

# A Better Mount Pleasant: Four years of Foxconn

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MOUNT PLEASANT, WI OCTOBER 4, 2021 - On the fourth anniversary of the announcement that the Foxconn LCD factory would be built in Mount Pleasant, Wisconsin - a factory which has never materialized - local residents have learned that Foxconn purchased an electric vehicle (EV) factory in Ohio to presumably begin production on Fisker electric cars. Foxconn announced the partnership with Fisker in May of this year, saying that Wisconsin was a potential location for EV development.

The slim hope that Foxconn might dedicate some of the thousands of acres of land purchased by the Village of Mount Pleasant for an EV factory in Wisconsin turned out to be just another false promise in a four-year string of disappointments and lies.

The list of promises is long: big LCD screens, small LCD screens, coffee kiosks, ventilators, Google servers, and home security systems - join other plans Foxconn put forward only to abandon. Innovation centers across the state sit empty and up for lease. A \$100 million grant to UW Madison was reneged. Foxconn's partnership in the development of Wisconsin's ginseng industry was forgotten and was just another press release amounting to nothing.

We know now that in a desperate attempt to find something - anything - Foxconn could produce in Mount Pleasant, company officials considered using their empty buildings for fish farming, boat storage, and handbag exports.

Not exactly the "eighth wonder of the world" we were promised.

Instead of a \$10 billion investment, Mount Pleasant got a \$280 million investment. Instead of 13,000 full-time jobs, Mount Pleasant got 281. Instead of a 20 million

square foot facility, Mount Pleasant got one that is twenty times smaller and was recently re-permitted for storage, not manufacturing. There is no global supply chain of companies to fill the land where farms and homes once stood. Instead, Mount Pleasant got a glass globe that looks like a low-rent Epcot Center filled with sadness and lies.

Conversely, Foxconn received plenty: Over a thousand acres of land for free; new and upgraded roads and highways for free; water, sewer, gas and electric infrastructure for free; and last but not least, a \$119 million electric substation paid for by the ratepayers while Foxconn continues to use temporary electric service. Although the State of Wisconsin has amended the agreement which would have given Foxconn nearly \$4.5 billion in incentives and cash rebates, Mount Pleasant and Racine County are still on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars in local spending. When it is said and done, nearly \$1 billion will have been committed at the local level.

Experts in finance and technology said from the beginning the state and local deal made with Foxconn was too good to be true. And while there is plenty of blame to go around, we find it difficult to blame Foxconn alone. They did what they have always done: over-promise and never deliver.

The eagerness of local politicians to score a game-changing development, so much so they forgot to ask basic questions, cannot even be compared to the ambition of the Racine County Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC) who persuaded local officials to toss in acquiring the land for Foxconn, just to sweeten the deal.

This was the moment that part-time village trustees became unqualified real estate brokers on behalf of a private foreign corporation, bullying and intimidating their own neighbors with blight and eminent domain.

Four years later, Foxconn announcements are universally greeted with the skepticism they deserve. However, local officials remain silent. There have been no project briefings since July of 2019. The Racine County Foxconn website hasn't been updated for years and still describes the same LCD factory which Foxconn abandoned almost immediately after the project was announced in 2017.

Mount Pleasant and Racine County maintain the local development agreement is still in effect – even though Wisconsin amended the State’s agreement in April. This is a pretense.

County officials are actively attempting to renegotiate the local agreement while trying to save Foxconn’s commitment to pay Mount Pleasant a \$30 million per year special assessment for the next 24 years – for a facility the state no longer requires them to build – or risk defaulting on the money Racine County and Mount Pleasant have borrowed.

For more than a year, our local newspaper, the Racine Journal Times and publisher Mark Lewis, have deliberately censored letters and commentaries from publication which are critical of the Foxconn development. We are aware of dozens that have been ignored in an effort to stifle factual community dialog.

Village and County officials have been warned against speaking about the project to the community, and all statements to the public and the media are carefully crafted by a communications firm paid for with public funds.

It is four years later, and we still do not know what Foxconn plans to make in Mount Pleasant, and the demands for accountability and transparency continue to fall on deaf ears.