Economic Development
Element Area Work Group

Recommendations to the
Portage County Comprehensive Planning
Joint Steering Committee

September 18, 2002
The following reactions came from the work group in response to the vision statements adopted by the Urban and Rural Comprehensive Planning Committees.

**Initial Reactions to the Vision Statements:**

- Conflict between “utilizing the businesses that are in existence” with “creating new jobs”.
- Living wage job reference doesn’t include benefits.
- The vision seems to decide for the communities that the urban area will be a point of concentration for development.
- If new businesses are concentrated in the urban areas, there is a strain created on the rural tax base.
- Concern about limiting the location options for businesses coming into the area.
- New companies “coming in” are important. The boundaries for development need to be identified.
- Urban vs. Rural development differs by the need for utility services for the business.
- New development should take place on developed infrastructure.
The following pages contain the recommended goals that the economic development element area work group compiled during their sessions. The goal is stated at the top of the page and is followed by the discussion points or “goal ideas” generated by the group’s discussion that the goal is formulated from. Also included on the page are the possible barriers to achieving the goal and factors that are already in place to help reach the goal.

**GOAL: A central organization actively maintains the growth and informational resources in the community.**

**Goal Ideas / Discussion Points:**

- Encourages consistency.
- Have local market research information available to businesses.
- Have up-to-date information on Community’s ability to support the needs of new and expanding businesses.
- Develop an inventory of existing infrastructure (land, buildings, utilities) available for development.
- Study the future demographics of our county and provide the necessary services.

**Barriers to achieving the goal:**

- Turf.
- Funding/staffing.
- Conflicting priorities and opinions of existing organizations.
- Ability to maintain focus.
- Difficult to keep informational resources up to date.
- Determination whether organization should be public or private.
- Business Council.
- Organization can’t become too dictatorial.

**Factors in place to reach the goal:**

- Existing organizations in place.
- Business Council.
- Geographic location of Portage County.
- Funding and staffing at municipal level to support them.
GOAL: Ensure adequate resources are allotted for economic development efforts

Goal Ideas / Discussion Points:

- Venture capital is available through identified sources.
- Identify incentives available for new and especially existing businesses.
- Establish adequate and stable sources of funding for economic development programs (lowering reliance on grant funds).
- Develop incentive programs that support new business development.

Barriers to achieving the goal:

- State and local budget restrictions.
- Poor economy.
- Lack of knowledge of existing programs.
- Not effectively using current resources.
- Can’t be all things to all people.

Factors in place to reach the goal:

- Business Council.
- State and local programs.
- Grants.
- Other organizations.
- Small Business Development Center.
- Private support.
GOAL: Coordinate Public and Private educational efforts to maximize the investment in our workforce.

Goal Ideas / Discussion Points:

- Community assistance/support for helping the University and MSTC achieve their goals.
- Evaluate local business labor needs and determine if the University and Technical College are meeting those needs.
- Encourage collaboration between the University, MSTC, and local school districts related to career development opportunities for K-12.
- The community has developed a reputation as a highly desirable place to work and do business because of its well-educated work force and high quality of life.
- Integrate the University and MSTC communities into the broader community.
- Have people coming out of our local educational institutions that can fill local employment needs.
- Maintain excellence in our educational systems.
- The community has developed a reputation as a highly desirable place to work and do business because of its well-educated work force and high quality of life.

Barriers to achieving the goal:

- Lack of cooperation.
- Funding constraints.
- Educational needs are at a higher level – need to keep pace with technology.
- Automation.
- Current economy funding levels are cyclical.
- Facility decisions.
- Mobile workforce.

Factors in place to reach the goal:

- Conservation subdivision design option.
- Existing programs.
- Cooperation between institutions.
- Public/private training programs.
- Employers exchange program.
- WI Learning Center.
**GOAL:** Ensure that an adequate skilled workforce is available through retention and recruitment for our business community.

**Barriers to achieving the goal:**

- Lack of model for doing it.
- Mobile workforce.
- Perception that region is low paying.
- Economy.
- State income tax for recruiting out of state employees.
- Adequate skilled jobs that pay a living wage.

**Factors in place to reach the goal:**

- Mobile workforce.
- Technology.
- Educational exchange program.
GOAL: Planned development areas are established throughout the County.

Goal Ideas / Discussion Points:

- New companies “coming in” are important. The areas planned for development need to be identified.
- Zoning is consistent with the goals of this comprehensive plan.
- Develop a plan for where development will take place, including such issues as type and intensity of use, and available or planned infrastructure.

Barriers to achieving the goal:

- Turf.
- Lack of a current long range plan.
- Property rights advocates.
- Politics.
- Potential for stifling growth.
- Layers of approving authorities.
- Financial ability of municipalities to expand infrastructure.
- Unknown of Hwy. 10.
- Sewer service area.

Factors in place to reach the goal:

- Comprehensive Plan.
- Ability to raise capital.
- Existing development patterns.
- Unknown of Hwy. 10.
- Public support for planning development.
- Sewer service area.
**GOAL: Support commerce and tourism throughout the county.**

**Goal Ideas / Discussion Points:**

- Develop a local business promotional campaign directed at the parents of the students at the university.

- Encourage the students and staff of UWSP and Midstate to utilize the downtown.

- Develop a signature attraction within the community to assist in attracting new businesses.

- Utilize our unique natural resources and recreational opportunities to support tourism.
  - Support and expand existing park and trail systems.
  - Maintain surface and ground water quality.
  - Get people (numbers) involved in preserving our natural resources.
  - Support the quality of life we enjoy.

**Barriers to achieving the goal:**

- Lack of hotel or accommodations in the downtown area.
- Lack of a convention center.
- Lack of signature attraction.
- Lack of public understanding that tourism is an economic development tool.
- Funding: less grant money available, local government contributions.
- Lack of resort type setting that takes advantage of natural resources.
- Getting information for parents of UW-SP students and alumni is difficult.

**Factors in place to reach the goal:**

- Location.
- Development of Yellowstone Trail.
- Portage County Sports Authority.
- Green space and related amenities for silent sports.
- Organized community events.
- Stevens Point Special Events Fund.
- UW-Stevens Point.
- New and existing sports facilities.
- Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- Established tourism base.
- Business Council.
- Room tax.
Goal: Preserve productive agricultural land Countywide.

Goal Ideas / Discussion Points:

- Maintain rural integrity.
- Preserve agricultural land through development plans.
- Promote stability in agricultural markets.
- Be sensitive of the long-term goals of the farmers through a dialogue between these landowners, businesses, and local governments.
- Recruitment of agribusiness is consistent with existing and planned agricultural, social and physical infrastructure.
- Limit the amount of residential development in productive agricultural areas.
- Retain and enhance the markets for agricultural products.
- The community taps the resources of the University (College of Natural Resources) to help develop our community plans.
- Create new opportunities to use local agricultural products.

Barriers to achieving the goal:

- Continued development.
- Private property rights.
- Price for farm products and commodities.
- Natural elements (i.e. weather).
- Short growing season.
- Nitrates.
- Loss of high capacity wells.
- Cost of production.
- Changing lifestyles and expectations of public.
- International competition.
- Parcelization of land.

Factors in place to reach the goal:

- Well-established agricultural based businesses.
- Easy to irrigate.
- Soils.
- Exclusive agriculture zoning.
- Transportation network.
- Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association.
- FFA programs.
- Tax incentives.
Goal: Identify and prioritize the needs of the business community.

Goal Ideas / Discussion Points:

- To promote and maintain locally based companies.
- To recruit new business that is compatible with existing support businesses and labor force.
- To develop a market identity for downtown Stevens Point and run with it!
- To promote businesses that give back to the community.
- Ensure that we have a diversified economy.
- Encourage a mix of commercial opportunities in our community to promote an increase in customer traffic.
- Encourage and support community safety and security efforts.
- Encourage community pride.
- People need to have a reason incentive to stay in this area to maintain a healthy workforce.
- To have an ongoing dialogue with employers to understand their needs for the future.
- To bring together business leaders to determine the needs of existing businesses.
- Have adequate and affordable housing opportunities in proximity to employment.

Barriers to achieving the goal:

- Funding.
- Conflicting priorities and opinions.
- Lack of cooperation (businesses, business organizations, local governments).
- Previously locally owned businesses now owned by non-local companies with lack of a community tie.
- Variety of choices on where to locate a business (competition).
- Lack of trend analysis for all county businesses.

Factors in place to reach the goal:

- Plover Area Business Association.
- Association of Downtown Businesses.
- Business Council.
- Business associations.
- Existing retention model and business survey.
- Core of Retired Executives.
- Small Business Development Council.
- Venture Capital Group.
- CAP Services.
- Education and training opportunities.
- CEO discussion group.