

CHAPTER 6 Economic Development Element

Section 6.1 Introduction

This element will present information about the economy within the Town of Plover. 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 Plover has historically been a rural community of primarily agricultural activity including a number of industrial operations that support the agricultural economy. However, in the recent past an increase in commercial and residential development has occurred. The Town recognizes that the Village of Plover will also experience growth and most likely see an increase in business development. Different types of development in surrounding areas, such as the Village of Plover, can have an impact on Town growth, quality of life, and even its ability to pay for Town services. For this reason, the Town of Plover 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 Plover 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) 708 of 831 (85.2%) Plover households sampled were classified as household with earnings; 188 (26.6%) were households with social security income; 161 (22.7%) were households that received retirement income; 8 households received public assistance and 132 households (18.6%) has other types of income.

In order to better understand the existing wage-earning realities within the Town of Plover, “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, and mean household and per capita income, for households and individuals in communities within the Plover area and Portage County overall. The Town of Plover experienced a lower percentage increase since 1989 in earnings and income indicators than the County and the other comparison communities. Plover ranks above the County overall in actual dollar amounts for the indicators.

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 Plover	\$39,877	\$52,187	31%	\$41,315	\$56,495	37%	\$13,677	\$21,186	55%
Town of Buena Vista	\$35,365	\$48,055	36%	\$36,182	\$51,832	53%	\$11,246	\$18,775	67%
Town of Grant	\$38,889	\$55,528	43%	\$39,068	\$58,280	49%	\$12,692	\$21,793	72%
Town of Hull	\$38,797	\$58,893	52%	\$41,735	\$62,798	50%	\$14,004	\$22,433	60%
Town of Stockton	\$39,107	\$55,413	42%	\$38,599	\$58,001	50%	\$12,471	\$19,886	59%
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 (see Table 1.6 of the Issues and Opportunities chapter of this Comprehensive Plan), median household income for Town of Plover residents was \$49,312, which was higher than Portage County (\$43,487). The median household income for the State of Wisconsin was \$43,791.

3. Percent in Labor Force and Unemployment

Table 6.2 below examines labor force participation and employment percentages for the Town of Plover, 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 71.6%, which was above the Portage County average of 67.1%. Plover did experience a slight increase in the unemployment rate from 2.6% in 1990 to 2.8% in 2000.

Table 6.2: Employment Status of Town of Plover Residents, 16 Years and Above

Employment Status	1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 16 years and over	1,598	100%	1,720	100%
In labor force	1,222	76.5%	1,231	71.6%
Civilian labor force	1,218	76.2%	1,231	71.6%
Employed	1,176	73.6%	1,182	68.7%
Unemployed	42	2.6%	49	2.8%
Armed Forces	4	0.3%	n/a	n/a
Not in labor force	376	23.5%	489	28.4%

Source: Census 1990 and 2000

4. Employment by Occupation

Table 6.3 below provides information regarding the type of occupation that Town of Plover residents were employed in 2000. The Management/Professional category is now the largest,

nearly doubling in number and increasing nearly 15% since 1990 (when it was the third largest occupation category). The number of residents in Sales and Office occupations declined over the decade (-66, -6%), but remains the second largest category. It was a similar trend for the third largest occupation, Production, Transportation, and Material Moving occupations (-90, -8%). Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance occupations more than doubled between 1990 and 2000 to 145. Table 1.9 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 Plover.

Table 6.3: Town of Plover Resident Employment, by Occupation

Occupation	1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Management, professional, and related occupations	195	16.6%	366	31.0%
Service occupations	136	11.6%	87	7.4%
Sales and Office occupations	392	33.3%	326	27.6%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry occupations	56	4.8%	15	1.3%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance occupations	65	5.5%	145	12.3%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving occupations	333	28.3%	243	20.6%
Total Employed	1,177	100%	1,182	100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

5. Commuting

Census 2000 data indicated that 87% of employed residents worked outside of the Town while mean travel time to work was 15.3 minutes.

B. Local Economic Base Analysis

The economic base in the Town of Plover is mainly agricultural and has a broad range of businesses relating to the agriculture industry. Plover comes in second in leading the County with the amount of acreage of irrigated cropland with 12,628 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. However, over the years, the Town has seen increasing commercial, manufacturing and recreational development along the major highways of Highways 54 and 39/51. Existing businesses in the Town of Plover include:

- Food Manufacturing
- Trucking
- Excavating
- Cold Storage
- Engineering Firms
- Hotel
- Restaurant/Taverns
- Agronomy Distribution
- Vegetable/Dairy/Beef farming
- Race Track
- Campground
- Auto Body
- Retail Sales
- Bait Wholesaler
- Auto and Steel Recycling

More commercial and residential development has been occurring in the Town due mainly to its proximity to the Village of Plover and easy access to the Wisconsin Rapids area. Most Town

residents would like to maintain the rural agricultural atmosphere, but establish some limited commercial development along more heavily traveled roads, such as State Trunk Highway 54.

Section 6.3 Strengths and Weaknesses for Attracting/Retaining Business

A. Strengths:

- Available labor pool
- Base of existing businesses
- Rail System
- Available educational/training centers (UW and Technical College)
- Access to major Highways (39/51 and 54) and railroads
- Good road network (E&W, N&S access)
- Level terrain
- Available land base (along Hwy 39/51)
- High visibility
- Planned development areas
- Land available- not suitable for prime ag land
- Centrally located to 4 larger cities
- Good school system
- Recreational opportunities
- Medical facilities nearby-hospital, Plover Family Practice
- Good resources for landscaping
- Strong cooperative relationship with the Village of Plover
- Development and planning at local level combined with County Planning assistance
- Adequate, affordable housing
- Low tax rate
- Future provision of sewer and water to designated areas of the Town without annexation
- Potential to create TIF districts within the Town

B. Weaknesses:

- Cold winters (potentially more energy costs)
- The Town does not know the extent to which additional rail spurs are available.
- Lack of municipal sewer and water in some areas.
- County Restrictions (want smaller lot sizes than current 2 acre min.)
- Possible agricultural land encroachment issues
- Limited access on Hwy 54 due to WisDOT access management plan

Section 6.4 Desired Businesses

Many businesses can develop in the community with little or no impact on surrounding uses; however, the Town will evaluate new proposals for industrial and commercial activities on a case-by-case basis. Desired businesses in the Town include:

- Agriculture product processor(s)
- Power plant
- Light manufacturing
- Light commercial
- Tourism and recreation
- Small-scale, neighborhood compatible businesses
- Home-based businesses
- Large-scale commercial development in appropriate areas

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 are currently no sites in the Town of Plover listed as brownfields with open status. 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.

Although not listed as a brownfield site, a potential area identified for redevelopment is located along the northern side of Hwy 54 in Section 1, T22N. Currently located on this site is an alcohol manufacturing facility that was developed when the Town of Plover administered its own zoning ordinance almost twenty years ago..

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. This program is for new technology to the 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 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:

- Some zoning districts within the current County Zoning Ordinance don't allow mixed uses (e.g. commercial and light manufacturing) within the district. What can the Town do to promote amending the zoning ordinance to allow for more mixed uses within certain zoning districts?
- How can the Town promote larger scale economic development within its borders?
- To what extent will the Drainage Board enable policies that protect agriculture within the drainage district?

Section 6.8 Economic Development Goals, Objectives and Policies

A. Goal: Promote the stabilization and expansion of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities.

B. Objectives:

1. Support commerce and tourism throughout the County.
2. Preserve productive agricultural land within the Town.
3. Maintain and promote agribusiness and agri-industry, which provide local jobs and support area farming, consistent with sound planning.

C. Policies:

1. Work with Portage County Zoning Department to amend the County Zoning Ordinance to allow for mixed uses such as, residential, home occupation, retail and light manufacturing.
2. Develop a liaison program to work with the Portage County Business Council and other organizations to promote economic development in the Town.
3. Direct commercial, industrial, and other larger scale business development to appropriate areas as identified on the land use map.
4. Maintain a good relationship with the Portage County Drainage Board to help ensure policies that are favorable to agricultural uses.