

Fox Cities Area Strengths

The strengths listed here received the most attention overall in focus groups and surveys. The 2006 LIFE Study included three surveys, 13 focus groups, interviews with experts, and a look at statistical data published by the state and others. We considered all data sources together to look for convergence on important issues.

Strengths	Broadly Recognized Aspects of the Fox Cities
Leisure opportunities	Outdoor recreation including water sports and trails; opportunities to view the arts, shop, use the libraries and to enjoy high quality restaurants
Safety	The area has consistently demonstrated a high level of public safety
Education	Higher education institutions received some of the highest ratings on surveys; K-12 education reported to be very high quality
Natural Environment	Clean air, plentiful water, good access to nature preserves
Collaboration	Organizations in the area have a track record of working together; now the expanded emphasis on the New North exemplifies this attribute
Community leadership	Leaders across different sectors are seen as proactive and willing to confront challenges
Health care	Widely recognized excellence for an array of services and quality of care
Community services and organizations	Local government and nonprofits viewed as effective and collaborative
Place for children and families	Well recognized as a friendly, safe area with emphasis on children and family lifestyle
Relative affordability	For many residents, the cost of living in the Fox Cities compares favorably to other parts of the United States

A Snapshot of Key Findings by Category

	Areas of Progress	Areas of Concern
LIFE in Our Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of public services • Growing recognition of and initiatives for diversity • Proactive community leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for leadership inclusive of minorities, young people, women • Quality of life perceived lower for people of color and singles • Uncontested local elections
A Healthy LIFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of health and dental care • Services expanded for underinsured and uninsured • Heart disease death rate declines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased costs and decreased access to health care • Major impact of untreated mental illness and substance abuse • Lifestyle issues of obesity, lack of exercise, and substance abuse • Need for health professionals
LIFE at Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative initiatives will expand information for those with disabilities and the elderly • Good environment to raise a family • Opportunities for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about quality and affordability of child care • Need for constructive opportunities for older youth • Transportation and support services for people with disabilities
LIFE of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality K-12 education • Quality higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of preschool for children • Relatively lower rate of post-high school education • Affordability of higher education • Achievement gap for low income students
LIFE at Leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and cultural opportunities • Outdoor recreation opportunities • Libraries • Restaurants and shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for better public pedestrian access to the waterfront • Concerns about growing parent pressure on youth to specialize and excel in sport at younger age
LIFE in our Natural Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good air quality overall • Quality nature preserves and parks • Progress on Fox River cleanup • Joint regional efforts expanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sprawling land development with harmful impacts • Water quality in certain areas • Reliance on automobiles
A Safe LIFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very safe region; low crime rates • Quality emergency services • Teamwork across county and municipal lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic violence and sexual assault reports increase • Re-integration of ex-offenders • Public perceives the area unprepared for major disaster
LIFE of Self-Sufficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower overall poverty rate than elsewhere • Strong nonprofit human services • Strong base of quality volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of people cannot afford basic needs • Cost of living increases
LIFE at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development initiatives • Strong manufacturing economic base • Retail sales and tourism • Workforce quality • Favorable cost of living for many 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job shift from manufacturing to services with lower earnings • Per capita income falling behind • Preparation of workforce for needed jobs

LIFE Study Opportunities for Improvement

While other important issues were identified, those listed below arose repeatedly and from multiple sources. The 2006 LIFE Study included three surveys, 13 focus groups, interviews with experts, and statistical data published by the state and others. We considered all data sources to look for convergence on important issues.

Opportunity Area	Broadly Recognized Aspects of the Fox Cities
Greater inclusion of diverse people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for further inclusion of diverse residents (beyond racial and ethnic diversity), especially in leadership roles
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for economic development and higher paying jobs was a strong consensus of residents, leaders and experts • Economic development can help alleviate certain other concerns
Transportation alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options for persons with lower incomes, persons with disabilities, the elderly, youth, shift workers, and those without automobiles • Desire for transportation options other than automobiles
Treatment for mental illness and addiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining access to treatment (especially for persons with low incomes or public health insurance) • Untreated mental illness/substance abuse creates many negative impacts
Health care access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining care is a challenge for many in the area due to growing out of pocket costs (for the insured) and a decrease in jobs with health benefits • Access to more preventive health care seen as important
Adult training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased support for employment skills, literacy, parenting, financial, and many other skills needed to function well in life • Noted by many as a way to address many other areas of need
Regional vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to create public efficiencies and related cost savings • Collaboration needed to confront challenges; New North a hopeful start
Long term focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for area leaders to have a long term focus and to make sometimes difficult decisions to confront challenges • Health promotion, education, child care, aging, support for disabilities or mental illness, and disaster preparedness cited as needing long term focus
Affordable basic needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those with lower to middle incomes, the challenge of making ends meet has become much more difficult • Housing, child care, health care, transportation costs cited
Support for elderly, people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of adults and children with disabilities grows • Declining safety net and government cutbacks have capped or reduced important services for persons with disabilities
Youth development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities needed for “average” youth in the arts and physical activities (especially for ages 16-21); pressure on high achieving youth to excel
Affordable quality child care/ preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The costs of child care have become a challenge for people with low to middle incomes; quality of existing services sometimes a concern • Pre-school and early education opportunities needed
Environmental preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban sprawl and fragmentation of ecosystems • Impacts on drinking water quality, transportation, safety, recreation, and health
Affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply of housing for people with very low incomes has not kept pace with the need projected by the Appleton Housing Authority • Requests for financial support grow for housing and utilities