

## Project Statement for East Central Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission

Progressively, the perceived quality of place, determines where talent, capital, travel and tourism coalesce.

The assets that attract talent to live in an area are the same assets that attract people to travel to and visit that area. Assets such as walkability, parks, opportunities for people to gather, welcoming, diverse and inclusive, variety of restaurants and arts, and culture. Quality assets provide for economic, social and cultural exchange among people, businesses, institutions, and influences where people want to live, visit and invest.

Covid-19 has had devastating impacts on the economy and particularly the travel and tourism industry globally, regionally and locally.

Appleton and the surrounding communities, known as the Fox Valley have seen sharp declines in the hotel room occupancy, revenue and hotel room tax.

Beginning in March with the on-set of Covid-19 hotel occupancy fell 42.6%. In 2019, the average hotel room occupancy was 59.5%. Year to date, we are at 34%.

Hotel occupancy was 68.7% in April, 65.1% in May, 53.7% in June and 46.9% in July.

Room Revenue correspondingly has declined. March 40.5%, April 77.4%, May 74.3%, June 66.6% and July 71.3%.

Hotel room tax for first quarter compared with 2019 was down 8.7% and second quarter was down 76.2%.

Cancelled events such as EAA, Mile of Music, Appleton Farm Market, Broadway Shows at the Performing Arts Center, Art in the Park, NFL games, conventions, sporting events and many more, will continue to negatively impact the travel and tourism industry until Covid-19 is under control to a degree that allows large gatherings and celebrations.

Year to date, it is estimated between conventions, sports and events, we have lost 28,709 room nights and \$8.5 million in visitor spending.

Unemployment is at 8.6% up from 3.6% in 2019.

A Tourism Master Plan will give us a competitive position and assist our community in recovering from the economic injury of Covid-19 by giving us a roadmap to recovery thru resiliency.

The Tourism Master Plan will create a foundation to guide the planning, product development, programming, policy and promotion of the Fox Cities tourism industry by balancing our economic vision, tourism assets, stakeholder interests and visitor demands.

Elements of the Tourism Master Plan include:

Stakeholder and Market Analysis

Consumer Research

Destination Assessment

Stakeholder Engagement  
Situational Analysis  
Visioning Workshops and Community Survey

This inclusive approach to the Tourism Master Plan will take approximately 1 year and the estimated cost will be \$200,000.

The EDA Grant requires a 20% match. The match of \$40,000 will come from the Fox Cities Convention and Visitor Bureau, City of Appleton and potentially other stakeholders.