

6 Economic Development

6.1 Economic Development Chapter Purpose and Contents

This element includes a brief summary of existing economic development resources and opportunities followed by a series of goals, objectives, and recommendations to guide the stabilization, retention, or expansion of local economic opportunity in the Town of Hancock. The element also provides a description of the types of businesses or industries desired in the community, and Hancock's strengths and weaknesses for attracting or retaining these businesses.

Recommendations were developed through the public participation process, and through review of the *Town of Hancock Community Management Plan (2005)*. Many of the goals and objectives that were developed as part of the community management plan have also been included in this comprehensive plan. New goals, objectives, and recommendations were added where identified through the public participation process or in areas necessary for compliance with Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law.

6.2 Summary of Existing Conditions for Economic Development

The following section identifies primary economic development resources identified by East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) located in whole or in part within the Town of Hancock. A complete listing of existing resources information can be located in the *Town of Hancock Comprehensive Plan Volume Two: Existing Conditions Report*.

Educational Attainment

- A higher percentage of residents in the Town of Hancock (54.6%) received high school diplomas than the State of Wisconsin (34.6%).
- The percentage of Hancock residents that completed four years of college or more was 16.0% compared to 22.4% of state residents.

Labor Force

- Labor force growth rates for Waushara County (29.4%) and the Town of Hancock (44.7%) exceeded the state's 14 percent growth rate between 1990 and 2000.

Economic Base Information

- The manufacturing (20.1%), retail (13.6%), and education, health, and social services (11.0%) industries employed about half (44.7%) of workers in the Town of Hancock in 2000.
- The top three occupations for Town of Hancock workers in 2000 were sales and office (30.4%), management, professional, and related occupations (22.7%) and production, transportation, and material moving occupations (17.9%).

Travel Time to Work

- On an average, residents from the Town of Hancock, Waushara County and the state spent less than 30 minutes traveling to and from work in 1990.
- In 1990, average commute times for Hancock residents was 17.5 minutes. By 2000, average commute times increased to 28.5 minutes.

Location of Workplace

- A total of 62.4% of Town residents worked in Waushara County in 1990. In 2000, the percentage decreased slightly to 58.7%.
- In 2000, about 42 percent of Town workers were employed in the Town of Hancock, the Village of Plainfield or the City of Wautoma.

Employment Forecast

- Statewide, it is anticipated that the largest increases will be seen in the education and health services sector.
- While the state is expected to see the highest increases in this area, employment opportunities in Waushara County may differ. It is difficult to forecast employment for small communities, since the addition or loss of one industry or employer greatly impacts the community's economic base.

Industrial Park Information

- There are no industrial parks in the Town of Hancock. The closest industrial park is the Coloma Business Park.

Business Retention and Attraction Entities

- Tri-County Regional Development Corporation (TCREDC) is a partnership between Waushara, Marquette, and Green Lake counties.
- The Waushara County Economic Development Corporation, run by a board of volunteers, is working to foster new business development, and support and sustain existing businesses throughout the county.
- Several nearby communities actively promote business retention and attraction.

Economic Strengths and Weaknesses

- Economic strengths generally include the Town's location and natural resources and agricultural base, while weaknesses include low population density and lack of economic diversity.

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 30 entries for Hancock in Waushara County. However, all sites listed are either closed, historic or No RR Action required.

6.3 Economic Development Issues Identified Through the Planning Process

Economic development for many towns means maintaining the ability of farmer's to continue to work the land while ensuring there is a support system which maintains access to goods and services that sustain active agricultural pursuits. 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 Town's local economy. Farming provides economic opportunity for hired hands to help harvest crops, which provides additional earning opportunities during limited times of the year. There are farming-related industries that also contribute to the local economy.

Redevelopment of Service Centers

Town residents utilize goods and services opportunities available in nearby communities. In Hancock, this includes commercial outfits located in the Village of Hancock. Unfortunately, these opportunities are becoming fewer as historic storefronts fall into disrepair and small businesses grapple with tough economic realities of higher operating costs and tougher competition. Redevelopment of small service centers, such as the Village of Hancock, would allow rural residents closer proximity to the goods and services they require and would increase their access to these commodities.

Proximity to Larger Service Centers

The Town of Hancock is located along I-39, a major highway, which should make it attractive for business development. Unfortunately, large population centers, such as the City of Stevens Point, deny local opportunities as smaller communities cannot compete with the services and other incentives larger communities can provide.

Employment Opportunities

The lack of employment opportunities can be an issue in rural communities. Even though agriculture is a key component in these communities, there is not always enough work to sustain many workers on a year-round basis. There are also few job opportunities available for young people who are looking for employment after high school or college graduation.

6.4 Strengths and Weaknesses for Economic Development

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

Kinds of Businesses Desired

Although new development is highly supported, it must exist in harmony with the local environment. It should not compromise the natural resources or the historical and cultural components of the area. New development should blend into the rural landscape and complement existing development.

Agriculture and related businesses should continue to be a key component of the local economy in Hancock. Large, factory farms are not as widely accepted, and the Town should collaborate with other communities to identify where this type of operation could be located in the county. Small businesses, or home-based occupations, are encouraged to develop and prosper in the Town. Support of business development, such as a grocery store, in the Village of Hancock is also encouraged as are eco-based tourism activities that capitalize on local resources (such as the Whistler Mound Group).

Strengths

- Access to the I-39 corridor
- Proximity to Stevens Point
- Availability of natural areas, open spaces, and recreational opportunities
- Prime agricultural soils
- Strong agricultural economy

Weaknesses

- Lack of diversity in economic base
- Lack of population density is a deterrent for service and retail businesses
- Distance from larger urban centers

6.5 Economic Development Policy

The Town of Hancock encourages agencies and individuals to work together to improve the economic health of the area and the financial well-being of local residents.

6.6 Economic Development Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations

The following section identifies goals, objectives, and recommendations for growing or sustaining economic development resources in the Town of Hancock. The goals and objectives identify what should be accomplished, whereas the recommendations focus on identifying the action necessary to achieve the goals and objectives. In many cases, existing prerogatives were carried over from the *Town of Hancock Community Management Plan (2005)*.

Goal 6.1: Create conditions that are favorable for retaining and attracting appropriate commercial enterprises.

Objective(s)

- a. Expand the range of goods and services available locally.
- b. Attract and capture visitor-dollars locally.
- c. Improve the economic viability of the Village of Hancock business district which services Town residents.

Recommendations

6.1.1 Target key I-39 interchange areas for new commercial development. This includes encouraging the Village of Hancock to extend sewer and water services where viable.

6.1.2 Support and retain existing local commercial enterprises.

6.1.3 Identify and fill “gaps” in the local retail/service economy. Gaps may include:

- i. Gas station / Food service
- ii. Tax accountants / Farm accounting
- iii. Daycare services
- iv. Beauty salon / Barber
- v. Craft store

6.1.4 Encourage business development that caters to the traveling public.

6.1.5 Seek out business opportunities that provide a reason to “visit” the area.

6.1.6 Market the area and its attractions by developing a tourism brochure and distribution strategy. Consider organizing a well-publicized community event/festival to draw people to the area.

6.1.7 Coordinate with the Village of Hancock to increase economic opportunity within the sewer service area and downtown district.

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

Objective(s)

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

Recommendations

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

6.2.2 Discourage residential development in prime farming areas.

6.2.3 Support statewide “Right-to-Farm” policies.

6.2.4 Identify and encourage agri-business development opportunities.

6.2.5 Encourage development of countywide or statewide programming to allow raw land price stability at a level that it is affordable for farmers to acquire and expand acreage for agricultural activities. (eg. statewide Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, etc.)

6.2.6 Encourage specialty farming operations. This includes 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.

6.2.7 Work with Waushara County to identify appropriate regional locations for large concentrated animal farming operations (CAFOs).

Goal 6.3: Maintain a quality forest resource and support economy.

Objective(s)

- a. Utilize forest resources for appropriate levels of economic development.
- b. Retain support industries to sustain viable forest exports.

Recommendations

6.3.1 Encourage best forestry management practices.

6.3.2 Explore opportunities to expand markets and diversify uses for forest products.

6.3.3 Control insects and diseases that threaten the forest resource.

Goal 6.4: Reduce dependency on other areas for employment.

Objective(s)

- a. Provide additional local employment opportunities.
- b. Retain young members of the work force.
- c. Create better paying jobs.

Recommendations

6.4.1 Work with Tri-County Regional Development Corporation (TCREDC) and the Waushara County Economic Development Corporation to develop both short-range and long-range strategies for job creation.

6.4.2 Explore the feasibility of forging a Village and Town partnership for creation of a jointly shared Industrial park development near the I-39 highway interchange.

6.4.3 Work with the Waushara County Economic Development Corporation to better “sell” the area’s amenities (i.e., location, quality of life) to attract business development.

6.4.4 Develop unique and interesting commercial opportunities to lure college and tech graduates back to the Hancock area. This includes exploring development of niche retail development in the Village of Hancock (such as antique shops or other boutique commercial outlets) to make Hancock a destination area.

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 the Town, application of economic development programs administered at other levels of government could be utilized locally to help achieve Hancock's goals and objectives. A listing of these programs is available in the *Town of Hancock Comprehensive Plan Volume Two: Existing Conditions Report* (see pages 6-14 to 6-23).