

# Richland County Workforce Attraction Marketing Plan 2021



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# Executive Summary

The need for this study was identified by local and regional experts and local input has been injected into the findings at every step. Richland County and its communities have so many outstanding attributes that the ability to overcome any obstacles in this report is well within reach.

The current Richland County workforce market has established an employee food chain, where there is an established path from one company to the next, always leaving the lowest company in line continuing to seek out new employees. This cannibalistic tactic does not grow the economy or endear Richland County to future employers. The lingering issue of limited childcare facilities is an ongoing obstacle, however if Richland County becomes a more desirable place to live and is able to attract and retain residents, services such as childcare become more viable.

There are several major causes for the current workforce challenges in the county. These include:

- **Fewer Workers** – The population of Richland County has stagnated since 2000. The workforce age population has dropped 9.2% since 2010 and is predicted to drop further by 2030.
- **Fewer Jobs** – Richland County has lost 826 jobs since 2008, however there has been an increase in the average hourly income of new jobs added. Nevertheless, this does not come close to making up for the quantity of job losses or overall wealth of the community.
- **Perception of the community** – In interviews with area employers, recruiting worker from other cities or other corporate locations is a challenge due to a perception by employees that the city is not a desirable place to live. This sentiment often impacts senior positions, which is an important segment of the community that Richland County should try to retain due to their higher wages.

As part of the Workforce Study, interviews were conducted with 11 large employers in the area. The employers listed their key workforce needs as:

- Dependable 20- to 40-year-olds
- Suitable local housing options from inexpensive to executive
- Welcoming community for ethnically diverse employees
- More things to do downtown, more food/shopping options
- More events and celebrations
- Improved childcare options for employees

Richland County and all its communities have many unique attributes and many reasons residents and visitors love the region, but most potential future residents don't know what Richland County has to offer. Addressing this can be accomplished if the county, municipalities, community partners and organizations collaborate to address employer and workforce needs. Workforce attraction efforts should be driven by the following two initiatives:

**Initiative 1: County and Communities Image Improvement** – To overcome image issues and general invisibility, Richland County and its communities needs to define their key attributes, state those clearly in words and pictures, and promote itself in ways that reach and favorably influence its targeted potential resident and workforce. By having a consistent brand message, bridging workforce attraction and tourism, Richland County will be able to stretch its dollar and appear as a cohesive, well-organized, and fun place to spend a life.

**Initiative 2: Attracting New Residents** – By actively targeting key counties where Richland County represents a lifestyle improvement, the county will be able to launch effective, highly specific campaigns focusing on key messages such as jobs, safety, and cost of living. There are two Project Plans outlined. *Project A: Attracting Workforce from Targeted Counties*, focuses on attracting workforce from specific Midwest counties where Richland County presents favorable life improvement to their current setting. *Project B: Target Market to Categories of People*, outlines ways to attract specific groups of people such as boomerang residents that could return, urbanites seeking an alternative, and tourists that might want to “live where others vacation.”

By proactively updating and improving its image, employers will value having civic and community partners in their effort to attract workforce. Richland County employers will also be able to more easily promote the region as a good place to work and live. This will be important to its current employers and to employers that would consider moving into the area.

Richland County and its communities have abundant attributes that make the area well worth investing in and has the ability to attract new residents and workforce. By investing the time and effort now to better showcase what the area has to offer will support the future growth and development of the county and all its communities.

# Introduction

Richland County and its communities are at a crossroads. There has plenty of jobs available but not enough workers to fill them. The declining workforce population has been an issue since 2010 and is projected to get worse. The best way to address this situation is to research the causes and develop plans to address it. The Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, working closely with Richland County, Richland Center and community leaders, developed an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant proposal to fund the Richland County Flood Recovery and Economic Resiliency Program. The four-prong approach outlined in the grant includes this Workforce Attraction Marketing Plan as one of the four key components of the program.

The results of the Workforce Attraction Marketing Plan are based on national and local research, including working closely with Richland Economic Development, the Richland Workforce Marketing Steering Committee and incorporating local interviews and online survey results. The data is used to assess the current situation, outline areas in need, and detail specific steps to make improvements. The work across all four prongs of the Richland County Resiliency program is designed to strengthen communities, create resiliency to the impacts of future disasters, and form an in-depth strategic view of the opportunities and obstacles that need to be enhanced or addressed.

In considering potential pools of future residents, we examined those familiar with Richland County as well as those with little to no knowledge of the region. Attracting people that do not know of Richland County required a thoughtful, data-driven analysis of where to recruit, and how Richland County compared on key attributes such as safety, schools, and cost of living. Cities initially researched had large manufacturing bases, high unemployment, and were located within 400 miles of Richland County. The selected sites were then analyzed to determine where Richland County provided the greatest collection of life improvement attributes. Marketing messages and plans were tailored for each target county based on their comparative weaknesses.

# Demographic and Workforce Trends

In this section we will look at the characteristics of the population in the region and the employment trends using regional and national data sources. To enhance this data we will recap the highlights of 340 local residents that completed the online survey and we will also review the key points from one-on-one interviews with 11 leading employers from across the county.

## Richland County Demographics

There are two key issues that are prevalent across Richland County:

1. An aging population – pending retirements and subsequent vacancies will impact businesses by driving up demand for labor.
2. Overall population decline – Loss of workforce population and declining school enrollment impact today and tomorrow’s workforce availability.

### Population

The population of Richland County in general has grown slightly since 2010, from 18,021 to a projected 18,275 in 2020 (Table 1). Unless deliberate and decisive action is taken, that minor increase will not include sufficient workforce age residents, and Richland County will not be able to keep up with employer workforce demands, even with increases in automation.

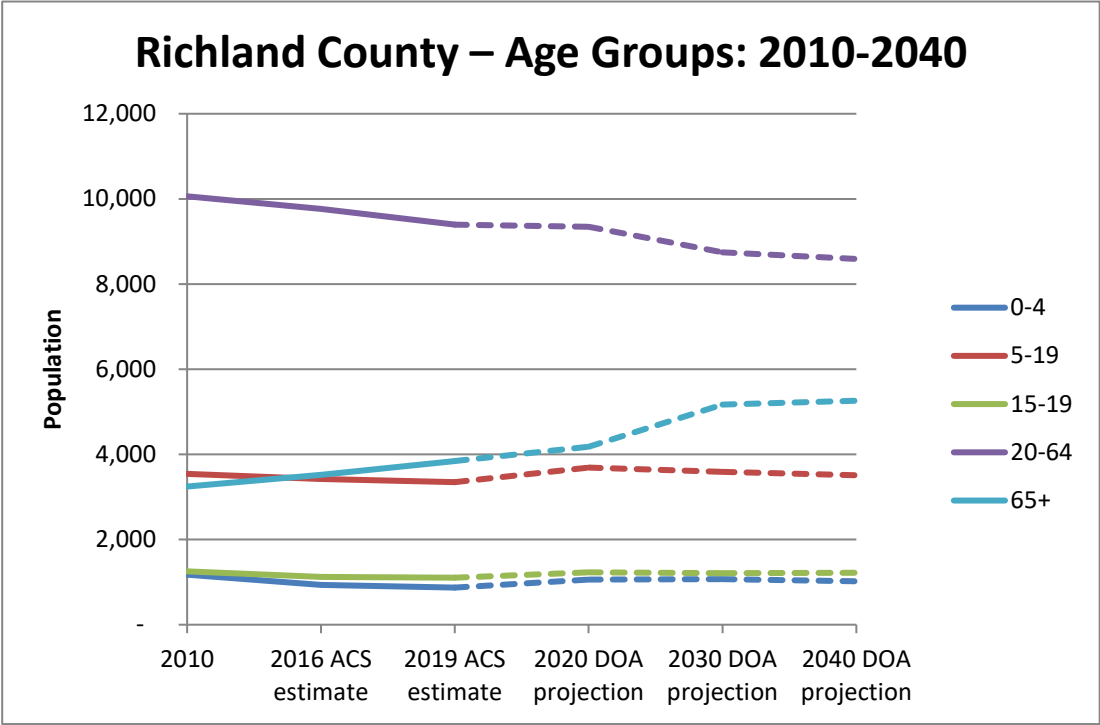
**Table 1:** Richland County Populations Trends and Projections (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Wisconsin Department of Administration Population Projections)

|                             | 2010<br>Census | 2016 ACS*<br>estimate | 2019 ACS<br>estimate | 2020 DOA*<br>projection | 2030 DOA<br>projection | 2040 DOA<br>projection |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Total<br/>population</b> | 18,021         | 17,642                | 17,459               | 18,275                  | 18,575                 | 18,380                 |
| <b>Change</b>               | 97             | (379)                 | (183)                | 816                     | 300                    | (195)                  |
| <b>% change</b>             | 0.5%           | -2.1%                 | -1.0%                | 4.7%                    | 1.6%                   | -1.0%                  |

### Age

Richland County has an older population, with a median age of 45.3. The workforce age population, age 20-64, has been declining since 2010 and is predicted to continue to decline. The number of 65+ residents has been continuing to increase since 2000.

**Table 2: Richland County Population Trends and Projections Chart 2010-2040** (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Wisconsin Department of Administration Population Projections)



**Table 3: Richland County Population Trends and Projections Table 2010-2040** (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Wisconsin Department of Administration Population Projections)

| Age groups | 2010   | 2016 ACS estimate | 2019 ACS estimate | 2020 DOA projection | 2030 DOA projection | 2040 DOA projection |
|------------|--------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 0-4        | 1,175  | 934               | 872               | 1,060               | 1,070               | 1,020               |
| Change     | 171    | (241)             | (62)              | 188                 | 10                  | (50)                |
| % change   | 17.0%  | -20.5%            | -6.6%             | 21.6%               | 0.9%                | -4.7%               |
|            |        |                   |                   |                     |                     |                     |
| 5-19       | 3,540  | 3,424             | 3,348             | 3,690               | 3,590               | 3,510               |
| Change     | (552)  | (116)             | (76)              | 342                 | (100)               | (80)                |
| % change   | -13.5% | -3.3%             | -2.2%             | 10.2%               | -2.7%               | -2.2%               |
|            |        |                   |                   |                     |                     |                     |
| 15-19      | 1,253  | 1,121             | 1,104             | 1,230               | 1,210               | 1,220               |
| Change     | (216)  | (132)             | (17)              | 126                 | (20)                | 10                  |
| % change   | -14.7% | -10.5%            | -1.5%             | 11.4%               | -1.6333%            | 0.8%                |
|            |        |                   |                   |                     |                     |                     |
| 20-64      | 10,061 | 9,767             | 9,395             | 9,345               | 8,745               | 8,590               |
| Change     | 317    | (294)             | (372)             | (50)                | (600)               | (155)               |
| % change   | 3.3%   | -2.9%             | -3.8%             | -0.5%               | -6.4%               | -1.8%               |
|            |        |                   |                   |                     |                     |                     |
| 65+        | 3,245  | 3,517             | 3,844             | 4,180               | 5,170               | 5,260               |
| Change     | 161    | 272               | 327               | 336                 | 990                 | 90                  |
| % change   | 5.2%   | 8.4%              | 9.3%              | 8.7%                | 23.7%               | 1.7%                |

## Job Growth

Certain categories of jobs are growing. The fastest growing job group from 2008 to 2020 by number of new jobs is Home Health and Personal Care Aides followed by Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and lastly Passenger Vehicle Drivers as shown in Table 4. The median hourly rate for these jobs is \$15.16 and the median hourly annual earnings are \$31,350 as shown in Table 5.

**Table 4:** Top Growth Jobs in Richland County 2008-2020 (Source: EMSI)



**Table 5:** 2020 Wages for Richland County Fastest Growing Jobs (Source: EMSI)

| Occupation                                | 2008 Jobs | 2020 Jobs | Increase in jobs (%) | 2020 Median Hourly Rate | 2020 Median Annual Salary |
|---|-----------|-----------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Home Health and Personal Care Workers     | 129       | 275       | 113%                 | \$13.17                 | \$27,396                  |
| Package and Filling Machine Operators     | 101       | 187       | 85%                  | \$16.35                 | \$34,016                  |
| Passenger Vehicle Drivers excluding Buses | 31        | 86        | 173%                 | \$15.98                 | \$33,236                  |
| Average                                   |           |           |                      | \$15.52                 | \$31,350                  |



## Job Losses

The greatest job losses by job count for the same time period were Electrical, Electronic, and Electromagnetic Assemblers; Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators, and Childcare workers as shown in Table 6.

*Table 6: Richland County Biggest Job Loss Categories 2008 (Source: EMSI)*

| Occupation   | 2008 Jobs | 2020 Jobs | Decrease in jobs (%) | Median Hourly Rate | Median Annual Salary |
|--|-----------|-----------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Electrical, Electronic, and Electromagnetic Assemblers | 176       | 24        | (86%)                | \$13.09            | \$27,217             |
| Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators               | 235       | 124       | (47%)                | \$13.47            | \$28,023             |
| Childcare Workers                                      | 93        | 33        | (64%)                | \$9.03             | \$18,780             |
| Average of Median Hourly Wages                         |           |           |                      | \$11.86            |                      |

Comparing job gains and losses from 2008 to 2020, Richland County had a net loss of 260 jobs and 566 new jobs were created. These new jobs pay a median hourly rate of \$15.52 compared to a median hourly rate of \$11.86 for the jobs that were lost. This means that even with fewer jobs, the wages for those that are employed has improved. Pay improvements are a good trend, but fewer overall workers negatively impact school enrollment, overall tax base, and therefore the future workforce pool and community wealth. An added critical flaw is the dramatic loss of childcare workers, a notoriously underpaid job, yet still critical to overall economic success of the community.

Many equal or higher paying jobs sit unfilled so it is not just entry level jobs that are available. This was brought up during employer interviews and a range of jobs are shown on company websites and recruiting tools.

## Smaller Families

Both family size and household size is decreasing locally and across the nation, but Richland County families are even smaller than the national average with Richland County family size being 2.77 compared to the national average of 3.23. The number of households is declining as well, at a time where Richland County needs to be growing. Richland County lost approximately 186 people from 2000 to 2020. Equally concerning is the decreasing number of school age children, and growth of households that includes at least one person over the age of 65.

Another stress on local resources is the fact that 8.8% households have someone over the age of 65 *living alone*, which reduces housing turnover to young families that could replenish the workforce, and which may otherwise have countered the slow growth in new home construction. The 2019 SWWRPC housing study noted that older residents do not have an alternative housing options to move into, and so they remain in their houses. Construction of age-appropriate ranch homes or apartments, as well as communal facilities, could open up some of this housing to accommodate the county's growing workforce needs.

## Racial Diversity

While still a predominately Caucasian population, the latest data available in the American Community Survey (ACS) 2019, projections estimated that for those that identify as white alone make up 95% of the county population, compared to 98% in 2010. As will be noted in the employer interviews, a more diverse workforce is beginning to expand and its important that they are welcomed by the community for long term growth.

## Resident Survey Results

Several trends emerged from the surveys conducted with Richland County residents during the winter of 2020-2021.

The positive feedback included:

- The county's greatest attributes are the natural beauty and peaceful scenery of the quiet small towns that comprise its rural character.
- Residents want the quaint country feel and slower pace of life to remain intact.
- The citizens are generally known for being good, friendly, hard-working people, and they feel Richland County is safe and mostly affordable.
- Richland Center is undeniably the hub of activity for the county. It offers nice parks with a good sense of community, with quick access to outdoor recreation, and nature.

Areas of concern:

- Residents may be resistant to change and diversity.
- Richland Center lacks opportunity for young people, new housing, and a grocery store.
- There is also concern about the aging population, the financial and cultural stagnation, and a lack of opportunities for new and growing businesses.
- Most people feel that in ten years the area will be the same or in decline.

Survey participants highlighted opportunities they thought could be further leveraged, including:

- Increased support for businesses
- The area's history and safe reputation
- Increase opportunities for family entertainment and cultural activities
- Young people, businesses, and local government were identified as those who should lead future change
- Downtown Richland Center requires refreshing and marketing to attract visitors and potential residents

## Employer Interview Results

SWWRPC spoke one-on-one with 11 area employers from multiple municipalities across Richland County. An additional three employers were contacted multiple times, but did not participate. SWWRPC spoke to multinational, national, and entrepreneurial companies in manufacturing, healthcare, food service, and professional services.

Several employers commented that they have trouble convincing potential employees to start at or transfer to Richland County locations. Overcoming negative perceptions about life and work in Richland County will require diligent effort to effectively showcase compelling reasons why employees and employers should come here and stay here. The "one and done" sentiment often applies to more senior positions, which is an important segment of the community that Richland County should try to retain due to their higher wages and their buying power that could help improve the sustainability of local businesses. Richland County will be unable to combat the natural rotation some organizations use to develop staff, but by becoming an in-demand city it will eliminate the stigma and create the potential for "boomerang" returns in the future.

Many of the open jobs are entry level and do not require advanced education or substantial experience, and so there are few barriers to entry. Equally interesting is that many equal or higher paying jobs sit unfilled so it is not just entry level jobs that are available. This was brought up during employer interviews and a range of jobs are shown on company websites and recruiting tools. This range of open jobs shows need at all levels as well as growth within organizations.

Positive feedback from employers included:

- Outdoor recreation – bike trails, walking trails, unique amenities such as the skating rink, aquatic center, drive-in movie theater, and remote-control car park
- The ease of commuting, the cost of living and other quality of life attributes are valued
- Lower crime than urban areas in the region
- Lower cost of living than many other cities in the region

#### Areas of concern:

- Lack of workforce – If they are unable to fulfill open jobs, companies may have to consider relocating. Job hoppers do not stay long, and trailing spouses have no suitable job opportunities. Absenteeism and dependability are an issue
- Lack of housing – Employees need housing priced at \$200K or less for production line, and higher for executive employees. Options for 6-month leases are also needed
- Communities are not welcoming to diverse employees who are of a different race, culture, or differing beliefs
- Lack of daycare options
- The area needs more amenities/conveniences
- Need high-speed internet

#### Employers provided the following future plans to address workforce issues:

- Some businesses are land locked and need room to expand and improve
- They want automation to improve production speed and lessen the physically difficult parts of the process. This will be done with or without added workforce. Even after automation many good jobs will still need to be filled
- Businesses are regularly reviewing workforce, housing, and diversity concerns to determine their ability to conduct operations in the region. Proactive work by local communities to address issues is noted and factored into future development plans by corporations.

#### Employer recommendations to improve the workforce environment include:

- Make Richland County and its communities more attractive online:
  - Create county and community websites that is modern and attractive
  - Help those considering living in Richland County see the benefits
  - Make moving here easier with online ‘concierge’ resources that help transplants find builders, real estate agents, utility hook ups, etc.
  - Create infographics to help them sell Richland County and its communities to prospective employees
  - Showcase attractive pictures of housing options
  - Create videos of amenities around the county
  - Develop a widespread community calendar of events
  - Promote existing favorable coverage such as the 2020 Discover Wisconsin video
  - Improve trail mapping, maintenance, and marketing of recreation trails
- Increase housing for all income levels
  - Incentivize housing developers to construct new homes
  - Enforce zoning and regulations to minimize blight
- Continue to improve downtown Richland Center
  - Need added stores, no warehousing in retail district, less vacancies
  - More vibrant activity, events, and storefronts
  - Increase entertainment options such as music venues, public music, and restaurants
  - Diversify gathering spots to include more than just churches and bars
- Be more culturally inclusive and welcoming
- Improve access to vocational training for high school students and increase technical college training
- Promote Richland County as a weekend getaway from bigger towns
- Co-market with Viroqua and Spring Green or tap into their traffic to get tourists to visit Richland County
- Better engagement once newcomers move here:
  - Presenting a welcome basket to new residents
  - Connect to churches and other community organizations
  - Connect new residents with groups and community organizations (Rotary, churches, etc.)
  - Connect newcomers to other newcomers

## Summary Analysis

Many issues and opportunities come into focus by analyzing the demographic research, the community survey results, and the information gained from the employer interviews based on their ability to attract and retain workforce. The key categories and their topics are outlined below and will be used to develop the County Image Improvement Initiative and Attracting New Resident Campaigns that follow.

### Strengths (*existing assets* that can be leveraged to *retain* workforce)

- Local Hospital
- Affordability
- Safety
- Two highly rated schools in the area
- Good jobs with minimal education and experience required
- Climate Change Resilience (compared to desert southwest, coastal areas of the U.S.)
- Short commutes
- Large cities and airports within 1 hour
- Pet friendly
- Unique amenities such as the remote-control park, dog park, skating rink, water park, drive-in movie theater, A.D. German Warehouse, the Auditorium
- Committed large and small employers
- Outdoor recreation opportunities

### Weaknesses (*shortcomings* in *existing* offerings that need improved to *retain* workforce)

- Broadband buildout not fast enough
- Lower wages in some local jobs
- Lack of diverse food/entertainment/grocery
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of move-in ready homes from starter townhomes to executive housing

### Opportunities (*New initiatives* that can be used to *attract* workforce)

- Recent boost in outdoor activity interest
- Create more events and celebrations to engage local residents and attract 'outsiders'
- Promote Richland County as "Your American Dream" - affordable, welcoming, and safe with opportunities for all

### Threats (Barriers to attracting new workforce)

- Worker housing availability
  - New builds and refurbishing required
  - Offer creative housing financing options
- Lack of executive housing options
- Lack of diversity – Resistance to welcoming ethnic and religious diversity
- Four schools have declining school populations
- Governmental inaction to respond quickly to new business inquiries
- Lack of outside investment in housing development
- Resistance to change
- Declining 20 to 40-year-old workforce group
- Increase in retired people living alone that lack the ability to manage house and property upkeep coupled with the lack of appropriate local supportive housing options
- Declining tax base and community wealth leading to reduced community wealth and investment

# Workforce Attraction Initiatives

Outside of the outstanding promotional efforts of the Tourism outreach, many potential future residents do not even know Richland County exists, much less what a beautiful and promising place it is. To overcome this invisibility, Richland County needs to define its key attributes, state those clearly in words and pictures, and promote itself in ways that reach and favorably influence its target markets.

There are two key initiatives to address the invisibility of Richland County and its communities:

- Improving the county and communities images – Richland County and their communities’ online materials are dated and do not represent the county as a vibrant place to live and work. This results in quickly losing people that see the county online, and those who do pursue information find information difficult to obtain and not worth the effort. The county has many attributes that are well worth promoting, but the formats, images and words that Richland County uses does not favorably represent the county. By updating those materials and tools, the county will be better able to compete for workforce that would consider relocating.
- New resident attraction campaigns – The second initiative kicks off once Richland County materials, both digital and print items, are updated. The county can then proceed to reach out to targeted populations to draw them into the community in two phases:
  1. Attracting workforce from other counties
  2. Target market to categories of people

## Initiative 1 – County and Communities Image Improvement

By having Richland County and its communities proactively update and improve its image, Richland County employers will be able to more easily promote the region as a good place to work and to live. This will be important to its current employers and to employers that would consider moving to the area. By increasing the number of people and families that live in the area, Richland County will be able to recruit additional resources, such as grocery stores, that need minimum traffic counts to justify building or buying in the area. The Improving the Image section is divided into two parts, “What We Say” and “Where We Say It”.

### What We Say: Recommendations and Examples

#### Messages

Develop communications materials to promote the region by developing a value proposition for the county that identifies who we are looking to attract (workforce), why they should move here (good jobs, good schools, etc.), and the cost of living in the county (cost of living comparisons). This can be built to echo and support some of the great tourism messaging that has been leader in outreach to new and returning visitors. Some examples of this messaging could include:

- Give your family a simpler way of life
- Your American Dream is in Richland County, Wisconsin
- Highlight cost of living comparisons to other areas
- Showcase the area’s affordable luxuries:
  - free time,
  - low cost of living,
  - Low wear and tear on cars,
  - A chance to be mayor, or an artist, etc.
- Create compelling stories that capture the region
  - Current Heroes – recent returnees, entrepreneurs
  - Foremothers and fathers

## Taglines

Taglines are a quick synopsis of what Richland County means. It is memorable, brief, unique, and is an accurate representation of what visitors and future homeowners can expect. Taglines could be developed by a local team of interested volunteers led by a facilitator. These taglines could become the underlying theme for the region's promotional campaigns. Below are some examples:

- Your Affordable American Dream
- Big adventures and small towns
- Like Colorado, but with cheese
- Cheaper than Colorado
- Tap into the Good Life
- Heavenly Hills
- Come to Madison's Brooklyn
- Beyond Just Beer and Cheese
- Adrift in the Driftless
- See you in Ocooch
- Dramatically Driftless
- Go where the Glaciers Missed
- More sky, more trails, more fresh air
- Big adventures and small towns
- Live life on Vacation
- Wisconsin's Land of Milk and Honey
- Have more life in Richland County
- Low cost of living, High ROI
- Goin' Ocooch
- Live Richer
- Live where others vacation
- Greater than the Glaciers
- Livin' Big in Small Town
- Big Life in Small Towns

## Logos

Develop a family of logos for the county and municipalities. There should be overarching themes, but each logo should distinctly reflect the local community and be unique to the region. Uniting a city and even a whole county under a common theme will provide a sense of cohesiveness while still allowing for unique attributes. Getting large groups of people to come to consensus is the most difficult aspect. Not everyone will agree, even at the end of the process.

The example of the Logo redesign that took place in 2020 in Platteville is a good example of a theme unique to each entity. A similar approach could be applied to Richland County as a whole, with each community having its own spin on the central theme.

Logos, while important, should not become a lifelong quest. Create something clear, easy to reproduce, uniquely representative of the region, and move on. Logos can be phased in if needed over time so not every business card needs to be replaced immediately. A complete rollout all at once is preferred and can be quite impressive if it is financially feasible.

*Figure 1: The Platteville Family of Logos (Source: City of Platteville)*





## Stories

Richland County hosts historic and current heroes that have interesting businesses, far reaching abilities, admirable lives. Telling their stories in social media and other online sources provides the color commentary that could attract the next generation back to the region and encourage others to consider Richland County as their next home. Great stories will showcase Richland County at its best and help pave the way for the next generation of prosperity and possibility.

## Photos

High quality, in focus, well composed photography tells the story without words. Photos will capture the imagination and draw people in, helping the viewer imagine themselves in the setting by capturing:

- Great houses
- Outdoor activity
- Fun community events
- Good jobs
- Young families
- Unique amenities not widely available such as the drive in and roller rink

These images can be used across advertising, websites, press releases, and brochures. Having a picture of a child winning their first blue ribbon conveys a wide array of positive attributes about Richland County without writing a word.

## **Where We Say it: Recommendations and Examples**

### Website

Creating a quality website and keeping it fresh with new content will improve interaction with viewers and keep the search engine ranking high. Recent examples of refreshed county websites include <https://www.lafayettecountywi.org/>. Website content intended to draw in new residents should include the following. This is not an exhaustive list, but more of an example of where to expand from current sites:

- Lifestyle and livability aspects
  - Housing information
    - Searchable listings for housing to buy or rent, vacant land, apartments
    - Contact information for real estate agents, builders, permitting and utility authorities
  - Schools
  - Business Property/Rentals/Land
  - Financing Partners – Banks, Credit Unions, RLFs, etc.
  - Community organizations
  - Activities (indoor and outdoor, arts and culture, etc.)
  - Services and Local Information such as healthcare and transportation
- Business assistance including vacant land, development incentives, and permitting information
- Local government information such as public meetings, utility payment information, services and staff contacts

### Signage

Establishing an identity through words and pictures often becomes most apparent on signs and wayfinding tools. One of the many ways to help build the Richland County brand would be to overhaul the many signs and logos in the area and come under one theme. Signs are expensive to replace, but consistency where possible will build interest and excitement for visitors, new residents, and existing residents. Clear directions to downtown and to other amenities will improve local business profits, increase spending by visitors, and drive added investment into the community.

### Promotional Items

Create materials that make new residents feel part of the local scene. Some can be Richland County-branded, town-branded materials or area items such as school hats or local business giveaways. These can be as simple as a bumper sticker, yard sign or collection of local menus that could go into a welcome basket for new residents.

## Content

Content can be housed on the website and printed for offline use as well. They can be the highlights of the region, tours that focus on special interests, or activities based on interests, age or people with pets. Some examples are:

- Must see places in Richland County, including restaurants, historic sites, natural features, and events
- UTV Tours and Activities
- Motorcycle rides
- Culinary Tour
- Wine, Beer, and Cheese Tours
- Mountain Biking and other bike routes
- Pet friendly activities

## Social Media and Traditional Media

Determine the best social media platforms to reach the intended audiences. Message format as well as frequency varies by platform and changes frequently. Some of the most popular platforms to consider include:

- Instagram – target market for young people, image-driven, geo-located marketing
- TikTok - videos
- Pinterest – crafts, local ideas
- Twitter – news, events, sales
- YouTube Content and Ads – advertising, tourism
- Google Ads – target marketing
- Facebook – advertising, community organizing of events, information sharing
- Traditional media – billboards, news outlets and magazines

The content for these outlets could include some of the stories gathered from the region, events and activities taking place. Ad concepts could include clever, place-based juxtapositions of urban live versus Richland life such as:

- Cook County (Chicago) – “The Kennedy vs. The Kayak” *Image:* juxtapose the ever present traffic jam on I90, aka “The Kennedy” to friends in kayaks in an unjammed river
- “Richland County Wisconsin – Like Colorado but with Cheese” *Image:* Pikes Peak made out of cheese
- “Our Rockies” *Image:* old fashioned on the rocks or outcropping photo – Rock Bridge
- “New fashioned fun” *Image:* young family at drive-in
- “Proud to be a flyover county” *Image:* trout fly fisherman in mid cast
- “The real stars” *Image:* juxtapose Lady Gaga vs. a group of star gazing campers

## Events

Events can boost local morale, draw in neighboring counties in, and be promoted to draw in more far reaching neighbors. Examples include:

- To help balance the lack of diversity and misconceptions that may exist about diverse people, host Cultural Events that celebrate many cultures. This could be a series focusing on one group each time, or be clustered by category, for example:
  - International Food Fest showcasing a range of food to sample: Asian, Hispanic, Irish, Jewish, etc. There could also be a movie night, dance night, or traditions exploration. This could be just cultures or cultures/religions.
  - Events could include international movies, dress, food, dance and other elements.
- “The Great Glacier Hunt” (since there were no glaciers here) The event could be a summer long event including:
  - Artist painted glacier forms across the county
  - Hunting the perfect ice cube
  - Ice sculpting
  - Geography/geology and other educational elements
- Multi-day kayak trips on the Pine River
- Guinness World Record breakers



By proactively updating and improving its image, employers will be able to more easily promote the region as a good place to work and to live. Having suitable promotional materials and event listings can be used during one-on-one recruiting and at job fairs. Having fresh, modern and diverse materials showcasing the region will be important to current employers and to employers that would consider moving to the area.

## Initiative 2 – Attracting New Residents Campaigns

Once Richland County has improved how they represent their communities by improving their image as outlined above, they will have a better story to tell and can begin to attract new residents. This can be done by reaching out to people in targeted other counties that Richland County compares favorably to and by reaching out to specific categories of people. Both of these tactics are outlined below and should be used in conjunction with marketing the natural beauty and recreational amenities of the county.

### Project A: Attracting Workforce from Targeted Counties

Target audiences were identified in key metropolitan areas within a 400-mile range that have potential new residents for Richland County. These counties were chosen due to their large manufacturing base, higher unemployment, relative affordability, safety issues, and similar climate. The research study included:

- Dane County, Wisconsin (Madison area)
- Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
- Brown County, Wisconsin (Green Bay area)
- Dubuque County, Iowa
- Winnebago County, Illinois (Rockford area)
- Cook County, Illinois (Chicago area)
- Hennepin County, Minnesota (Minneapolis area)
- City of St. Louis, Missouri
- St. Louis County, Missouri (St. Louis suburbs)

Key factors were identified that are important to residents' quality of life, such as ability to afford a decent place to live, how much it costs to live there, how many jobs are available, how safe the area is, and school quality. Some of the targeted cities listed above turned out to be prime targets because Richland County would provide a definitive improvement in quality of life. Baseline data for Richland County, Wisconsin, and the United States is found in Table 7 below. An analysis of each quality-of-life indicator relative to Richland County follows below.

**Table 7: Richland County, Wisconsin, and the United States baseline data (Source: US Census)**

| Point of Comparison              | Richland County, Wi | United States | Wisconsin |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Cost of Living                   | 101.1               | 100.0         | 100.0     |
| Unemployment Rate (October 2020) | 3.5%                | 6.6%          | 4.9%      |
| Median Household Income (2018)   | \$51,355            | \$60,293      | \$58,209  |
| Median Home Value (2018)         | \$136,800           | \$204,900     | \$173,600 |
| Rental Vacancy Rate (2018)       | 7.7%                | 6.0%          | 4.9%      |
| Monthly Median Rent (2018)       | \$628               | \$1,023       | \$837     |
| Violent Crimes per 1,000 People  | 0.93                | 3.53          | 2.84      |
| Property Crimes per 1,000 People | 4.64                | 19.79         | 14.19     |
| Housing Affordability            | 2.66                | 3.40          | 2.93      |

**Housing Affordability** An affordable house is defined as one that costs no more than 2.5 times the household income. Using Census data on Median Household data and Median Home Value, we identified whether housing costs are greater or lesser than those in Richland County, proportional to household income. The larger the number, the less affordable the median valued home compared to median household income. For example, it costs 2.66 times the median household income to buy a home valued at the median home value. This makes homes in Richland County more affordable than Dubuque, and Cook counties, but less affordable than in Winnebago counties.

Richland County's median house affordability is 2.66 which compares favorably to all sampled markets except Winnebago at 2.22 and it is nearly even with Dubuque County at 2.62. By comparison, Cook County is at 3.82 and the average across all counties is 3.04.

- Target markets: Dubuque and Cook Counties
- Message: You can afford a better life Richland County

**Cost of Living** This compares the expenses an average person can expect to incur to acquire food, shelter, transportation, energy, clothing, education, healthcare, childcare, and entertainment in different regions. The higher the number the more expensive it is to live there. These indexes are calculated by the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Richland County's cost of living index at 101.1 beats out the higher priced counties to live in such as Milwaukee, Dane, Suburban St. Louis, Cook County, and Hennepin County

- Target markets: Milwaukee County, Dane County, and Cook County
- Message: Make your money go farther, live better, and invest wisely in your life.

**Median Household Income** An indicator of earning ability for county residents.

Richland County's median household income is \$51,335, lower than all counties except Milwaukee and St. Louis.

- Target markets: Milwaukee County, City of St. Louis
- Message: Come earn what you're worth!

**Unemployment Rate** The number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labor force.

Richland County's unemployment rate of 3.5% is the lowest in all counties in the research group, with Milwaukee at 7.6%, City of St. Louis at 6.1%, Winnebago at 6.6%, and Cook at 8.6% being the four highest.

- Target markets: Everywhere
- Message: Find a great job and life for you in Richland County.

**Safety** The research included comparisons of violent crimes and property crimes per 1000 residents.

Violent Crimes – Richland County rates .93 as the least violent crimes in the comparison group, with the City of St. Louis the most violent at 19.22 and Dubuque County at 1.31. The average across all counties was 5.55.

Property Crimes – Richland County was ranked at 4.64, again the lowest in the comparison group, the next closest was Dubuque County at 11.22 and the City of St Louis was the highest at 62.03. The average for the counties was 23.45.

- Target markets: City of St. Louis, Milwaukee County
- Message: Safe communities and better lives.

**Schools** Analysis compared District Report Cards, Student Teacher Ratios, and Expenditure by Student.

Richland County schools had District Report Card Scores of 70.4 (Meets Expectations) and 73 (Exceeds Expectations), respectively. This was better than the combined total of the two Milwaukee School District ranked at 65 (Meets Expectations) and the 66.9 (Meets Expectations) ranking for the Green Bay School district. When the districts of River Valley, Riverdale, Hillsboro, Kickapoo Area, Boscobel, North Crawford, and La Farge are included, the overall county scores and ratios remain strong at 70.23 (Meets Expectations), so no matter where new families choose to reside, there are better school options than in Milwaukee and Green Bay.

The Richland County school’s student-to-teacher ratio was the best in the comparison pool. Richland’s 12.6 ratio and Ithaca’s 11.68 ratio were most favorable compared to a high of 16.94 in Winnebago County and 16.48 in Cook County. The expenditure per student was \$2,564 compared to \$1,852 in Winnebago County and Cook County at \$1,954.

- Target market - Instate: Milwaukee and Green Bay Counties
- Target market - Out of state: Winnebago and Cook Counties
- Message: We invest in your kid’s education. We have the money and the teachers to help your student succeed.

### Prime Target Counties

Richland County has the ability to attract residents from several communities and should directly tie the deficits in those communities to the comparative strengths of Richland County. Summarizing the data from above, Table 8 shows the prime targets for recruiting new potential residents.

**Table 8: Richland County Compared to other Midwest Counties Summary**

| Target Market     | Housing Affordability | Cost of Living Index | Median Household Income | Unemployment Rate | Median Home Value | Safety | Schools |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------|---------|
| Richland County   |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |
| Milwaukee County  |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |
| City of St. Louis |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |
| St. Louis County  |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |
| Winnebago County  |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |
| Cook County       |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |
| Brown County      |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |
| Dubuque County    |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |
| Hennepin County   |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |
| Dane County       |                       |                      |                         |                   |                   |        |         |

### LEGEND

- **Prime Message Topic** – **Green** is much worse than Richland County and *best* target marketing point
- **Possible Message Topic** – **Light Green** is worse than Richland County and is a *potential* target marketing point
- **Not a Target** – **Yellow** is closest to Richland County’s score and so *not a competitive* target marketing point
- **Not a Target** – **Red** is better than Richland County so *no demonstrable marketing benefit*

### Top Targeted Counties and Key Messages

Using the data above, several of the researched counties have key deficiencies that Richland County can take advantage of. Those cities and exploitable weaknesses are listed below with the key messages that will have the greatest impact:

#### Cook County: Move to Richland County because we offer:

- Affordable houses
- Better cost of living
- Jobs
- Safe Community
- Good Schools

#### Milwaukee County: Move to Richland County because we offer:

- Good jobs available
- Good schools
- Affordable houses

### **Hennepin County: Move to Richland County because we offer:**

- Better cost of living
- Affordable houses
- Safe

### **St. Louis City: Move to Richland County because we offer:**

- Good jobs available
- Safe

### **Recommended Communication Outlets**

Reaching this audience will require special effort to connect with populations that are not familiar with Richland County and they need to be connected to and convinced of the value and quality of life that Richland County offers. Story pitching will be the most valuable, but also likely the most expensive and longest lead time. Advertising is more immediate and controllable.

- Advertising
  - Google Ads
  - Facebook Ads
  - Billboards
  - Special interest websites and publications (hunting and fishing for example)
- Story Pitching to target area local and special interest publications
- Social Media

## **Project B: Target Market to Categories of People**

In addition to reaching people in targeted cities, this second campaign will be able to reach out to specific categories of people as shown below. This campaign will use many of the materials created in the County and Communities Image Improvement Initiative Campaign. Some audiences will be easier to reach and influence and some may be perceived as more desirable than others, but all should be reviewed as we exhaust all options to increase workforce population.

Potential categories of people to attract include:

- **Boomerangs.** These are people that were born in the region or grew up here. They may or may not still have ties here. These could be young families that want to give their children the same carefree lifestyle that they enjoyed as a child. The campaign could use local family and other connections to this group as part of the outreach. It could take the form of a postcard “Your home awaits” campaign, or events that could draw them back in to sample how Richland County has reinvested in its amenities, while still offering that cherished feeling of home.
- **Alumni lists.** Reaching out through the local schools to alumni in the 27 to 45-year-old bracket through reunions, special pricing on housing or land, or other incentives could draw this familiar crowd back home. When Alumni or Boomerangs to move back to Richland County, they will naturally bring new ideas and new ways of working that will help Richland County to continue to evolve.
- **Tourists.** Once Richland County attracts visitors to the region, they generate the ability to market to retain them to live here. By intertwining tourism with workforce attraction, Richland County will be able give future residents a preview of their life in the county while enhancing the vibrancy of activities in the region through increased tourism. By having a consistent message across workforce attraction and tourism, Richland County will be able to stretch its dollar and appear as a cohesive, well-organized, and fun place to spend a life.
- **Disenchanted Urbanites.** With the expansion of work from home opportunities and improvement of broadband access, there is the opportunity for those living in the city to keep their city job while living in rural luxury. The choice to afford a yard or a hobby farm may be a dream come true for some.
- **Underemployed.** This can tie back to the targeted cities where research found high unemployment rates, or can be used in other areas. A chance to get a good job in a safe place and have a home you can afford may be appealing enough to some people that they would make the leap to try Richland County. Extra effort would

be needed to ensure they get tied into groups of their interest, are heartily welcomed included in order to retain newcomers, and to encourage them to recruit their friends.

- **Second Chance Prison Population.** Nonviolent offenders need a chance to get restarted. Some are getting trained on new workforce skills while incarcerated and could make strong candidates. Special support, potentially sponsor families, may be required to ensure a successful restart in the community.
- **Church-to-Church Outreach.** Churches serve as a cornerstone for many families and outreach to churches in the cities outlined above could be a rich resource of new families. By connecting future residents to welcoming local churches, they would be able to pre-arrange job interviews and find sponsor families or other suitable housing opportunities, thus lessening the hurdles facing those who want to move. By tapping directly into other church communities, local churches could demonstrate the better quality of life for these families and provide an instant social network to ensure that they will stay in the area. Moving two or three families from a church or neighborhood at a time would reinforce an immediate network and sense of community for these transplanted workers. Working with the churches in the other cities, who may not be anxious to diminish their church populations, could be persuaded to support the move if the move is to benefit the families with better income, better housing, better healthcare, and better schools.

### **Key Messages and Communication Outlets**

Messages will vary based on the audience and will be nuanced to meet the interests and priorities of that specific audience. Messages will all be truthful and not contradictory, just fine-tuned to focus on the facets of greatest interest.

#### Boomerangs and Alumni Lists

##### *What We Say - Key Messages*

- Come home to the new Boaz/Yuba/Lone Rock
- Remember the good times
- Check out the new amenities

##### *Where We Say It - Project Components*

- Social Media
  - Instagram
  - TikTok
  - Twitter
  - Pinterest
  - YouTube
  - Facebook
- Email
- Snail Mail

#### Tourists

##### *What We Say - Key Messages*

- Why just visit when you can live here?
- Come for the cheese, stay for the rest of your life
- Your forever Spotted Cow awaits.
- Spotted Cow (and 999 great beers) on Tap

##### *Where We Say It - Project Components*

- Social Media
  - Instagram
  - TikTok
  - Twitter
  - Pinterest
  - YouTube
  - Facebook

- Google Advertising
- Email
- Snail Mail

### Disenchanted Urbanites

#### *What We Say - Key Messages*

- Your American Dream awaits
- Be the big fish in the small pond
- Are you a future farmer?
- Come to where we still have stars

#### *Where We Say It - Project Components*

- Social Media
  - Instagram
  - TikTok
  - Twitter
  - Pinterest
  - YouTube
  - Facebook
- Google Advertising

### Underemployed

#### *What We Say - Key Messages*

- Your American Dream awaits
- Good jobs and a good life
- You are welcome in Richland County, Wisconsin

#### *Where We Say It - Project Components*

- Social Media
  - Instagram
  - TikTok
  - Twitter
  - Pinterest
  - YouTube
  - Facebook
- Google Advertising

### Second Chance Prison Population

#### *What We Say - Key Messages*

- Richland County has good jobs for you
- Good work without incurring student debt
- A fresh start awaits

#### *Where We Say It - Project Components*

- Social Media
  - Instagram
  - TikTok
  - Twitter
  - Pinterest
  - YouTube
  - Facebook
- Google Advertising

## Church-to-Church Outreach

### *What We Say - Key Messages*

- Come to God's County
- Almost Heaven – Richland County

### *Where We Say It - Project Components*

- Email
- Snail Mail
- Social Media
  - YouTube
  - Facebook

## SMART Goals and Implementation Plan

Priority work should be measured through the establishment of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) goals. Below are SMART goals and a detailed implementation plan for the three major workforce projects outlined in this plan:

1. Initiative 1 - County and Communities Image Improvement
2. Initiative 2 - Workforce Attraction Campaigns
  - a. Project A: Attracting Workforce from Other Cities
  - b. Project B: Target Market to Categories of People
3. On-going Maintenance and Continuity of this Work

**Table 9 – SMART Goals Guidance Chart**

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <i>Specific</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What do you want to achieve?</i></li><li>• <i>Who needs to be involved to accomplish this goal?</i></li><li>• <i>When do you want to have your goal finished?</i></li><li>• <i>Why should you achieve this goal exactly?</i></li></ul> |
| <i>Measurable</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>How can you measure progress and know if you've successfully met your goal?</i></li></ul>  |
| <i>Achievable</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Are you capable of achieving the goal?</i></li><li>• <i>Do you have the needed skills?</i></li><li>• <i>If you haven't, how can you build them?</i></li></ul>  |
| <i>Relevant</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Why should you achieve this goal?</i></li><li>• <i>What is the impact?</i></li></ul>   |
| <i>Timely</i>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What is the due date of your goal?</i></li><li>• <i>Can the goal be achieved until this date?</i></li></ul>  |

## Initiative 1: County and Communities Image Improvement

### Goals

- Goal 1: Form a multi-entity marketing team to advise on workforce attraction efforts.
  - Measuring progress – Defining, inviting and on-boarding partners will be the measure of progress. As the project develops, formal agreements could be established, however this isn't necessary during the initial discussion and planning stages.

- Potential barriers to achievement – Past relationships, other commitments, lack of vision, etc. Usual barriers to partnership in the region which must be overcome with trust developed through action grounded in relationships.
- Relevant impact – Coordination and input will generate local buy-in from other public entities and the private sector. This is required to ensure on-going funding support and leverage existing resources.
- Target completion date – December 31, 2021
- Goal 2: Finalize messages, taglines, logos, and photo database for use in workforce attraction effort.
  - Measuring progress – Progress measured through the creation of the items listed above. On-going progress will be reflected in refinement and creation of additional materials.
  - Potential barriers to achievement – Over-analysis stalling further progress, or delays due to participants stumbling on finalizing messaging. Potentially some push-back to partnerships.
  - Relevant impact – Content and brand materials ready to deploy on a variety of public, private, and non-governmental marketing materials. Shared creation results in reduced individual time and resources to create media.
  - Target completion date – June 30, 2022
- Goal 3: Finalize and install wayfinding signage as guides to points of interest and amenities.
  - Measuring progress – Finalization of design, siting locations, and installation.
  - Potential barriers to achievement – Potentially funding. Otherwise, assets are clearly defined and local comprehensive planning efforts have sited locations for wayfinding signage.
  - Relevant impact – Tourists and newcomers have immediate guides to event locations, recreation sites, and other key amenities.
  - Target completion date – June 30, 2022
- Goal 4: Finalize social media sites to be used and create an initial footprint on each.
  - Measuring progress – Finalization of social media sites and identification of social media manager.
  - Potential barriers to achievement – Reducing choices to a manageable few that are most impactful across a variety of target audiences.
  - Relevant impact – Real-time, modern communication with target audiences that incorporates data analytics to feedback information on “Likes,” “shares,” and other metrics.
  - Target completion date – June 30, 2022
- Goal 5: Create new websites that serve employers, new residents, tourists, and local government.
  - Measuring progress – Creation of wireframes, content, prototypes, and final website.
  - Potential barriers to achievement – Incorporating all desired amenities and securing funding. Maintenance may also be a barrier.
  - Relevant impact – Richland County will have a new face to the outside world, dramatically and immediately improving its impact.
  - Target completion date – December 31, 2022

## Implementation Plan

| Month   | Activity   | Responsibility and Notes   |
|---------|--|--|
| Month 1 | Build Team – Steering Committee, Leader  | Community and County Leaders, Government Representatives                             |
|         | Gather creative minds and local for brainstorming messaging, taglines, logos, stories, content | Leader   |
|         | Analyze input and present options to the community   | Leader/ via news outlets and social media. Anticipate and address negative feedback. |
|         | Review results and report top contenders Finalize initial messaging, logo concept, and tagline | Leader, Steering Committee, Creative Minds   |
|         | Define social media platforms and partners   | Leader and Team  |



|                  |   |  |
|------------------|---|--|
|                  | Create social media contests and other community engagement tactics to build energy, excitement, and consensus around the new options. Post on a weekly or biweekly basis on owned sites and repost on other applicable sites. Establish online calendar of tools and messages to ensure ongoing effective communication            | Leader and Team  |
| Month 2          | Create logo options, color palate, preferred fonts  | Leader/Graphic Designer  |
|                  | Review options and finalize selection. Get consensus and commitment to support these choices  | Leader/ Steering Committee/ Government Representatives/ Community. Expect naysayers. |
|                  | Layout logo on stationery, signage, uniforms, and other material  |  |
| Months 2-onwards | Continue Social Media outreach  | Leader and team  |
| Months 2-5       | Coordinate website development with participating parties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gather participant organizations</li> <li>● Define needs</li> <li>● Build wireframe</li> <li>● Solicit Designers</li> <li>● Select Designer</li> <li>● Outline content needed</li> <li>● Upload and test, test, test</li> </ul> | Leader/City/County/Tourism/Economic Development and others as needed                 |
| Month 3          | Write content for website and other outlets   | Leader and Team  |
|                  | Gather and take new photography   | Photographer   |
|                  | Write story ideas for future posts  | Leader   |
|                  | Produce items with new logo   | Leader   |
| Month 4          | Define, design, source, and create promo materials if budgeted, create signage and support materials  | Leader and Team  |
|                  | Work with partners on existing event schedule to tag onto/or create new events  | Leader and Team  |
| Month 5          | Debut Websites, Logo(s), Signage  |  |

## Budget

|   |  |
|---|--|
| "What We Say" - Key messages, Tagline, Logo concept | Group facilitation, research, meetings, and recommendations.<br><br>36 hours estimated: \$1,600  |
| Logo Design, color palate                           | \$3,000  |
| Website Design                                      | Depends of the sophistication, page count, and function of the site.<br>Informational only, no shopping or bill paying: \$5,000 and up<br>Tied to city or county systems, level of security: \$25,000 and up |
| Story development                                   | 5 hours estimated: \$350   |
| Website Content Development                         | Also tied to page length and review cycles.<br>\$140/page  |
| Print Materials                                     | 2 side 8.5x11 flyer, writing and design included, not printed<br>\$500   |
| Photography   | \$75/hour  |
| Promotional Items (If any)                          | Depends on the item and the quantity   |
| Signs   | Size and material. From \$200 to \$10,000 without electronic display   |
| Social Media Campaign                               | Anticipate 20 hours a month for up to 3 outlets: \$1,400/month   |
| Events  | Varies by scope  |

## Initiative 2 - Workforce Attraction Campaigns

### Goals

- Goal 1: Finalize messaging to target populations and cities, including relevant lifestyle improvement messaging.
  - Measuring progress – Iterative progress measured through completion of messaging and confirmation of target audiences and cities.
  - Potential barriers to achievement – Finalizing messaging. Time and resource commitments.
  - Relevant impact – Targeted resource use for workforce attraction.
  - Target completion date – September 30, 2021
- Goal 2: Test messages in target markets to determine what works, and make improvements as needed.
  - Measuring progress – Tests sent, analytics received and analyzed. Revisions made
  - Potential barriers to achievement – None foreseen
  - Relevant impact – Improvement and testing of potential program. Bugs worked out.
  - Target completion date – February 28, 2023
- Goal 3: Coordinate County and employer workforce to create a coordinated message and gain feedback from related to these efforts.
  - Measuring progress – Progress measured in the number of employers on-board
  - Potential barriers to achievement – Employer time commitments
  - Relevant impact – Public/private partnership for coordinated effort
  - Target completion date – April 30, 2023
- Goal 4: Establish a target number of touches, views, and opens and work to determine how to tie these to visitors or workforce impacts.
  - Measuring progress
  - Potential barriers to achievement
  - Relevant impact
  - Target completion date – June 30, 2023

### Implementation Plan

After the County and Communities Improvement Initiative is near completion these projects can launch. These two projects can run in sequence or simultaneously.

#### Project A: Attracting Workforce from Targeted Counties

| Month      | Activity  | Responsibility and Notes                                     |
|------------|---|--|
| Month 6    | Set budgets   | Leader and Steering Committee/<br>Government representatives |
|            | Develop ad concepts and story pitches   | Leader   |
|            | Gather input and present options to the steering committee/<br>decision makers. Refine as needed and gain consensus | Leader/ Steering Committee                                   |
| Month 7-8  | Investigate ad pricing and make recommendations   | Leader   |
|            | Engage Designer for any graphic design  | Leader/Graphic Designer                                      |
|            | Create targeted publication and website list  | Leader   |
|            | Develop Social media messaging and calendar   | Leader   |
|            | Begin story pitching. social media, and advertising campaigns   | Leader   |
| Month 9-18 | Continue in all efforts, monitoring, and refining as needed   | Leader/Graphic Designer                                      |

**Project B: Target Market to Categories of People**

| Month                 | Activity   | Responsibility and Notes                                     |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Month 6               | Establish who is doing the work and set budgets  | Leader and Steering Committee/<br>Government representatives |
|                       | Determine first two campaigns to launch  | Leader/Steering Committee                                    |
|                       | Finalize “Where We Say It” tools to be used  | Leader   |
| Month 6:<br>Weeks 2-4 | Draft social media outlets timing and “What We Say” messaging calendar   | Leader   |
|                       | Gather input and present options to the steering committee/<br>decision makers. Refine as needed and gain consensus. | Leader/ Steering Committee                                   |
| Month 7               | Launch social media campaign   | Leader   |
|                       | Recruit promotion partners such as parents for boomerangs and<br>pastors for church-to-church outreach               | Leader/Steering Committee                                    |
|                       | Determine if printed snail mail or other materials are needed  | Leader   |
|                       | Engage Designer for any graphic design   | Leader/Steering Committee                                    |
|                       | Create concept for print materials   | Leader   |
|                       | Work Designer on print materials   | Leader/Designer  |
|                       | Track Google Analytics for social media and advertising  | Leader   |
| Month 8               | Work with Promotion Partners on contact lists, messaging and<br>rollout plans  | Leader/Steering<br>Committee/Promotion Partners              |
|                       | Launch Print Campaigns   | Leader   |
| Month 9-18            | Continue in all efforts, monitoring and refining as needed.  | Leader/Graphic Designer                                      |

**Budget****Project A: Attracting Workforce from Targeted Counties**

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Message Development and Refinement | Group facilitation, research, meetings, and recommendations.<br>4 markets, 20 hours each, 80 hours total: \$5,600 |
| Advertising Copy                   | \$3,000   |
| Advertising Print Design           | \$1,500 for 4 ads   |
| Media Relations                    | 10 hours month/ per market, 40 hours total: \$2,800   |
| Social Media Campaign              | Anticipate 20 hours a month for up to 3 outlets: \$1,400/month  |
| Ad campaign management and report  | 10 hours a month, depends on number of outlets: \$700   |

**Project B: Target Market to Categories of People**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Message Development and Refinement                                 | Group facilitation, research, meetings, and recommendations: \$1,400 |
| Advertising Copy   | \$3,000  |
| Print Design   | Varies based on graphic designer                                     |
| Snail Mail/Email   | Creative concept, copywriting, and management: \$2,100               |
| Social Media Campaign  | Anticipate 20 hours a month for up to 3 outlets: \$1,400/month       |
| Google Ads and Facebook boost Ad<br>campaign management and report | 10 hours a month, depends on number of outlets: \$700                |

# Keys to Success

## Finding Initial and Sustaining Funding

All this work takes time and money. But frugal, thoughtful investment can reap great rewards. Consider the success at Candlewood Cabins, they started small, had a strong commitment to brand and quality and are now in high demand. Making the long term commitment to marketing, sustained by city, county and or private support, will ensure that materials are kept fresh, emerging trends and tools are taken into consideration, and that the county is able to ride out both the troughs and the waves in the future.

Securing at least a two-year commitment of funding and staffing or contracting would ensure that the groundwork can be accomplished, the attraction work activated, and review of all the programs be conducted. Ongoing reinvestment in marketing the County and its towns and cities will ensure that the population and building booms that have taken place in the nearby counties are able to take place in Richland County. The first step is getting noticed, favorably impressing outsiders, and then winning them over to want to spend time, money, and maybe make Richland County their home.

## Recruiting/Hiring Leaders

Outside talent or in-house expertise will be needed to develop and successfully manage these initiatives. While well-intentioned, we have seen that the results of past development of marketing materials has contributed to disjointed images and materials as well as key information sources such as websites not being kept up to date. This is not for lack of trying and good intentions, but a coordinated, cohesive approach will be able to present the region in a much more positive light that will serve to attract workforce and provide lasting value to residents.

## Coordinating Efforts with other Regional Organizations

By having a central point of contact for marketing Richland County, the county will be in a better position to ensure of being in sync with other area efforts within the county and in the surrounding counties. This ability to amplify and cross promote will allow Richland County to expand its marketing footprint, create needed interest, and dovetail with other area events and initiatives.

## Ongoing Maintenance and Continuity of this Work

Content does not fall magically from the sky. Someone must have the role to monitor, capture images, create words, gain approval, distribute, and promote fresh content to keep search engines and people engaged. Consider the success seen with Richland Center Tourism to keep its content seasonal, upbeat and varied. This is a huge driver in getting the positive impact that is possible with the right effort.

Long term marketing management should be thoughtfully considered when doing longer range planning. Marketing must be a budgeted line item to ensure both appropriate funding and time is allotted. There can be some time savings when re-sharing content and working in collaboration with other organizations, but even moving preset content from a press release to a social media post to a Google Ad campaign needs reworked and then managed to ensure success.

## Summary

Richland County has many admirable attributes and effectively promoting the offerings of the County will help outsiders discover the affordable American Dream in Richland County. The prep work of showcasing Richland County both online and in-person will be required as the base work prior to launching targeted attraction campaigns.

A collaboration between Richland Economic Development, Tourism, townships, villages, city, county, and the local employers will be critical to launching and maintaining a successful and cohesive marketing program.

If allotted the proper time and the resources, Richland will be able to showcase what it has to offer and reap the benefits of a robust local economy by having successful employers that have ample access to capable local workers. The side benefits will include having sought after regional amenities, well-funded schools, good housing, and sufficient tax base for lasting success.