



“Hey Todd, why do we need another \_\_\_\_\_?”

It is pretty exciting to see some new businesses popping up here and there around the Village. Certainly this is representative of a strong economy, desirable location, and growing community.

As the Village’s Administrator and Economic Development Director, I spend a lot of time working to help our current businesses succeed while also encouraging and assisting new potential business to get started and grow. But, I am very careful to avoid attracting a user into our local economy when the market might not be ready for it. To coin an old adage, economic development tends to fail when attempts are made to fit a square peg into a round hole. That generally never works and leads quickly to shuttered windows in commercial buildings.

What I am getting at, to be specific, is that I have heard some local chatter about duplicate commercial uses in our community and whether they are needed. Uses often mentioned include pizza places, beauty salons, chiropractors, financial institutions, and, most recently, auto parts stores. I can tell you with certainty that the Village has not specifically pursued any of these types of uses. Do not get me wrong; we are glad they are here and wish for their success. But, Village officials did not cold-call them to select Waunakee as their place to do business.

You might be wondering how potential businesses come our way. Rising to the top of that list would be that commercial building owners, commercial developers (those who own the land and/or buildings) and commercial brokers work to attract users. Also, specific trade groups and franchise managers identify certain markets where they see strong economic and strategic growth opportunity, and then direct investors and entrepreneurs in those directions. Finally, I am occasionally approached by people (typically locals) who desire to pursue a career change and have a dream about what they would like to do.

I recognize the brute strength of economic forces that are beyond any of our control. For this reason, I rarely spend lots of time pursuing specific users as part of the Village’s overall economic strategy. I do not go to trade shows for “x” type of business and attempt to lure them here. My time, and that of others on the Village team, is best spent being prepared and responsive when potential users knock on the door. We keep our website filled with the latest and greatest data that would be of interest to new businesses. I speak and present regularly to broker and development organizations around our region.

The most important message that I want to share is a reminder to SHOP LOCAL. You hear it a lot, and sometimes the message just blends into the background of everything else. But, it is so very important to both our long established businesses and brand new businesses that Waunakee’s residents enjoy consuming products locally. Check out the Waunakee Area Chamber of Commerce website at [www.waunakeechamber.com](http://www.waunakeechamber.com) or stop in to the historic depot (aka Chamber Office) at 100 E. Main Street and pick up a member directory to learn about all of the great local shopping choices that you have right here in your backyard.