

8.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

According to the Smart Growth Law, the purpose of the Economic Development Element is to promote the stabilization, retention and expansion of the economic base, and quality employment opportunities. To address this requirement, this chapter includes:

- Highlights of the **labor force information** from Chapter 3;
- An assessment of **strengths and weaknesses** with respect to attracting and retaining business and industry;
- An overview of programs that deal with **environmentally contaminated sites** for commercial or industrial uses; and
- A list of organizations (and contact information) providing **economic development programs** at the county, regional, state and federal levels.

The Town of Oshkosh does not have an economic activity center or “downtown” area, however given its close proximity to nearby urban communities, most residents travel elsewhere to obtain needed goods and services. The Town of Oshkosh does, however, have a limited number of local businesses within the town limits. Farming and lake-based recreation activities are also important to the local economy.

Economic Development Vision

Non-residential economic activity has been expanded, but is still concentrated primarily along the USH 41 and USH 45 corridors. Secondary commercial development areas are situated along CTH S and CTH A.

Economic development has been coordinated in harmony with the town’s natural environment and its residential areas.

Employment opportunities for town residents can easily be found within 10 miles of their homes.

Labor Force and Economic Base

The Community Profile Chapter (Chapter 3) provides a detailed analysis of the local and county economy, as well as the labor force. Highlights from that chapter include:

- Winnebago County’s labor force participation rate is over 80%. The United States’ participation rate is close to 70%, while the overall State of Wisconsin participation rate is approximately 75%. The participation rate for the Town of Oshkosh is 72.2%.
- Most town residents who work travel beyond the town limits.
- Winnebago County workers are very mobile. Of the 96,135 residents of the county who have jobs, over 40 percent work outside of the county. Much of the cross county travel is to and from the Fox Cities.
- According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the largest percentage of town residents were employed in management, professional and related occupations (31.5%).
- Average annual wages paid in Winnebago County were 9.9 percent higher than the state average in 1997.
- In 1989, the per capita income in the Town of Oshkosh was \$9,904. The 2000 per capita income in the Town of Oshkosh has risen dramatically to \$25,610 (See box at right for more information).
- Most residents of the Town of Oshkosh have earned a high school diploma and many have continued their education to pursue Associates’, Bachelors’ and other advanced degrees.

Participation Rate describes the relationship between the labor force and population. Participation Rate is the percent of residents, over the age of 16 that are working or looking for work in a community. Retired persons and others not participating in the labor force would not be included in the participation rate.

Per Capita Income is defined as total income divided by the total number of residents.

Part of the reason for the great change in per capita income between 1989 and 2000 is the annexation of the state prison and Winnebago Mental Health Institution to the City of Oshkosh. This annexation resulted in a loss of 2,000 town residents who had no income. It is also important to note that the 1989 figure is represented in 1989 dollars and the 2000 figure is represented in 2000 dollars. No adjustment has been made for current dollars.

Other breakdowns of income (i.e. family, household, etc.) are provided in the **Community Profile Chapter**.

These facts and statistics indicate that the Town of Oshkosh has a limited economic base consisting of a few businesses. This situation is desirable as the community takes great pride in its residential, farmland and natural areas. Extensive areas of commercial, industrial and other non-residential development are not desired. However, given the town’s proximity to USH 41 and the newly realigned STH 45, opportunities for economic expansion exist. It will be important for any commercial/industrial development to be compatible with surrounding land uses. This may include landscaping, signage and other amenities. The town has identified specific areas for additional commercial development along the highway corridors. If a boundary agreement is reached with the City, it is possible that higher end uses (i.e. hotels, shopping centers, etc.) may be developed at these locations if water and sewer are provided. Otherwise, the town will pursue commercial development opportunities at these locations that do not require municipal water and sewer facilities.

Current Business Inventory and Business Environments

There are relatively few businesses located in the Town of Oshkosh. As mentioned above, many more businesses are found in nearby cities that can offer additional amenities (i.e. sewer and water). Residents generally travel to nearby communities to purchase needed goods and services. Nevertheless, the town enjoys a unique collection of small businesses that are scattered throughout the town. These businesses include a greenhouse, trucking operation, gas stations (with convenience stores), four building contractors, three roofing contractors, an electrical contractor, a metal fabrication shop, a landscape firm, a restaurant, a motorcycle sales business and a discount sales store.

The Town of Oshkosh has four business corridors to offer potential entrepreneurs: USH 41, USH 45, CTH S and CTH A. What follows is a brief profile of each area.

USH 41. The USH 41 corridor extends through the heart of the town. Currently, some businesses exist at the Jackson Street / USH 41 interchange. It is anticipated that additional development will occur in this area as businesses seek to capitalize on the highway accessibility and frontage available in this area.

USH 45. As is discussed in the Transportation Element, this corridor has been recently rebuilt and realigned through the Town of Oshkosh. The town believes that this corridor will be a desirable location for businesses to locate. However, development should not interfere with the flow of traffic on USH 45. As a result, the use of interchanges, frontage roads and other road amenities will be necessary to accommodate substantial business/industrial development.

CTH S. It is anticipated that the completed USH 45 corridor will usurp much of the traffic from this corridor, thereby converting the former STH 110 (now CTH S) corridor into a more localized travel route. There are already a few businesses located along this corridor, which provides access from Butte des Morts

to the greater Oshkosh area. It is anticipated that substantial business development will occur catering to local residents and passing motorists.

CTH A. CTH A extends from within the City of Oshkosh north through the town. An active railroad corridor parallels most of the road frontage. Some opportunities for

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

When asked where new commercial development should be encouraged, respondents indicated that:

- USH 41 (64%) and USH 45 (60%) were most favored locations for new commercial development.
- Secondary support was expressed along the STH 110 (now CTH S) (21%) and CTH A (19%) corridors.



M Schettl Sales Inc., CTH S

commercial/industrial development exist along this corridor, particularly south of Snell Road.



Construction Business on CTH A

It is also believed that some home occupation uses (i.e. child care, hair stylist, taxidermy, contractors, small engine repair, etc.) also exist in the town without any special permits or other zoning approvals.

The nature of these businesses presents no noticeable impact or nuisance to adjacent properties. Moreover, some residents may work

at home utilizing Internet and other technologies. The town supports a resident's right to have a small business operation on his/her property or work at home, provided that the business activity or establishment does not create a nuisance for neighboring property owners by generating excessive traffic, noise, lighting, signage, etc.

Attracting and Retaining Business and Industry

The Town of Oshkosh has several positive attributes to offer potential businesses. Specifically, the town has:

- A relatively **low tax rate**;
- Properties with **USH 41, USH 45 and CTH S frontage**;
- **Land available** for development;

While the town certainly enjoys its share of advantages, there are several weaknesses that the town must contend with when seeking to attract new businesses and industry. In particular:

- The Town of Oshkosh has **limited services** to offer potential businesses (i.e. restricted areas of municipal water or sewer service).
- The population in the town is not large enough to provide the customer base necessary to support a large commercial endeavor.
- **Residents of the Town of Oshkosh are very mobile** and can easily drive to nearby communities to purchase services and products.

Winnebago County has been included in the award of a 16-county Northeast Wisconsin **Regional Economic Partnership (NEWREP)** designed to bring high-paying jobs to Wisconsin through start-up and expansion of technology businesses.

- Former Governor McCallum announced the creation of the Northeast Wisconsin technology zone in 2002.
- It is **one of eight zones** created throughout the state, and each has \$5 million in income tax credits to provide incentives to attract high-tech companies to the area, and to help existing companies increase productivity and free up capital.
- The zones will be in effect for **10 years** – until 2012.
- Projects within the region will be considered and approved based on their ability to create high-wage jobs and support the development of high-tech industries in the region.
- There will probably be technology “clusters” created within the zone to more aptly meet the needs of local, homogeneous communities.
- **For more information**, contact the City of Sheboygan Economic Development Department (Local Administrative Contact), at (920) 459-3377.

Economic Development Opportunities

Future commercial and industrial development in the Town of Oshkosh is most likely to occur along the **USH 41, USH 45, CTH S and CTH A corridors**. In fact, the Planning Advisory Committee has indicated a preference for commercial and industrial development to occur along these corridors so as to protect the natural areas and residential development in the town. However, it should be understood that the Plan Committee does not envision these corridors infilling completely with commercial and industrial development over the next 20 years. Preferably, development along these corridors would **expand from the existing developed areas**.

While the town would like to welcome additional commercial, office and light industrial development to support the local tax base, it is important that any new development exist **in harmony with the local environment**. Therefore, new industrial and commercial development should be “clean” and not produce a significant amount of waste, which could pose a hazard to the rivers, streams, and wetlands of the Town of Oshkosh. Likewise, new development should blend into the rural landscape and not represent a nuisance to residents. Therefore, new developments must include natural **landscaping and attractive signage**.

More importantly, new development should generate quality, **well paying jobs** capable of allowing workers to support their families.

New development must not interfere with the traffic flow along highways. Therefore, the development of a service/frontage road to provide adequate and safe access may be necessary if an extensive amount of development were to occur. This may be difficult to provide since the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is discouraging additional service/frontage roads.

The use of innovative treatment systems, permissible under the provisions of Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter COMM 83, may be one approach for the town to consider in order to attract development to the town that might otherwise seek locations in communities with municipal sanitary sewer service.

Desired Business and Industry

New business and industry in the town should be informed of available water or sewer service options. In addition, the town wants to be sure that new development does not jeopardize the rural quality of life. Therefore, businesses and industries that locate in the town should:

- Be environmentally friendly
- Have limited outdoor storage (if any) to control unsightliness
- Generate minimal noise and traffic that can be easily accommodated by the existing transportation network

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

When asked to identify **what types of new development is desired** in the Town of Oshkosh, community survey respondents indicated that:

- Convenience stores, mini-storage, strip malls, heavy industry and multiple family housing were clearly discouraged by survey respondents.
- Survey respondents looked more favorably toward **light industrial and restaurant** uses.

- Require only minimal lighting (on-site lighting only, no beams, or other protruding light sources)
- Require only on-site signage (no billboards)
- Have generous landscaping to improve the façade from the roadway and buffer the development from adjacent land uses.

Given these constraints, the town would like to target the following types of development:

- **Light industrial, commercial and office establishments** along USH 41 and USH 45 catering to both passing motorists and the local population. These businesses should generate higher income and skilled jobs for residents of the town.
- **Service business** (i.e. restaurant, coffee shop, and real estate or medical office development) along the CTH A corridor. These businesses rely on local traffic to survive.
- **Home occupations** of a professional nature to take advantage of the Internet and other technologies that permit people to work from the privacy of their homes. Home occupations are particularly attractive to the town given the town’s low density of development that limits the likelihood that a home occupation will become a nuisance to neighboring property owners.

Tools to Promote Economic Development

INDUSTRIAL REVENUE BOND

The Wisconsin Department of Commerce's Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program allows all Wisconsin cities, villages and towns to support industrial development through the sale of tax-exempt bonds. The proceeds from the bond sale are loaned to businesses to finance capital investment projects at, primarily, manufacturing facilities. Even though IRBs are municipal bonds, they are not general obligations of the municipality. The company or business that will use the facilities provides the interest and principal payments on the loan. The local government is in partnership with the business, lending its name, but not its credit, to the bond issue.

For more information on the Industrial Revenue Bond Program, contact the Wisconsin Department of Commerce at 608/267-0762 or get information on the internet at: commerce.state.wi.us.

INTERNET MARKETING

Many towns in Wisconsin are creating Internet Web Pages. The Town of Oshkosh should consider marketing itself on the Internet by providing detailed information about available land for commercial/industrial development, community services, programs, and organizations, and includes demographic, economic and housing



statistics. Much of this information could be taken from this plan. This type of information is a valuable resource to marketing professionals seeking redevelopment locations.

A Town of Oshkosh web site could also be used to advertise community events, post community meeting minutes and agendas, and provide a new forum for residents to provide feedback and get questions answered. Ideally, this web site would be maintained by the Town Clerk.

Program Assistance

Winnebago County has several programs and organizations to encourage economic development opportunities within the county. Moreover, many cities within the county (i.e. Oshkosh and Winneconne) have their own Chambers of Commerce to promote economic development within their boundaries. What follows is a description of the activities of two organizations that can play an important role in economic development in the town - the Winnebago County Industrial Development Board and the Winnebago County UW-Extension.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WCIDB)

The WCIDB essentially fills the role of a county Chamber of Commerce. The WCIDB has three major programs: Marketing and Promotional Program, Revolving Loan Fund Program, and a Per Capita Funding Program.

For More Information about the WCIDB call or write to:
P.O. Box 2808
Oshkosh, WI 54903
(920) 236-4839

The purpose of the **Marketing and Promotional Program** is to create awareness of the industrial development opportunities and benefits of Winnebago County at the local, regional, national, and international levels. The WCIDB directly sponsors programs designed to achieve these goals, and participates in cooperative programs with other local and regional economic development organizations.

In 1992, the WCIDB implemented a new advertising campaign with the theme "Making Waves." The media plan for this campaign included placements in several industrial development and site selections publications. A coordinating folder of response materials was also produced. Additionally, the Board has instituted a general public awareness program at the local and regional levels. It has also taken steps to track responses so the effect of advertising can be measured.

The **Revolving Loan Fund and Per Capita Funding Program** are designed to provide financial assistance to local communities so they may expand industrial development and create new jobs. To date, only villages and cities in the county have used these two programs, but they are also available to towns.

UW-EXTENSION

Through the Winnebago County office of the University of Wisconsin-Extension Service, the Winnebago County Resource Development Agent offers:

- Small business management assistance workshops or one-on-one counseling
- Information on county revolving loan funds and other sources of financing
- Research into available government loans
- Local demographic information

In addition to county organizations and programs, there are many federal, state, and regional organizations that can help the Town of Oshkosh to support economic development opportunities and initiatives in the town, including:

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

- East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission – *www.eastcentralrpc.org*: ECWRPC maintains an Economic Development Program that provides communities with information for economic development, reviews of program changes and initiatives, and review assistance for local economic development proposals, plans. ECWRPC also reviews regional economic development program recommendations for more effective application at the local level.

A significant portion of the Economic Development Program is updating the CEDS, an annual report that includes a review of the previous year's accomplishments, current demographic and economic statistics and any significant changes in the local economy. As part of the process, the Commission's Economic Development Committee helps to identify economic problems and opportunities and economic development projects to address their needs.

ECWRPC also collects and distributes socio-economic data about the region which is useful for market analysis by prospective developers. Furthermore, ECWRPC maintains an inventory of industrial sites and buildings within the region.

STATE AGENCIES/PROGRAMS

- Wisconsin Department of Commerce – *www.commerce.state.wi.us*: the state's primary agency for delivery of integrated services to businesses.
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation – *www.dot.state.wi.us*: the office of disadvantaged Business Enterprise Programs administers a range of services to increase participation of firms owned by disadvantaged individuals in all federal aid and state transportation facility contracts.
- Forward Wisconsin – *www.forwardwi.com*: to market outside Wisconsin to attract new businesses, jobs and increased economic activity to the state.

- Department of Workforce Development – www.dwd.state.wi.us: to build and strengthen Wisconsin’s workforce by providing job services, training and employment assistance, and help employers find necessary workers.
- Wisconsin Small Business Development Centers – www.uwex.edu/sbdc: to help ensure the state’s economic health and stability through formative business education by counseling, technology and information transfer and instruction.

FEDERAL AGENCIES/PROGRAMS

- Department of Agriculture Rural Development Administration – www.rurdev.usda.gov
- U. S. Small Business Administration – www.sba.gov: provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run and grow their businesses.
- US Department of Commerce – www.doc.gov
- US Department of Transportation – www.dot.gov

Environmentally Contaminated Sites

At this time, there are no known environmentally contaminated sites in the Town of Oshkosh. If a site were to be identified in the future, it would be provided through the WDNR Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Internet web site tracking list available at: www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/rr/brrts/index.htm. There are many sites documented in the City of Oshkosh that are in close proximity to town property.

A **Brownfield** refers to an abandoned, idle, or underused industrial or commercial facility or property where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

If a contaminated site is identified, the town and landowner can pursue organizational and financial assistance from Winnebago County, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to clean up the property. There are many grant programs available through these agencies to help communities address Brownfield (currently vacant commercial and industrial facilities), leaking underground storage tank, and other environmental concerns should they arise in the future. To prevent an environmental situation, the town will encourage only environmentally friendly business development that is properly permitted and regulated to protect the town’s natural environment.

Issues and Concerns

Through the planning process, several economic development concerns were identified. What follows is a summary of some of the primary issues raised.

TAX BURDEN

Economic development is seen as a means to support the tax base. However, to be an effective means of supporting the tax base, economic development opportunities must not create a burden on existing community facilities (i.e. roads) or require services beyond those the town currently provides. For this reason, special consideration was given to the extent of economic development when developing the *Future Land Use Maps*.

LACK OF TECHNICAL BASED BUSINESSES

The development of technical enterprises has the potential to create higher-paying skilled positions in the area. This is desirable to town residents, but challenging given the limited services the town has available to offer potential businesses.

RURAL CHARACTER PRESERVATION

Of primary concern to the town is to maintain a balance between economic development opportunities and rural character. While some additional economic development, particularly along highway corridors, is desirable, this development must not interfere with the overall rural, residential character of the community.

Coordination with Other Required Plan Elements

Economic development in the Town of Oshkosh has the potential to impact many of the other required plan elements. What follows is a summary of the relationship between the Economic Development Element and the Land Use, Transportation and Intergovernmental Elements.

LAND USE

The location, type, and amount of business development in the Town of Oshkosh was an important consideration in the development of the *Future Land Use Maps*. Likewise, as business environments were identified in the planning effort, the importance of landscaping, signage controls and lighting controls to protect the rural character of the town was discussed. Enforcement of these types of ordinances is addressed through the Winnebago County Zoning Ordinance. The town should continue to coordinate with the county to ensure that the ordinance is effective and enforced.

TRANSPORTATION

Given that much of the town's business development will occur along highway corridors, it is important to ensure that development does not interfere with the flow of traffic on these roadways. However, at the same time, many businesses require convenient access to be successful. As a result, it will be important to ensure that business uses along

highway corridors are well-planned with shared drives and service roads to minimize traffic impacts.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

A great challenge to the Town of Oshkosh is to seek intergovernmental cooperation with other surrounding municipalities. The town should have information available to prospective business owners outlining the advantages of remaining in the town. This will become increasingly important to ensure that the town's tax base is diversified over time.

Vision and Goals

In 2020, the Town of Oshkosh expects to have expanded economic development areas to support the local tax base without jeopardizing the rural character of the town. The goals and objectives needed to expand the economic base are provided below. The location for new business development is illustrated on the *Future Land Use Maps* provided in the Chapter 10.

GOALS

1. Expand commercial and light industrial development along USH 41 and USH 45, with secondary development areas along old USH 45 and CTH A to "grow" and diversify the local economy.
2. Encourage local entrepreneurs who seek to expand and diversify the town's economy by opening home occupations.

OBJECTIVES

1. Through appropriate zoning and communication with local realtors, seek to concentrate new commercial and industrial development around existing development in areas identified on the *Future Land Use Maps*.
 - a. A copy of this plan will be available upon request and available at the nearest public library for local businesses.
 - b. Work to ensure that the county zoning code adequately permits commercial and industrial uses with appropriate signage, lighting, and landscaping.
2. Support the establishment of home occupations, provided such uses do not constitute a nuisance to neighboring properties (i.e. excessive noise, traffic, odors, vibration, etc.) or deter from the rural character of the area (i.e. signage, lighting, etc.).
 - a. Adopt a policy for providing recommendations to officials about proposed special use permits to allow for home occupations in the Town of Oshkosh.
 - b. Develop a guide for local property owners who wish to establish a home occupation. Include criteria for site development and zoning approvals.
3. Monitor local property tax revenue to ensure that revenues are adequate to provide needed services.
 - a. Utilize a CIP/B to anticipate future budget expenses.
 - b. Coordinate improvements with state, county and other agencies to minimize duplication of services and increase efficiencies in services provided.
 - c. Consider conducting a cost of services study, similar to the study completed by the Town of Dunn, to better understand the sources and allocations of tax dollars.