

CHAPTER 6: Economic Development

6.1 Background

This is the sixth of nine chapters that comprise the Wisconsin Rapids Comprehensive Plan. This chapter is based on the statutory requirement for a “compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps, and programs to promote the stabilization, retention, or expansion of the economic base and quality employment opportunities.”

The Comprehensive Planning Legislation established 14 state planning goals. Of these 14 goals, two relate directly to economic development, while three more are related to economic development. The two economic development goals are: promoting the expansion and stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional, and local levels; and promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures.

The three related goals are: Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests; Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards; and Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

Local, county, regional, and state economic development programs that apply to Wisconsin Rapids are identified, as are economic development related issues, and overall goals, objectives and policies.

A. Previous Studies

1. Ahead of the Current: A Downtown Revitalization Plan for the City of Wisconsin Rapids, 2007

This plan focuses directly on the downtown. The first part of the plan is an inventory and assessment of the downtown; the second part was an implementation plan. Four themes were identified in this process:

- Coordination & Cooperation
- Economic Positioning

- Design & Infrastructure
- Publicity & Promotion

The downtown study identified additional public infrastructure and support of both the business and general public necessary for the effort to be successful.

2. Downtown Waterfront Plan, 2009

A Waterfront Grant was received by the city, and builds on some of the finding of the 2007 downtown planning process. The Waterfront Plan provides a planning tool, for both the short and long terms, to guide improvements in the downtown area. The overall goal of the plan is to enhance pedestrian connectivity, diversity, visual appeal, and other elements to enable the city to retain existing businesses and attract new ones, provide interesting places to live and visit, and create the activity necessary to allow the downtown to thrive.

3. Wood County Comprehensive Plan

The county is currently working toward the completion of a county comprehensive plan. The Economic Development Chapter is still in draft form.

4. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Wood County is one of ten counties included in the North Central Wisconsin Economic Development District, as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) is the agency that is responsible for maintaining that federal designation. As part of maintaining that designation, the NCWRPC annually prepares a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report. The report serves to summarize and assess economic development activities of the past year, and present new and modified program strategies for the upcoming year.

Key findings from this regional level plan involve an inventory of the physical geography of the Region and its resident population. Labor, income, and employment data are covered with analysis of the economic status of the region. Construction, wholesale trade, retail, transportation, and manufacturing all have grown rapidly since 1980. Finance, insurance, real estate, and services have lagged behind national averages.

B. Economic Development Issues

Several issues have been identified during the planning process. Some of those issues are listed below:

✓ Change of the Downtown

Over the last several years, the downtown has lost numerous businesses to other areas. There is an organized effort to revitalize the downtown. A study was done related to this in 2007.

✓ Loss of High Paying Manufacturing Jobs

Over the last decade, the general economy has changed. Manufacturing jobs, especially those in the paper sector, have been lost, and the pay scales of the jobs that have been created recently are not at the same pay level. In general, there has been a change toward more service or retail jobs. Unfortunately, manufacturing is on the decline at both the state and national levels.

✓ Income Levels

Although city residents have made progress toward closing the gap over the last twenty years, income levels still are below county, state, and national levels.

✓ Commuting Patterns

Wood County is a “net commuter” county, meaning more people come into the county than leave the county for employment opportunities. According to the 2000 Census, approximately 5,000 persons come into the county daily, about half from Marathon County, followed by Clark and Adams.

✓ Labor Force Skills

An issue identified by existing manufacturing and other entry-level employers is the issue of workforce skills. The existing skill set worker training is a priority. Local firms are spending time and money to train their labor force to minimal levels. That takes funds away from other functions of the business. This also creates difficulty in the attraction of new employers. The local Community Foundation recently received a federal grant to further identify the needs of the area workforce and develop strategies for future training.

6.2 Inventory and Trends

The City of Wisconsin Rapids comprises a major portion of the Wood County economy; therefore, this chapter begins with a review of county level data. The county level is also the primary data level for economic data.

A. Wood County

The following section reviews the twelve major Industry Sectors, as categorized by the U.S. Census Bureau. Unfortunately, this data is only collected and released on a ten-year cycle; therefore, the data is often several years old. The Census has developed a new survey called the American Community Survey to release data more frequently; however, the city is too small to qualify.

1. Industry Sectors

The twelve sectors are: public administration; agriculture, forestry and fishing; mining; construction; manufacturing; transportation and communications; wholesale trade; retail trade; finance, insurance and real estate; education, health and social services; business, personal and entertainment services; and other.

In 2000, there were over 37,000 persons employed in the county. The largest sector was manufacturing, followed by education, health, and social services, and retail trade. In terms of percent of total employment, manufacturing has declined from over 27 percent of total employment to about 24 percent. Table 1 displays 1990 and 2000 employment by industry sector.

Between 1990 and 2000, the three fastest growing sectors, in terms of percentages, were business, personal, and entertainment services, construction, and public administration. However, public administration accounts for less than three percent of total county employment. Four industry sectors actually experienced declines in total employment.

**Table 1:
Employment by Industry, Wood County**

Sector	1990	2000	1990 to 2000 % Change
Public Administration	725	980	35.2%
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	1,655	1,321	-20.0%
Mining	31	0	NA
Construction	1,560	2,333	49.6%
Manufacturing	9,284	9,144	-1.5%
Transportation and Communications	1,844	2,266	22.9%
Wholesale Trade	1,115	929	-16.7%
Retail Trade	6,282	5,150	-18.0%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	1,225	1,471	20.1%
Education, Health and Social Services	6,984	8,558	22.5%
Business, Personal and Entertainment Services	1,954	3,825	96.0%
Other	1,514	1,368	-10.0%
County Totals:	34,173	37,345	9.0%

Source: Fact Finder 1990 & US Census 2000

Public Administration:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector grew by over 35 percent. Less than 1,000 persons were employed in this sector, making this the 10th largest sector in the county.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector declined by about 20 percent. About 1,300 persons are employed in this sector, which makes it the ninth largest sector.

Mining:

Although the data shows no employment in 2000, that does not mean there is no employment in this sector. Since this is such a small sector, data for it is often excluded to protect proprietary information if only one or two firms are involved in this activity.

Construction:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector grew by almost 50 percent. About 2,300 persons are employed in this sector, making it the fifth largest in the county.

Manufacturing:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector declined by 1.5 percent. Over 9,100 persons are employed in this sector, making it the largest in the county.

Transportation and Communication:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector increased by almost 23 percent. Over 2,200 persons are employed in this sector, making it the sixth largest in the county.

Wholesale Trade:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector declined by over 16 percent. Less than 1,000 people were employed in this sector, making it the eleventh largest of twelve sectors in the county.

Retail Trade:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector declined by about 18 percent. However, some of this decline is attributed to the way the data has been categorized by the Census Bureau between 1990 and 2000. Over 5,100 people are employed in this sector, making it the third largest in the county.

Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector increased by over 20 percent. About 1,400 persons were employed in this sector, making it the seventh largest in the county.

Education, Health & Social Services:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector had growth exceeding 22 percent. Over 8,500 people are employed in this sector, making it the second largest in the county.

Business, Personal & Entertainment Services:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector grew by 96 percent. Over 3,800 persons are employed in this sector, making it the fourth largest sector in the county.

Other:

Between 1990 and 2000, this sector declined by 10 percent. About 1,300 people are employed in this sector, making it the eighth largest sector.

2. Labor Force

Labor force is closely related to the total population. In 2000, the county population was 75,555, and the labor force was 39,339, a participation rate of about 67 percent. The labor force is simply the number of people, age 16 and over, employed or looking to be employed in an area. Those persons over sixteen who are students, homemakers, retired, institutionalized, or unable/unwilling to seek employment are not considered part of the labor force.

Some of the growth in the county's labor force has been due to the increase in the participation rate, as shown in Table 2. In 1990, only 65.9 percent of the population over 16 was in the labor force. By 2000, that rate increased to almost 67.1 percent. The national participation rate in 2000 was 48 percent, and the state rate was 69 percent.

Unemployment is defined as the difference between the total civilian labor force and total persons employed. In 1990, the county had 6.1 percent unemployment, which was the same as the state rate of 6.6 percent. In 2000, the county had a 5.0 percent unemployment rate, compared to the state rate of 4.7 percent.

Table 2:
Labor Force Indicators, Wood County

Indicator	1990	2000	Change
Labor Force	36,447	39,339	8%
Employed	34,173	37,345	9%
Unemployed	2,224	1,976	-11%
Unemployment Rate	6.1%	5.0%	-1.1
Participation Rate	65.9%	67.1%	+1.2

Source: U.S. Census

The most recent employment data available is from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development for 2008. The labor force had grown to 41,550, and the unemployment rate was 5.4 percent.

3. Educational Levels

Education and training is critical to maintaining the productivity in the county. The vocational-technical education system and the training available are of particular importance. As business and industry continues to grow and change, the demand for highly trained and skilled labor grows. The state provides a variety of initiatives to develop the workforce through education, training, and cooperative ventures with business and industry. Worker training programs are very important, as the locational mismatch between worker skills and available jobs continues to widen.

Employment and training services for dislocated workers are primarily delivered through job centers. There is a job center located in Wisconsin Rapids. These centers are one-stop resources for employers to meet their workforce needs and for job seekers to get the career planning, job placement, and training services they need to obtain jobs.

4. Income Levels

There are two measures of income: median household income and per capita income. Median household income provides an indication of the economic ability of the typical family or household unit, while per capita income provides a measure of relative earning power on a per person level.

As identified in the Issues and Opportunities chapter of this plan, the county Median Household income in 2000 was \$41,595 and the Per Capita income was \$20,203. Both Median and Per Capita Incomes have risen over the last twenty years, but still lag behind the state median income of \$43,791 and Per Capita Income of \$21,271.

B. City of Wisconsin Rapids

The previous information has provided the county context for this topic. Below are a variety of local level data related to economic development.

1. Economic Profile

Labor Force:

The city's local labor force represents about 22 percent of the total county labor force. In 2000, Table 3 shows that there were almost 8,800 people in the labor force, which represents a participation rate of 61 percent. Both the labor force and the number employed increased over the last ten-year period, although at a slower rate than the county.

Table 3:
Labor Force Indicators, City of Wisconsin Rapids, 1990–2000

Indicator	1990	2000	Change
Labor Force	8,249	8,732	6%
Employed	7,655	8,225	7%
Unemployed	582	507	-13%
Unemployment Rate	7.0%	5.8%	-1.2
Participation Rate	58.0%	61.0%	+3.0

Source: U.S. Census

Occupations:

Occupation data from the U.S. Census in Table 5 indicates that the majority of the persons residing in the city work in occupations of production and transportation, followed by sales and office, and management and professional. These are also the same three primary occupations identified in the county.

Table 4:
Residents by Occupation, 2000

Occupation	City of Wisconsin Rapids	
Management/professional	1,911	23.2%
Service	1,439	17.5%
Farming/forestry	87	1.1%
Sales/office	2,154	26.2%
Construction	732	8.9%
Production/transportation	1,902	23.1%

Source: U.S. Census

Incomes:

Both median income and per capita incomes were discussed in the Issues and Opportunities chapter. The city's median household income in 2000 was \$34,956, and the Per Capita income was \$17,723. Although both Median and Per Capita Incomes have risen over the last twenty years, they still lag behind the county and state growth rates.

2. Major Employers

Table 6 lists the major employers in the Wisconsin Rapids area, which represent a variety of different economic sectors, including manufacturing, insurance, and government.

**Table 5:
Major Area Employers**

Name:	Product/Service	Employed
Wisconsin Rapids School District	K – 12 School District	500-999
Riverview Hospital	Hospital	500-999
Domtar	Paper Industry	1000+
Ocean Spray	Food Processing	100-249
Advanced Fiberglass Technologies	Manufacturing	100-249
NewPage	Paper Industry	1000+
Renaissance Learning	Software	100-249
Wood County	Government	500-999

Source: City of Wisconsin Rapids, Heart of Wisconsin, WiDWD

3. Employment Areas and Existing Facilities

The city has a variety of infrastructure amenities for business development, including:

- Three fully serviced business and industrial parks.
- Transportation access to County Highways F, W & Z, and State Highways 13, 34, 54, and 73, as well as four-lane access to Highway 39/51.
- A public-use airport with a 6,000-foot runway suitable for commercial and freight service. It is classified as a Basic Utility – B Airport.

- Rail service is available from both Canadian National and Union Pacific Railroads.
- Telephone, cable, internet, and fiber optics.
- Water, sanitary sewer, and local roads throughout the city.

These types of resources enhance the city's ability to maintain and expand its economic base. Business and industrial parks are critical economic development infrastructure for a city. The creation of business and industrial parks enables the city to compete with other communities to attract new businesses, or to relocate existing businesses for expansions. An industrial park is a parcel of land that has been developed according to a plan that provides sites for potential business and industrial firms. The park should be designed in such a way that it ensures compatibility among industrial operations and the existing activities of the area in which the park is located.

The three city industrial parks are the Wisconsin Rapids Westside Industrial Park with about 540 acres, of which 30 acres are available; Rapids East Commerce Center with about 210 acres of which about 10 acres are available; and Woodlands Business Center with about 150 acres of which about 30 are available.

4. Strengths and Weaknesses

The following section lists the community strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are the things that are positives for economic growth, while weaknesses are negatives toward economic development. Each of these should be further examined and actions taken to maximize and minimize the impacts on the community.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS:

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

- Reasonable cost of living
- Excellent health care services
- Existing economic clusters in forest products, food processing, and distribution
- Lower wage rates
- Adequate utilities
- Wide range of Prices on land and buildings

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Available business and industrial space
- Rail service by two providers
- Capacity of infrastructure for growth
- Necessary utilities, services, and telecommunications
- State highway network
- Proximity to highway 51/39

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Available labor
- Quality schools /commitment to education
- Strong work ethic of labor force
- High level of interest in economic development
- Safe community
- Good business & education partnerships

NATURAL RESOURCES

- Abundant area natural resources, such as water, soils, and wood fibers
- Four season climate
- Excellent recreation opportunities
- Good water and air quality

OTHER

- Overall good quality of life
- Central location in state and close proximity to Marshfield, Stevens Point – Plover, and Wausau

COMMUNITY WEAKNESSES:

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

- Shortage of angel and venture financing for business growth
- Need for better coordination and cooperation
- High property taxes
- Location to major markets
- Lack of promotion and marketing for the area
- Lack of marketing programs for the region
- Improving community preparedness
- Decline of manufacturing sector
- Slow decision making by state and local governments

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Transportation limitation imposed by interstate system access

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Difficulty retaining young workers
- Lack of specialized training programs for technology related jobs
- Aging workforce
- Limited partnerships between business and education

OTHER

- Proximity to Marshfield, Stevens Point – Plover, and Wausau

5. Local Economic Development Capacity

There are four primary economic development organizations in the community. These are: the Wisconsin Rapids Area Development Corporation, the Heart of Wisconsin Business Alliance, the City of Wisconsin Rapids, and the Wood County Economic Development Corporation.

Heart of Wisconsin Business Alliance

The Heart of Wisconsin Business and Economic Alliance, or HOW, receives financial support from annual membership dues, local government funding, public and private grants, sponsorships, program revenues and more. HOW serves as a first contact for business resource assistance, maintains the Wisconsin Rapids revolving loan fund, provides entrepreneurial training, and either sponsors or participates in several economic development workshops each year. The Wood County Board of Supervisors, through their Conservation, Education, and Economic Development Committee, provides financial support to HOW and County supervisors and staff members participate on various HOW-sponsored committees and events.

City of Wisconsin Rapids

The City of Wisconsin Rapids has a revolving loan fund that was established by the Wisconsin Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. These funds are soon to be co-mingled with similar funds from Marathon, Portage, and Wood County.

The City of Wisconsin Rapids has utilized tax incremental finance (TIF) districts throughout the city. Typically, TIF districts are used to provide infrastructure in an area to promote development. A TIF district allows local governments to invest in infrastructure and economic development projects and apply the increment of increased property tax revenue realized by those projects in retiring the costs of those improvements. There are several Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts in the city

6. Economic Development Programs

The following is a brief listing of county, regional, state, and federal resources and programs to assist economic development efforts in the region. This list is only a summary of some of the programs available, and provides the most current program information. The reader should seek current information on any of the programs listed.

C. County

The county does not have a countywide economic development corporation, but rather a Marshfield area organization and a Wisconsin Rapids area organization. Both groups were formed to provide assistance to economic development in their respective areas. The county also operates a county revolving loan fund. These funds have recently been merged with a new multi-county fund.

D. Regional

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is a designated Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. Under this designation, the Commission maintains a continuous process of planning assistance that supports the formulation and implementation of economic development programs designed to create or retain full-time permanent jobs and income. The NCWRPC provides services such as economic research, marketing, financial packaging, evaluation and analysis of public infrastructure needs that support private economic development activity, and works with local units of government to maintain eligibility for certain grants.

The North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation (NCWDC) is a regional organization created for the purpose of managing a regional revolving loan fund. The Corporation is comprised of the following counties: Adams, Forest, Juneau, Langlade, Wood, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, and Wood.

E. State

1. Wisconsin Department of Commerce

Wisconsin Department of Commerce is the state's primary department for the delivery of integrated services to businesses. Their purposes include to: foster retention of and creation of new jobs and investment opportunities in Wisconsin; foster and promote economic business, export, and community development; and promote the public health, safety, and welfare through effective and efficient regulations, education, and enforcement.

Below is a listing of the programs available from the Department of Commerce:

- **Community Development Block Grant for Public Facilities & Economic Development:** This federally funded program helps underwrite the cost of necessary infrastructure for business development to retain or create employment opportunities. Funds may be used for improvements to public facilities, such as water systems, sewage systems, and roads to meet business retention or creation needs.
- **Community Development Block Grant for Public Facilities:** This federally funded program provides funds to help finance facilities that principally serve low and moderate-income persons, which often have a secondary economic development benefit. Using these CDBG funds, local governments can improve publicly owned utility systems, streets, sidewalks, facilities for the disabled, community centers, libraries, fire stations, and medical facilities.
- **Community Development Block Grant for Emergency Grant:** This federally funded emergency response program helps restore or replace critical infrastructure that has been damaged or destroyed because of a natural or man-made catastrophe. Local governments may use these funds to restore or replace publicly owned utility systems, streets, sidewalks, community centers and other community facilities. Any rural Wisconsin county, city, village, or town with 50,000 or less population is eligible to apply for grant funding.
- **Community Based Economic Development Program (CBED):** The state's CBED program provides funding assistance to local governments and community-based organizations that undertake planning, development, and technical assistance projects supporting business development. For example, CBED program funds may be used to finance economic development plans, small business and technology-based incubator grants, revolving loan programs, and entrepreneur training programs for at-risk youth.
- **Main Street Program:** This program helps communities organize to revitalize their downtowns. The Main Street program promotes a four-pronged approach of organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. State assistance includes training for community-based program managers, workshops, on-site visits, and ongoing technical support.
- **The Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program:** The IRB program involves an allocation of Federal tax-exempt status on bonds that

will be issued by a business to finance an expansion project. By classifying the bonds as tax exempt, the company is able to offer the bonds at a reduced interest rate. Although this program is heavily utilized, its use is limited to small and mid-size manufacturers with strong financial statements.

- Customized Labor Training (CLT): The CLT program can provide grants to help cover a portion of the costs associated with training employees on new technologies, industrial skills, or manufacturing processes. Eligibility is typically limited to those companies that are making capital investments in new technologies that subsequently necessitate the training of existing or new employees.

2. Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

Workforce Development offers several programs in the area of workforce investment, including adult apprenticeship programs in construction, services, and industrial/manufacturing activities, vocational rehabilitation, employee training, and child care, to name a few.

3. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

The DNR Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment provides a comprehensive, streamlined program that consolidates state and federal cleanups into one program (e.g., hazardous waste cleanup, underground storage tank investigation and cleanup, spill response, state-funded clean ups, and brownfield sites). Assistance is also provided to businesses seeking to clean up and re-use existing brownfield sites for commercial, public, or green space uses.

The DNR also inventories brownfield sites through their Tracking System (BRRTS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) registry. These databases connect to statewide information about contaminated sites, spills, cleanups, and other data.

F. Federal

Economic Development Administration (EDA): The EDA is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Its programs target areas that demonstrate need or economic distress. The Public Works program strives to revitalize, expand, or upgrade the area's physical infrastructure to attract new industry, encourage business expansion, diversify local economies, and generate or retain long-term, private sector jobs and investment. Examples of past investments include water and sewer facilities, industrial access roads, rail spurs, port improvements, skill-

training facilities, technology related infrastructure, as well as the demolition, renovation, and construction of publicly owned facilities.

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA): The SBA provides financial, technical, and management assistance to help citizens start, run, and grow their businesses. The SBA has many programs focused primarily on making business loans, and providing counseling and training programs for small businesses.

The SBA's Certified Development Company (504) Loan Program provides growing businesses with long-term, fixed-rate financing for major fixed assets, such as land and buildings. 504 loans can be used to fund land purchases and improvements, grading, street improvements, utilities, parking lots and landscaping, construction of new facilities, or modernization, renovation, or conversion of existing facilities. A Certified Development Company (CDC) is a nonprofit corporation set up to contribute to the economic development of its community. The region utilizes the statewide Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corporation to access this program.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development: RD provides a wide range of programs to assist in community and economic development in farm and rural areas across the nation. While the USDA's housing, empowerment, and utility programs are beneficial to the stability of communities, it is their business and cooperative programs that are the most directly applied to economic development.

The Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program – B&I helps create jobs and stimulates rural economies by providing financial backing for rural businesses. This program provides guarantees up to 90 percent of a loan made by a commercial lender. Loan proceeds may be used for working capital, machinery and equipment, buildings and real estate, and certain types of debt refinancing. The primary purpose is to create and maintain employment and improve the economic climate in rural communities.

The Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) – IRP finances business facilities and community development projects in rural areas. This is achieved through loans made by the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) to intermediaries. Intermediaries re-lend funds to ultimate recipients for business facilities or community development. Intermediaries establish revolving loan funds so collections from loans made to ultimate recipients in excess of necessary operating expenses and debt payments will be used for more loans to ultimate recipients.

The Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) Program – available to public bodies, private nonprofit corporations, and federally-recognized Indian tribal groups to finance and facilitate development of small and emerging private business enterprises, located in areas outside the boundary of a city or unincorporated areas of 50,000 or more, and its immediately adjacent urbanized or urbanizing area.

The Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) – RBOG promotes sustainable economic development in rural communities with exceptional needs. This is accomplished by making grants to pay costs of providing economic planning for rural communities, technical assistance for rural businesses, or training for rural entrepreneurs or economic development officials.

G. Economic Development Strategy

There are many reasons to pursue economic development; however, most revolve around the general goals of expanding the employment base, the tax base, and encouraging diversification. Each of these are briefly discussed below:

- **Expanding the Employment Base:** Job retention efforts are the basic strategy of holding on to the employment that you have, followed by assisting employers to grow and expand. Additional job growth is usually fueled by local efforts to recruit new business into the community. Recruiting should be focused on those businesses that match the assets of the community.
- **Expanding the Tax Base:** Increasing the tax base allows for the continuation and expansion of municipal services. While job-creation efforts promote a search for labor-intensive activities, the effect of a tax-base creation goal depends upon the tax revenue source is most valuable to a community. Here, both recruitment of new businesses and expansion of existing ones are common implementation for this strategy.
- **Economic Diversification:** This goal is important, as major employment dislocations can occur even when the economy is growing. Having only a few large employers can be catastrophic for a local economy, as proven by the reliance of the paper industry. Unemployment can skyrocket if even one of those large employers fails in the market. It is important to have a diverse range of small businesses to stabilize the economy. Periodic busts in the market can devastate certain sectors of the

local economy, especially with respect to small businesses. In practice, a small business needs about six years of successful operation before it reaches a stable plateau where it can resist the bust part of the cycle. Economic stability is obtained by selling to a broad spectrum of markets. Using an economic stability strategy for economic development requires an understanding of markets and linkages.

There are four basic types of economic development strategies that could be used to promote economic development activity. Any comprehensive strategy would address all four of the four strategies in some way. An overview of each is provided:

Retention

Retention means keeping the local firms that already exist in the area. The goal is to assist these firms as needed to stay profitable. All economic development efforts should view retention as the first and most important goal.

Expansion

Working with local businesses to promote expansions can lead to a stronger economy. Expansion leads to the creation of new employment and more profits; therefore, expansion is a boon to local economies.

Creation

The creation of new businesses in a community has obvious benefits. Rather than luring the businesses into the community, the businesses are “home-grown.” These types of businesses are usually small in the beginning, but have potential to grow into larger businesses.

Attraction

The basic premise behind attraction is to bring, or recruit, an existing business to locate within the community. This may be achieved through a combination of economic incentives, marketing, and local amenities. Larger communities find this type of economic development to be successful more so than smaller communities.

6.3 Goals, Objectives & Policies

Goals:

1. Maintain, diversify, and expand the economy.
2. Preserve and enhance the quality of life of the community.
3. Continue to develop the city in a cost-efficient manner.
4. Encourage the coordination of economic development efforts throughout the county and region.

Objectives:

1. Promote the retention and expansion of the current economic base.
2. Encourage the creation of new businesses.
3. Promote and assist the relocation of new businesses to the city.
4. Develop a well-trained workforce.
5. Maintain and enhance public facilities and services.
6. Pursue development and assistance for sustainable economic ventures from both public and private sources.
7. Promote compatibility between economic development and quality of life.

Policies:

1. Conduct a business retention survey from time to time.
2. Establish a Business Retention Committee to address business needs and recognize local businesses.
3. Sponsor a Business Education Program for area businesses.
4. Sponsor, at least annually, a “How to Start a Business” Program.
5. Establish an inventors club for the creation of new firms.
6. Market available sites and buildings to targeted firms.

7. Maintain a website presence for economic development information.
8. Determine employment characteristics and identify needs.
9. Encourage educational institutions to develop training programs needed by the area's businesses, today and in the future.
10. Support and work with local school officials on expanding the school to work program.
11. Evaluate infrastructure and maintain as necessary industrial parks, available sites, and other employment areas of the city.
12. Plan for an adequate supply of land for commercial and industrial needs.
13. Promote telecommunications infrastructure and other technology development and expansion.
14. Direct industrial development to areas with the infrastructure and services to support the development.
15. Work closely with Heart of Wisconsin on all aspects of economic development.
16. Continue to utilize local and regional revolving loan funds and seek recapitalization for these funds.
17. Pursue Wisconsin Department of Commerce and Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority funds, among others.
18. Pursue U.S. Economic Development Administration and USDA - Rural Development funds, among others.
19. Secure additional venture capital for firms in the city.
20. Encourage and promote the tourism industry, with area locations such as the Mead Wildlife Area.
21. Promote development that does not degrade the natural environment or quality of life issues, such as odor, noise, and dust.

22. Update zoning regulations to provide appropriate commercial and industrial zoning districts.
23. Encourage the development of a bike-pedestrian trail along the river throughout the area.
24. Consider all costs of economic development, including those to the environment and quality of life, before deciding on or approving a course of action.
25. Undertake a thorough review of all zoning and other ordinances to make energy and land conservation a conscious part of the ordinance implementation process.