales tax revenue	
New Dunkin Donuts / ATT Store	\$750,000	Repeat Property Tax income every year	\$21,750
Panorama Building #2	\$4,500,000	Repeat Property Tax Revenue is deferred to TIF for approx. 15 years	\$145,000
Facilitation of Richland Center Stori Field Development of new housing units	\$2,400,000	Projected Repeat Property Tax income every year	\$93,600
Los Amigos – WEDC – CDI Grant effort	\$200,000	Effort is in progress	
Projects / Efforts that are in Progress that will bolster the Economy			
City Website Rebuild for Marketing and public ease of use			
City Ordinance Recodification and Rewrite for growth and planning			
City / County Tax Deed Lot Program for redevelopment and new homes			
New Single Family Home Subdivision			
Facilitated transfer of vacant lot to Cazenovia for future redevelopment			
City Redevelopment Authority Revitalization			
City Industrial Park Revitalization Project			
Several Sales leads for Industrial Park			



Exhibit B – Richland Economic Development Impact Tracker (Continued)

Projects that are in Progress that will bolster the Economy		
Facilitating USEDA Grant implementation with Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission - Comprehensive plans in Richland Center, Lone Rock, Boaz, Richland County Strategic Plan, Richland Center and Richland County rebranding for Workforce Retention and Attraction		
Assisting Richland Center in planning around the construction of the New Richland Center Hospital		
Environmental Protection Agency and DNR Technical Assistance Program to clear brownfields in Richland Center and Richland County for redevelopment		
Regional involvement on model for immigrant and migrant workforces of alleviate extreme workforce shortage in the county		
Assisting Richland Center in overhauling the City Planning and Zoning departments and efforts.		

Economic Impact Summary - Since the Inception of RED:

- RED has secured over \$1,700,000 in Grant dollars.
- RED is currently facilitating the process to secure over \$300,000 more in grants.
- RED has assisted in the development of projects (either complete or under construction) valued at \$5,545,900.
- RED is currently working to secure development projects valued at more than \$7,000,000
- RED has significantly contributed to the realized, or soon to be realized, year after year property tax revenues of more than \$150,000.



Exhibit B – Richland Economic Development Impact Tracker (Continued)

- RED is working to secure development projects that, if completed, will have year after year property tax revenue streams that are in excess of \$240,000.
- RED was instrumental in acquisition and or sale of land for the City that resulted in one-time revenue streams that would not have been realized otherwise; \$163,500.
- The dollar values and contributions listed above are trackable and objective. There are numerous indirect economic and financial impacts that are more difficult to quantify, but never the less very real. Examples are jobs or businesses created or saved, increased sales tax revenues, and the overall positive social and economic environment that is created when we are actively and progressively working to develop our economy.