

## **CHAPTER 6: Economic Development**

### **Section 6.1 Introduction**

This element will present information about the economy within the Town of Carson. Economic development, which can be defined as the type and level of business activity within an area, is often based on a combination of market forces, regulation, and the extent of local government encouragement. The Town of Carson has historically been a rural community of primarily agricultural activity with a scattering of small-scale commercial uses. This trend of predominantly agricultural economic activity continues to the present, along with an increase in residential development in areas near the Wisconsin River. Different types of development in surrounding areas, however, can have an impact on Town growth, quality of life, and even its ability to pay for Town services. For this reason Carson wishes to pursue economic development opportunities that will enhance the rural character of the area and assure the community the means to provide for the services and infrastructure needs of present and future residents.

This element concludes with goals, objectives, and policies to promote the stabilization, retention, or expansion of the economic base. County and State economic development information is included to help the Town identify potential opportunities that could be used to pursue appropriate economic development activities.

### **Section 6.2 Labor Force and Economic Base**

#### **A. Labor Force Analysis**

##### **1. Educational Attainment**

As discussed in the Issues and Opportunities chapter of this plan, and illustrated by Table 1.4 of that chapter, the Town of Carson has seen an increase in the percentage of its residents who have achieved a college degree (Associate, Bachelor, or Graduate/Professional degree).

##### **2. Earnings and Income**

Wages are not the only form of income those residents receive. “Total income” is defined by the U.S. Census as the sum of the amounts reported separately for wages, salary, commissions, bonuses, or tips; self-employment income from non-farm or farm businesses, including proprietorships and partnerships; interest, dividends, net rental income, royalty income, or income from estates and trusts; Social security or Railroad Retirement income; Supplemental Security Income (SSI); any public assistance or welfare payments from the state or local welfare office; retirement, survivor, or disability pensions; and any other source of income received regularly such as Veterans; (VA) payments, unemployment compensation, child support, or alimony. According to the 2000 Census (Summary File 3 Table P58, P60, P62-66) 420 (85.5%) of 491 Carson households sampled were classified as household with earnings; 129 (30.7%) were households with social security income; 55 (13.1%) were households that received retirement income; 4 households received public assistance and 84 households (20.0%) had other types of income.

In order to better understand the existing wage-earning realities within the Town of Carson, “earnings” data was considered to be more informative. “Earnings” are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as the algebraic sum of wages or salary income and net income from self-employment, representing the amount of income received regularly before deductions for personal income taxes, Social Security, bond purchases, union dues, Medicare deductions etc

Table 6.1 compares mean (average) earnings, along with mean household and per capita income, for households and individuals in communities within the Carson area and Portage County overall. The Town of Carson has the highest mean earnings of the three communities compared and Portage County overall.

**Table 6.1: Mean Earnings, Mean Household and Per Capita Income Comparison**

	Mean Earnings Per Household			Mean Income Per Household			Per Capita Income		
	1989	1999	Change	1989	1999	Change	1989	1999	Change
Town of Carson	\$37,274	\$59,190	59%	\$37,123	\$57,979	56%	\$12,342	\$21,576	75%
Town of Eau Pleine	\$30,962	\$53,583	73%	\$32,903	\$56,964	73%	\$10,597	\$20,301	92%
Town of Hull	\$38,798	\$58,893	52%	\$41,735	\$62,798	50%	\$14,004	\$22,433	60%
Town of Linwood	\$39,142	\$59,087	51%	\$38,623	\$61,155	58%	\$12,895	\$21,073	63%
Portage County	\$33,230	\$50,373	52%	\$33,184	\$52,102	57%	\$11,730	\$19,854	69%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Census

Mean earnings = total earnings / # h/holds with earnings;  
 Mean income = total income / # h/holds with income

According to 2000 Census data, median household income for Town of Carson residents was \$51,583, which was higher than Portage County (\$43,487) and State of Wisconsin (\$43,791). See Table 1.6 of the Issues and Opportunities chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.

### 3. Percent in Labor Force and Unemployment

Table 6.2 below examines labor force participation and employment percentages for the Town of Carson, as described in the 1990 and 2000 Census. Age sixteen is considered to be the lower threshold for being eligible for employment. The Town had a 2000 labor participation rate of 74.7%, which was above the Portage County Average of 67.1%. Carson did experience a decrease in the unemployment rate from 3.5% in 1990 to 1.9% in 2000.

**Table 6.2: Employment Status of Town of Carson Population 16 Years and Above**

Employment Status	1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Persons 16 years and over</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,034</b>	<b>100%</b>
In labor force	671	67.5%	772	74.7%
Civilian labor force	668	67.2%	772	74.7%
Employed	637	74.0%	752	72.7%
Unemployed	31	3.5%	20	1.9%
Armed Forces	3	0.1%	0	0%
Not in labor force	323	32.5%	262	25.3%

Source: Census 1990 and 2000

### 4. Employment and Occupation

Table 6.3 below provides information regarding the type of occupation that Town of Carson residents were employed in 2000. The Production/Transportation/Material Moving category continues to be the largest, followed by Management, Professional, and Related occupations, which recorded the largest numeric and percentage increases between 1990 and 2000. Table

1.10 of the Issues and Opportunities Chapter summarizes resident employment by industry for the last three Census years. Information for both these tables represents what type of occupation/industry the working residents of the Town were employed in, and is not a listing of the employment opportunities currently located in Carson.

**Table 6.3: Town of Carson Employment by Occupation**

Occupation	1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Management, professional, and related occupations	95	14.9%	189	25.1%
Service occupations	78	12.2%	83	11.0%
Sales and Office occupations	139	21.8%	172	22.9%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry occupations	108	17.0%	22	2.9%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance occupations	51	8.0%	83	11.0%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving occupations	166	26.1%	203	27.0%
Total Employed	637	100%	752	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

5. Commuting

According to Census 2000 data, 83% of employed residents worked outside of the Town, with a mean travel time to work of 23.4 minutes.

B. Local Economic Base Analysis

The economic base in the Town of Carson is mainly agricultural and has a broad range of businesses relating to the agriculture industry. Carson is ranked first in Portage County regarding its amount of non-irrigated cropland (14,228 acres). The community supports the development of agriculture-related businesses that are in harmony with existing land uses and are complimentary to the agricultural activities that currently exist in the Town. Existing types of businesses in the Town of Carson include:

- |                       |                            |              |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Home based businesses | Recreational Vehicle Sales | LP Gas Sales |
| Bars/Restaurants      | Construction/Roofing       |              |
| Agriculture           | Trucking                   |              |

**Section 6.3 Strengths and Weaknesses for Attracting/Retaining Business**

A. Strengths

- Wisconsin River is an important aesthetic resource.
- Restaurant businesses have historically been successful.
- Existing railroad is oriented north-south and east-west.

B. Weaknesses

- No sewer
- Wet / Heavy soils
- High Groundwater
- Low quality groundwater (Iron)

## **Section 6.4 Desired Businesses**

New development proposals for industrial and commercial activities in the Town of Carson will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Many businesses can develop in the community with little or no impact on adjacent uses. Desired businesses in the Town include:

- Possibly a Marina/Restaurant/Bar adjacent to the River
- Agricultural operations and agriculture related businesses
- Home based businesses

## **Section 6.5 Environmentally Contaminated Sites**

Contaminated sites, also known as brownfields, serve as potential land base for economic development. Brownfields are defined as abandoned or underutilized commercial and industrial properties where redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived contamination. The Wisconsin Departments of Commerce and Natural Resources have jointly prepared a guide to help finance brownfields cleanup and redevelopment. It can be found on the internet at: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/rr/archives/pubs/RR539.pdf>

There is currently a small site, two-tenths of a mile east of Lakeview Dr on the north side of USH 10 that is listed with the WI DNR as a brownfield site with open status. This site is listed as having contaminated soil and groundwater from a diesel fuel spill in 1996. Open status refers to a contaminated site in need of clean up or where cleanup is still underway. A complete list of all brownfield sites can be obtained by contacting the DNR or through their website at: [www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/rr/brrts/index.htm](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/rr/brrts/index.htm).

## **Section 6.6 Economic Development Resources**

- **Revolving Loan Fund Programs (Portage County)**

*Purpose:* Funds administered by local communities, which provide local government the ability to assist in economic development projects that will create jobs for low-to-moderate income persons. Typically, the revolving loan fund program provides "gap" financing to local projects that make the project economically feasible.

*Use of Funds:* Land, working capital, buildings, and inventory.

*Amount Available:* Programs are different in each community.

*Advantage:* Offers terms to make the project economically feasible, maximize the return on and provide businesses the ability to finance job creation efforts locally. This program provides a quicker approval process than the Wisconsin Community Development Block Grant - Economic Development Program.

- **Wisconsin Community Development Block Grant-Economic Development (WI Dept. of Commerce)**

*Purpose:* To provide resources to local governments to assist economic development projects that provide jobs to low-to-moderate income persons and expand the local tax base.

*Use of Funds:* Land, working capital, buildings, and inventory.

*Amount Available:* \$750,000 maximum award, \$75,000 to \$500,000 is usual. Provides fixed-rate long term financing.

*Advantage:* Offers terms to make the project economically feasible, maximize the return on public funds, and provide business with rate of return comparable to industry norms. In addition, these funds remain locally for the creation or expansion of a existing Revolving Loan Fund.

- **Wisconsin Rural Economic Development Program (WI Dept. of Commerce)**

*Purpose:* To stimulate the start-up and expansion of small businesses in rural and/or small communities.

*Use of Funds:* Planning and managerial assistance only. This could include development of a marketing strategy for a new product line. Program pays for technical assistance such as consulting fees.

*Amount Available:* Maximum loan award is \$30,000. This program allows straight loans and/or forgivable loans.

*Eligibility:* Businesses with fewer than 25 employees. The business should be starting or expanding operations.

- **Community Development Block Grant - Customized Labor Training (WI Dept. of Commerce)**

*Purpose:* To stimulate the expansion of existing businesses, the attraction and creation of businesses, and the "retooling" of Wisconsin's Industrial base by providing customized labor training. Program is for new technology to industry and industry sector.

*Use of Funds:* Training costs incurred in the upgrading of manufacturing skills. This includes training on the shop floor while not producing salable product.

*Amount Available:* Grant Award. Training grant, competitively awarded, requires 50% match from company. Maximum \$2,500 per employee trained.

*Eligibility:* Proposed training must not supplant training available through existing federal, state and local resources (such as the Technical College and University System). Projects are evaluated on economic contribution; quantity and type of jobs created or saved; cost effectiveness significance of skill upgrading and local unemployment situation.

- **Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation**

A voluntary, non-governmental organization controlled by member families to represent them on legislative issues and to provide farm marketing, business and planning consultation and services. Contact information:

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation  
PO Box 5550  
Madison, WI 53705-0550  
1-800-261-FARM or 608-836-5575

- **USDA – Rural Development Administration (Wisconsin)**

The Rural Development Administration is an organization affiliated with the United States Department of Agriculture that provides funding for home purchase and rehabilitation, technical assistance and funding to new cooperative ventures, and financing for new business development. A full list of their programs can be found on the internet at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wi/programs/index.htm>

Contact information:

USDA Rural Development - WI  
4949 Kirschling Ct.  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
Phone: (715)345-7615 FAX: (715)345-7669

### **Technical Assistance**

- **Small Business Development Center**

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located at the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, is one of ten university-based SBDC's in Wisconsin. Their mission is to provide learning opportunities and practical guidance to help individuals make informed business decisions. The Stevens Point SBDC works with small business in eight central Wisconsin counties, and offers several types of services including seminars, customized in-house training, and individualized counseling. (715) 346-3838

- **Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP)**

In an effort to improve quality and productivity of small to medium sized Wisconsin Manufacturers, a partnership between government, industry, labor, and education was formed. The WMEP assessment process is designed to be broad based rather than in-depth. The purpose is to "raise flags" where more effort should be placed. After the assessment, this can lead to a technical assistance project, in which your company is paired with a facilitator to help design and implement solutions.

- **Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC)**

The University of Wisconsin-Extension's SHWEC program was created to provide pollution prevention services to waste generators in Wisconsin. SHWEC's pollution prevention specialists will assess hazardous waste systems, provide no-cost non-regulatory technical assistance, and identify potential waste reduction options.

### **Section 6.7 Economic Development Issues**

The following issues were identified during the comprehensive planning process:

- The percent of equalized value contained in Ag land is declining because of Use-Value assessment; more residential now
- A lot of people don't work in the Town, they commute somewhere else.
- Need to allow for residential but provide buffers and other protection to allow agriculture operations to run unimpeded
- Economic Development opportunities may arise from the new Hwy 10 alignment.
  - Currently all options are showing an interchange at New Hwy 10 and Hwy 34 going south; this would be the most likely place for commercial development

- Current job opportunities in the Town are home-based businesses.
- Farming and farmland are important economically to the Town.
- How can the Town minimize conflict between farm and non-farm uses, especially as it relates to economic development?

## **Section 6.8 Economic Development Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

Goal A Promote the stabilization of the current economic base.

Objective A.1 Encourage the maintenance or development of agricultural operations in the Town.

Goal B Planned development areas are identified or established throughout the Town.

Objective B.1 Encourage the maintenance and development of small businesses in the Town.

Policy B.1 Be receptive to new commercial development in appropriate locations within the Town.

Policy B.2 Address large scale development proposals, including industrial, institutional, and major commercial uses, on a case-by-case basis.