

# Cory Mason: City of Racine Benefiting from New Partnerships and Foxconn

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As news outlets and political pundits anxiously await the groundbreaking on Foxconn's Racine County manufacturing facility, in the City of Racine, we are already starting to see how Foxconn's unprecedented investment will benefit local residents and families.

As the Mayor of Racine, I have two key priorities regarding Foxconn: (1) make sure Racine residents are well-positioned to pursue jobs tied to public and private development projects throughout the area; and (2) ensure that we protect Lake Michigan, our greatest natural resource. I'm proud to say that last week we made progress on both fronts.

In terms of workforce development, last week I was joined by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Secretary Ray Allen, County Executive Jonathan Delagrave, Gateway Technical College President Bryan Albrecht, and other local and state officials to announce Racine Works, a \$1.5 million workforce training program that will help train City of Racine residents for public and private construction job opportunities tied to Foxconn and other projects throughout our community. This partnership between the City, the County, the Department of Workforce Development, UMOS, and the Gateway Foundation will enable us to boost existing efforts and enhance their focus on City of Racine residents. In addition to workforce training, the Racine Works program will help ensure local hiring for publicly funded projects.

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We have organizations that are already doing great work in this space. First Choice Pre-Apprenticeship, WRTP/BIG STEP, UMOS, and local building trades are preparing people for job opportunities. Because of Foxconn and the related development projects, we need to ramp up our efforts. Encouraging businesses, developers, and contractors to hire from Racine is meaningless if we don't invest the dollars in the training needed to make sure we have skilled workers available to hire. That's what Racine Works is all about. Through the program and its investment, we will go from training dozens of Racine workers to training hundreds.

We are anticipating more than \$100 million in Racine Water Utility work tied to water infrastructure projects for the Foxconn project alone. Thanks to the Racine Works program, we will be able to ensure that City residents have the skill needed for these jobs, and that contractors will have trained workers to hire from within the City.

My other priority is ensuring that our greatest natural asset, Lake Michigan, is protected. As Mayor, I am responsible for protecting Lake Michigan with the City's Water and Wastewater Utility. I have made it clear on several occasions that we will ensure that Foxconn will have to meet or beat every federal, state, and local water discharge standard. We made great strides last week when Foxconn announced that it is investing \$30 million in a zero liquid discharge (ZLD) system that will allow it to dramatically reduce the facility's water intake requirements from Lake Michigan and when operational, eliminate the return of any industrial wastewater to the lake.

By using this technology, Foxconn will reduce its intake of water by more than 3.5 million gallons per day, down to 2.5 million gallons per day. The ZLD system eliminates industrial wastewater by distilling it, allowing the company to recycle, recover, and re-use it. The only water that will not be recycled will be the domestic wastewater that is normally discharged from any commercial or residential facility and the water evaporating from the cooling systems.

Foxconn is committing to modify its facility in order to protect - at an even higher level than before - our greatest natural resource, Lake Michigan. Few manufacturing facilities in the United States have adopted ZLD systems and I appreciate Foxconn's investment in environmental sustainability.

Foxconn is breaking ground in Racine County. I am doing everything in my power to ensure that the opportunities and growth that it brings will have a positive impact

for our city. I know that Racine residents work hard, and given the opportunities and training, they will succeed. I also know that Lake Michigan is one of our greatest resources, and it is incumbent on us to protect it. There are challenges to overcome, and there is work to be done, but I believe that the arrival of Foxconn creates the best opportunity in my lifetime to rebuild our middle class and build a stronger community for all of us.

— *Mason is mayor of Racine and a former Democratic state legislator.*