

4.8.08 MILWAUKEE BRAINSTORM

What are the major challenges/issues facing the city?

- Personal experiences with problems
 - Getting mugged at 9 p.m.
 - Hard to get around without a car
 - After I lived out east for so long, there's a really bad perception with crime. There are times when I look at the Journal Sentinel—and every single shooting, it's huge. I lived in Pittsburgh and that sort of thing happened there every day. I don't think that crime is any worse here than it is anywhere else.
 - There's an urban standoff/misperception about the city by the suburbanites. They're terrified about not finding free surface parking, about getting mugged, etc. I think there's also a suburban misperception about the value of the walkable parts of the city. The third ward is gorgeous, for example. But there's a perception among the suburbanites that the city isn't what it is.
 - There's an expectation and a perception, and it's not followed by taking action—"That's the way it is, and that's the way it's going to be."
 - There's no problem building new cities and new downtowns (faux downtowns like Bayshore) but we're eating into open space.
 - There's an overall negative self image, and really not leveraging that underdog complex we have. We compare ourselves to other cities all the time, but we have so many resources here and innovative projects here that we don't give ourselves enough credit for. We don't really capitalize on what we do have.
- Public policy problems/shortcomings related to problems
 - Places in state share aspects and facets but don't share knowledge.
 - Government is not unified.
 - People with skills leave our region.
 - State Government has given up on Milwaukee.
 - It's hard to have transparency to the flow of money in our city/region.
- Political implications/hurdles
 - The County and the City have yet to find a coherent drum to beat to.
 - The county in phillie and the city are the same; Miami-dade are the same, etc. Many efficiencies to that, in terms of fire ,police, schools.
 - (Read Milwaukee's Growing Pains, Colver)
<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0938076167>)
 - We've got, from my perspective, too much government. All the little towns, all feed into that regionalism issue—equal representation for Milwaukee vs. Vernon causes a huge problem at SEWRPC.
 - It's too bad that our two regional governments are the most under fire—deservedly so, maybe not—but those are two examples of regional cooperation, but if those are two examples we have a long way to go before we see consolidation and cooperation by governmental entities.
 - It's not only a breakdown of where your taxes are going, but where the moneies are drawn for schools, water, roads, it's hard to see in a regional level.

- With state revenue sharing, it's back to the urban/rural democrat/republican; schools are underfunded because of the model we use to fund them, which is subject to poverty.
- If we can get our state legislatures and city council members and state senators, and form a regional voting block, we could have some influence. WE don't have anything like that right now. Our influence is really diluted. That's too bad. I really believe that the people in the state believe the city of Milwaukee is a financial black hole, and race is involved in that as well.
- There's great opportunities we're missing out on regardless of where you're focused in the state. Same thing different scale. There's opportunity in Wisconsin, in the greatlakes, especially in the great lakes coastal region, same banners, same themes—everyone has brown fields for example.
- Madison cranks out workers, but doesn't keep them, and they're not coming here because they're going to the coasts.
- It's hard for people to find work in this city.—if you're not in a place with many jobs, moving there is a risk; Milwaukee is a large city with the challenge of finding a good job.
- Perceptions of Milwaukee
 - Not diverse (homogenous)
 - Not open (closed)

Solutions

- I think we could do more to capitalize on the strengths we do have. We can look at the companies that are here—JCI, Rockwell, etc.--that are producing the tech and commodities that no one else is, but we get lumped into the high tech bandwagon, or the biomed thing, or whatever—other places own that.
- We can regionalize some more of our government, which will help it become more transparent (among other things.)
- Create an educational system.
- People - who's doing it right? (name any group or project you can think of in these categories.)
 - Education
 - Environment
 - Food and Health
 - Government
 - Business/Commerce
 - Media/Culture
 - Spirituality
- Public Policy - what changes can be made?
 - Increase the consolidation and collaboration between government units.
 - Increase transparency and accessibility of people to the information about the flow of money.
 - Political - who do we talk to?
 - What can I do?

Big Ideas: In a dream world...

If Milwaukee was healthy, what would it look like?
If you average the terms below, you get Milwaukee in 20 years.

1. ++++Innovative
Reinvent
Risky
Entrepreneur
Destination
Leadership
Adaptive
2. +++Pride Bold Identity Optimistic National level
3. +++Mobility = Best transit = Walkable = Interconnected
4. ++Fair Integrated Diverse Interconnected (across the entire spacetime continuum)
5. ++Empowered = Adaptive = Education = Gainful Employment = Stakeholder
6. +Healthy Safe
7. Wealthy
8. Utilizing natural resources
9. Incentive
10. Home ownership

Milwaukee sets an example for the planet's definition of city, by empowering its citizens to take pride in their ownership of an innovative adaptive and highly walkable environment that they maintain for their health and the health of future generations.

REPLY FROM BUFFALO

perception/ reality gap and interplay is similar

there is a sense of 'greener grass' because we have a list of similar complaints/ problems but don't necessarily feel like you may not have them to the extent that you may think you have them

people who love cities most are people who left and came back, would you have same perceptions if you lived elsewhere (/do those who have lived elsewhere have the same perceptions?)

Milwaukee is a great city, we're jealous -- yes celebrate your assets, and talk up your quality of life. chin up, great lakes, campers, we're gonna be alright...

-- you must have had a small meeting to get such consensus :)