



**Economic
Development and
Growing the
Economy**

**UW
Extension**

Profiles of Best Practices

Building Community Economic Development Capacity—“Superior Days”

Community, County

Superior, Douglas County

Area of Project Impact

Superior, Douglas County

Population Affected

27,368

Situation

The national recession of 1981–1982 left devastating impacts in Superior that the community has been seeking to overcome. In those years, Superior lost over 20 percent of its local employment base, including 40 percent of its manufacturing base. In response to the recession’s impacts, the community mobilized to take action.

Economic Development Strategies

Based on a discussion of its long-term economic development needs, the community of Superior decided to engage in community development through an annual community event.

Implementation

“Superior Days” is a community-based effort that grew out of reaction to a number of seemingly negative factors and forces. It developed as an outgrowth of a community economic analysis sponsored by University of Wisconsin-Extension in 1985, spurred by the devastating economic recession of the early 1980’s. This community analysis brought together a group of interested residents and leaders who identified as its top priority to establish communication linkages between northwest Wisconsin and state government—this communication linkage became “Superior Days.”

For seventeen consecutive years, a diverse collection of Superior, Douglas County and northwest Wisconsin local government officials, community and business leaders and concerned citizens (totaling more than 125 per year) have journeyed to Madison as a group to build and enhance the area’s relationship with state government. The “Superior Days” effort is essentially a grass roots approach to identify and then communicate northwest Wisconsin issues to state government representatives. Each year, issues unique to the area are identified and prioritized through a participatory nominal group process; and then well researched and documented. This researched documentation serves as an educational/informational tool that is used to communicate the issues and needs of northwest Wisconsin to legislators as well as state department and agency officials. During the past five years, a strong youth component as been added to the event.

Partners and Leadership

University of Wisconsin-Extension provides overall coordination and facilitation for the preparation and implementation of the event; including the issues identification process, preparation of the issues, and participant training. Ultimately, the success of “Superior Days” depends upon the involvement of citizens, community and business leaders from Douglas, Iron, Washburn and Burnett counties.

Outcomes

Many concrete changes have resulted in part from the Superior Days effort. A few successful outcomes include the completion of Highway 53, improvements to Highway 2, support for KUWS Radio—a public radio station

transmitted from the UW-Superior campus, development of the Northern Great Lakes Visitors Center, and funding for an Aquaculture Research and Demonstration Center. In addition, this effort has become a model for community development that has been implemented by a number of Wisconsin and Minnesota communities.

Contact

Geoffrey Wendorf, Community Resource Development (CRD) Agent
Douglas County UW-Extension
107 Courthouse
1313 Belknap St.
Superior, WI 54880
(715) 395-1399