

# 6 Economic Development

## 6.1 Economic Development Chapter Purpose and Contents

The Economic Development Element of a comprehensive plan provides direction to support economic growth and development. This countywide element provides opportunity for local municipal governments to pursue their own economic interests while creating a strategy for countywide economic development.

This element includes a brief summary of existing economic development conditions followed by a series of goals, objectives, and recommendations to guide the stabilization, retention, or expansion of countywide economic opportunity in Waushara County. The element also provides a description of the types of businesses or industries desired in the region, and the county's strengths and weaknesses for attracting or retaining these businesses.

## 6.2 Summary of Existing Economic Development Conditions

The following section cites primary economic development resources identified by East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) in Waushara County. A complete listing of existing resources information can be located in the *Waushara County Comprehensive Plan Volume Two: Existing Conditions Report*.

### Educational Attainment

- A higher percentage of residents in Waushara County received high school diplomas than the State of Wisconsin.
- In the area of post-high school achievement the county has a lower level of educational attainment with 11.7 percent of Waushara County residents completing four years of college or more compared to 22.4 percent of Wisconsin residents.

### Labor Force

- Labor force growth rates for Waushara County (29.4%), were greater than the State (14.0%) between 1990 and 2000.

### Economic Base Information

- The manufacturing (22.1%); education, health, social services (17.9%); retail trade (10.4%) industries employed over half (50.4%) of workers in Waushara County in 2000.
- The top three occupations for Waushara County workers in 2000 were production, transportation, and material moving (25.0%); management, professional, and related (23.5%); and sales and office (21.4%).

### Travel Time to Work

- On average, residents from Waushara County and the state spent less than 30 minutes traveling to and from work in 1990. In 2000, average commute times for Waushara County residents decreased to 27.1 minutes, while state residents traveled an average of 20.8 minutes to work.

### Location of Workplace

- According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, over 50 percent (58.7%) of county residents worked in Waushara County in 1990. In 2000, a majority of residents continued to work within Waushara County (52.5%) but the percentage who commuted to the Appleton-Oshkosh MSA increased.

**Employment Forecast**

- Statewide, the largest increase in employment is anticipated to be in education and health services though with declining school enrollments, education sector employment is unlikely to increase in Waushara County.
- The health care sector may grow in Waushara County as the median age of county residents continues to rise.

**Industrial Park Information**

- There are seven industrial parks in Waushara County with a total of 155 acres available for development.

**Table 6.1: Industrial Parks in Waushara County, WI (2008)**

Park Location/ Name	Size (Acres)	Water	Sewer	Sanitary Sewer	Storm Sewer	Electricity	Rail	Highway	Avail. Acres	Private / Public	Improved / Not Improved
City of Berlin / Berlin North Business Park	186	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	STH 49,21,91	80	Public	Improved
City of Wautoma / South Industrial Park	19	Y	Y	(1)	N	Y	N	STH 21,22,73	0	Public	Improved
City of Wautoma / Southeast Industrial Park	45	Y	Y	(1)	N	Y	N	STH 21,22,73	8	Public	Improved
Village of Coloma / Coloma Business Park	42	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	I-39, STH 21	25	Public	Improved
Village of Redgranite / Redgranite Industrial Park	22	Y	Y	(1)	N	Y	N	I-39, STH 21	22	Public	Improved
Village of Wild Rose / Roberts Industrial Park	23	Well	Y	(2)	N	Y	N	STH 22	18	Public	Improved
Village of Wild Rose / South Industrial Park	9	Well	Y	(2)	N	Y	N	STH 22	2	Public	Improved

Source: ECWRPC, and NEWREP 2008

**Regional Economic Development Corporations**

- Tri-County Regional Development Corporation (TCREDC) is a partnership between Waushara, Marquette, and Green Lake counties.
- The Waushara County Economic Development Corporation is working to foster new business development and support and sustain existing businesses throughout the county.

**Infill and Brownfield Redevelopment**

- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment maintains a listing of brownfield’s and contaminated sites. This website lists 393 entries for Waushara County that may or may not be active.

**6.3 Economic Development Issues Identified Through the Planning Process**

Economic development for many rural counties means maintaining active agriculture while ensuring there is a support system which maintains access to goods and services that sustain agricultural pursuits. Generally speaking, access to goods and services is accommodated in the small villages and cities

throughout Waushara County. The following economic development issues were identified through the public participation process as primary concerns that should be addressed by this comprehensive plan.

### **Agriculture**

Agriculture is an important part of the county's economy. In addition to farming, there are also farming-related industries like food processing, transportation of goods, the supply of farm machinery and equipment, and wholesale retail or trade that contribute to the regional economy.

### **Employment Opportunities**

The lack of employment opportunities is a major issue for towns, villages, and cities in the county. Even though agriculture is a key component to the local economy, there are few full-time employment opportunities available to sustain many people year round. Parallel industries may thrive, but there is a lack of diverse employment opportunities overall. There are also few job opportunities available for young people who are looking for employment after high school or college graduation.

### **Economic Growth**

The employment and consumer needs of a majority of community members are met by services located in nearby communities. There is some desire to increase local access to hardware, grocery, or other large commercial venues, however, most areas in Waushara County do not contain the population density necessary to sustain large retail areas. Many residents are also split on whether large retail stores are appropriate in rural areas.

### **Home-Based Businesses**

Residents of many towns are supportive of allowing home-based businesses in the community because they do not generally detract from the rural character and they allow for entrepreneurial experimentation.

### **Retirement Communities**

Some communities that describe themselves as "retirement communities" because they have an older population and program special events that appeal specifically to senior citizens do not offer a full array of employment opportunities. The economic development potential of these areas stagnates as they specialize to support a senior population.

### **Nonmetallic Mining**

As with any industry that generates heavy traffic and noise, nonmetallic mining operations draw some complaints. Waushara County has implemented standards for reclamation of these sites and to protect residents and landowners from the potential negative impacts of mining operations. Still, engaging in more regular enforcement and communication may help to convey information and mitigate concerns.

### **Highway Access**

Interstate I-39, which extends the entire north-south length of the western side of the county, should be viewed comprehensively as a corridor that can serve as an economic driver. I-39 is intersected by STH 73 and STH 21 which, in turn, bisect additional highways including STH 22 and STH 49. Any commercial or industrial development that may occur is likely to locate in areas within close proximity to the county's highway network. At the same time, it can be difficult for Waushara County's rural areas to compete for these businesses because large population centers, such as the city of Stevens Point, offer services and other incentives that many smaller communities cannot provide.

### **Downtown Redevelopment**

Many rural residents use goods and services opportunities available in nearby communities. In some places these opportunities are becoming fewer as stores close and small businesses grapple with tough economic realities of higher operating costs and tougher competition. Redevelopment of small service

centers would allow rural residents closer proximity to the goods and services they require and would increase their access to these commodities.

#### **Provision of Utilities**

Some areas of the county are not currently able to support large business developments. Even in communities that contain sewer or water, the capacity of these facilities is not always sufficient for large users. Other utilities, such as high speed internet service, are also not universally available and weaken business recruitment potential.

#### **Absentee Owners and Teardowns**

Some traditional “Main Street” commercial centers are struggling for relevancy. While some downtown areas look and function just fine others are deteriorating due to absentee owners or poor economic conditions. With many residents commuting out of Waushara County for jobs, many also choose to shop outside of the county which makes the economic outlook of small town centers less attractive to investors.

### **6.4 Strengths and Weaknesses for Economic Development**

Wisconsin State Statutes require that this element discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Waushara County to attract, retain, and build economic capacity. The following descriptions summarize the types of industries or businesses desired within the county, and the assets and liabilities for growing or maintaining these economic opportunities.

#### **Kinds of Businesses Desired**

There is a desire for a more diverse business climate that offers offices and retail areas in the county. While small businesses are encouraged to develop and prosper, larger business developments may help to retain local jobs that are currently exported to other counties. Agriculture and related operations remain a key component within the economy. Light industry is also welcomed in various parts of the county where access to the highway system supports industrial activities. Eco-tourism and the development of recreational opportunities are also desired to support sustainable economic activities such as farming and to promote quality of life.

#### **Strengths**

- Transportation corridors I-39 and STH 21, 22, and 73
- Proximity to Stevens Point (Portage County), Oshkosh (Winnebago County), and Fox Valley
- The amount and diversity of natural areas, open space, and recreational opportunities
- Prime agricultural soils
- Numerous woodlands
- Strong agricultural economy
- Access to a healthcare
- Strong sense of community

#### **Weaknesses**

- Lack of diversity in economic base
- Lack of population density is a deterrent for service and retail businesses
- Distance from major urban centers
- Lack of organizations to implement or maintain recreational opportunities

### **6.5 Waushara County Economic Development Policy**

Waushara County will promote economic development opportunities that:

- a. Do not adversely impact the natural or built environment;

- b. Are consistent with community values stated in local comprehensive plans;
- c. Encourage development that provides jobs to county residents;
- d. Address unemployment in the county and seek innovative techniques to attract different industries for a more diversified economic base;
- e. Utilize existing community infrastructure and sustainable inputs;
- f. Support retention and expansion of existing businesses.

## **6.6 Economic Development Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations**

The following section identifies goals, objectives, and recommendations for growing or sustaining economic development resources in Waushara County. The goals and objectives identify what should be accomplished, whereas the recommendations focus on identifying the action necessary to achieve the goals and objectives.

The directives were developed based on a set of identified themes observed in municipal comprehensive plans from across Waushara County. These ideas were also informed by the ECWRPC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report that was approved in late 2008.

### **Goal 6.1 Promote the expansion or stabilization of current economic resources.**

#### Objectives

- a. Retain existing jobs.
- b. Increase the number of living wage jobs within the county.
- c. Enhance infrastructure throughout the county.
- d. Retain young members of the work force.

#### Recommendations

6.1.1 Support and encourage the efforts by the Waushara County Economic Development Cooperation and the Tri County Regional Economic Development Corporation. These organizations can help with the coordination of local and regional economic development activities. Encourage them to develop and maintain a website for progress updates and dissemination of materials.

6.1.2 Encourage partnerships between the public and private sector to identify skills and knowledge needed for emerging jobs. Work with local businesses to hire local students for intern and cooperative jobs, with preferences for hiring permanently when they graduate from college.

6.1.3 Work with school districts to evaluate the value of creating partnerships to track the path of high school graduates and those who do not complete high school. Continue partnerships with technical colleges to enhance training opportunities.

6.1.4 Promote technical programs and job skills training or apprenticeship programs through technical colleges, CESA 5, CAP Services, and the local high school curriculum.

6.1.5 Support local entrepreneurial programs that facilitate local business start-ups.

6.1.6 Support the creation of small and "home-based" businesses.

6.1.7 Support efforts to examine and expand technological infrastructure for business and residential needs. This includes promoting access to high-speed telecommunications.

6.1.8 Increase the amount of revolving loan funds available through federal, state, and other outside sources in order to help more businesses grow and prosper in Waushara County. Encourage funding

for business start-up, recruitment and retention, and to promote quality of life measures that help to sustain and attract a productive workforce.

**Goal 6.2 Maintain the viability of productive agricultural activities and enterprises as a component of the area's economy.**

Objectives

- a. Enable farming to remain a viable lifestyle choice.
- b. Curb the loss of employment opportunities in the agricultural sector.
- c. Provide opportunities for entry-level farmers.
- d. Maintain and expand the customer base for agriculture-related businesses and services.

Recommendations

6.2.1 Protect prime agricultural lands from encroachment of incompatible land uses.

6.2.2 Work with communities to promote food choices for supporting local farmers. This includes increasing the access of information about local growers to consumers interested in purchasing locally grown food.

6.2.3 Promote niche crop development using organic or sustainable practices, and developing community supported agriculture (CSA) whereby food harvested from local fields is made available for local consumption.

6.2.4 Work with local governments to identify appropriate locations within the county for large concentrated animal farming operations (CAFOs).

6.2.5 Support efforts to engage retiring farmers in an agriculture apprenticeship program to share knowledge and sell active farmlands to new farmers.

6.2.6 Promote complimentary industrial and commercial agribusinesses to support local farm producers and marketing initiatives.

6.2.7 Consider educating land owners and community members on the land preservation tools and programs that can be used to help farmers retain their land. Consider collaborating with UW-Extension, the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, or other entities. Ideas include:

- Promote conservation easements as a way of reducing the tax load on unplanted farmland holdings. Establish a conservation program resource center.
- Support statewide "Right-to-Farm" policies.

6.2.8 Support public and private initiatives to organize and market agriculture as a tourist attraction.

**Goal 6.3 Support the local economy by managing forest areas.**

Objectives

- a. Explore opportunities to expand markets and diversify uses for forest products.
- b. Encourage practices that maintain a healthy ecosystem.
- c. Encourage multiple uses of forest resources.

Recommendations

6.3.1 Support forest industry efforts to improve the efficiency of raw material uses and to explore species supply options to produce forestry products.

6.3.2 Conserve forestlands that are susceptible to development, have the potential to connect to other parcels of forestland, have public importance, and provide critical ecological functions.

6.3.3 Prepare appropriate roles for the compatible use of forestland by non-motorized and motorized users.

6.3.4 Use forestry best management practices (BMPs) as minimum standards for harvesting.

6.3.5 Encourage forest landowners to enroll in Wisconsin's Managed Forest Law (MFL) program and other tax programs.

6.3.6 Encourage efforts to keep forestry-related jobs in and adjacent to the community, such as working with schools, colleges, and training programs to recruit and retain workers within the county.

#### **Goal 6.4 Encourage harmony between commercial/industrial uses and adjacent lands.**

##### Objectives

- a. Promote appropriate placement of commercial and industrial uses.
- b. Support appropriate design character in urbanized areas.
- c. Decrease the impacts of nonmetallic mineral extraction operations.

##### Recommendations

6.4.1 Future commercial and industrial development should locate in areas with appropriate transportation access, such as the state highway system, and near other existing concentrations of these uses. The location of development should be based sensitive to their impacts on the environment, local water supply, the availability of municipal services, and the local comprehensive plan.

6.4.2 Promote new commercial or industrial development in any of the seven industrial parks located within Waushara County.

6.4.3 Encourage urbanized areas to build community identity by developing and enforcing design standards. Encourage local initiatives such as establishing design corridors, business improvement districts, or historic district designation to focus attention and resources on downtown revitalization.

6.4.4 Encourage incorporated communities, or unincorporated areas that offer urban amenities, in Waushara County to adopt zoning that permits higher-density, mixed-uses in downtowns and around transportation hubs. Encourage pedestrian-friendly and transit-ready designs in urban areas to differentiate them from highway development.

6.4.5 Promote sustainable development, energy conservation, and green building techniques.

6.4.6 Encourage the revision of conditions for nonmetallic mining and processing operations to provide more specific protections to adjacent landowners.

#### **6.7 Economic Development Programs**

There are a number of economic development programs available in Waushara County, the region, and the state. While the scope and magnitude of many of these programs is beyond the capacity of many local communities in the county, application of economic development programs administered at the county and state levels of government could be utilized locally to help achieve countywide goals and objectives. A listing of these programs is available in the *Waushara County Comprehensive Plan Volume Two: Existing Conditions Report* (see pages 6-13 to 6-22).