

CHAPTER 6 Economic Development Element

Section 6.1 Introduction

This element will present information about the economy within the Town of Buena Vista. 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 Buena Vista has historically been a rural community of primarily agricultural activity with a scattering of small-scale commercial uses. As such, the Town recognizes that the majority of business development will most likely occur beyond its borders. 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 Buena Vista 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 Buena Vista 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 that 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 business, 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 sources of income received regularly such as Veterans’ (VA) payments, unemployment compensation, child support, or alimony. According to the 2000 Census (Summary File 3 Tables P58, P60, P62-66), 398 (81%) out of the 439 Buena Vista households sampled were classified as households with earnings; 105 (26%) were households with social security income, 10 (2.5%) received Supplemental Security Income (SSI), 35 (9%) received retirement income, 4 households received public assistance and 64 households had other types of income.

In order to better understand the existing wage-earning realities within the Town of Buena Vista, “earnings” data was considered to be more informative. “Earnings” are defined by the

U.S. Census Bureau as the algebraic sum of wage or salary income and net income from self-employed, 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 Buena Vista area and Portage County overall. The Town of Buena Vista has experienced increases in earnings and income between 1990 and 2000, but still lags slightly behind Portage County as a whole in actual dollars.

Table 6.1: Mean Earnings, Median 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 Buena Vista | \$35,365 | \$48,055 | 36% | \$36,182 | \$51,832 | 53% | \$11,246 | \$18,775 | 67% |
| Town of Almond | \$34,340 | \$44,883 | 31% | \$36,617 | \$47,961 | 31% | \$14,057 | \$17,962 | 28% |
| Town of Lanark | \$32,396 | \$50,273 | 44% | \$32,682 | \$51,376 | 57% | \$10,511 | \$19,246 | 83% |
| Town of Amherst | \$34,883 | \$54,644 | 57% | \$36,120 | \$63,172 | 75% | \$11,387 | \$19,751 | 73% |
| 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 the Town of Buena Vista residents was \$46,920, which was higher than Portage County (\$43,487), and the 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 provides information regarding the industries of the employed labor force for 1990 and 2000. Age sixteen is considered to be the lower threshold for being eligible for employment. In 2000, the percent of Buena Vista residents in the labor force was 77%, which was above the Portage County average of 67.1%. Buena Vista experienced a slight increase in the percentage of unemployed persons, going from 3.2% in 1990 to 3.3% in 2000.

Table 6.2: Town of Buena Vista Employment Status, 16 years and Above

| Employment Status | 1990 | | 2000 | |
|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Persons 16 years and over | 793 | 100% | 909 | 100% |
| In labor force | 538 | 67.8% | 700 | 77.0% |
| Civilian labor force | 538 | 67.8% | 700 | 77.0% |
| Employed | 513 | 64.7% | 670 | 73.7% |
| Unemployed | 25 | 3.2% | 30 | 3.3% |
| Armed Forces | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Not in labor force | 255 | 32.2% | 209 | 23.0% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

4. Employment by Occupation

Table 6.3 below provides information regarding the type of occupation that the Town of Buena Vista residents were employed in 2000. The Management/Professional category is now the largest, having accounted for the greatest increase in both number and percentage since 1990 (+114, +15%). Sales and Office occupations remains the second largest category (+55, +2%). The third largest change in occupation was in the Construction/ Extraction/ Maintenance category (+78, +10%). Farming/Fishing/Forestry and Production/ Transport/Material Moving occupations had the leading decreases from 1990 to 2000, at -47, -10% and -41, 14%, respectively.

Table 6.2: Town of Buena Vista Employment by Occupation

| Occupation | 1990 | | 2000 | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Management, professional, and related occupations | 60 | 11.7% | 174 | 26.0% |
| Service occupations | 62 | 12.1% | 60 | 9.0% |
| Sales and Office occupations | 117 | 22.8% | 172 | 25.7% |
| Farming, Fishing, and Forestry occupations | 73 | 14.2% | 26 | 3.9% |
| Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance occupations | 29 | 5.7% | 107 | 16.0% |
| Production, Transportation, and Material Moving occupations | 172 | 33.5% | 131 | 19.6% |
| Total Employed | 513 | 100% | 670 | 100% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

5. Commuting

According to the 2001 Portage County Comprehensive Planning Survey, 58% of Town respondents worked outside of the Town and 42% of respondents worked somewhere in Portage County, while Census 2000 data indicated that 14.8% of residents lived and worked in the Town, while 85.2 % of employed residents worked outside the Town. The fact that the majority of Buena Vista’s labor force works outside the Town is further supported by Census 2000 data indicating that mean travel time to work was 23.2 minutes.

B. Local Economic Base Analysis

The economic base in the Town of Buena Vista is agriculture, and has a broad range of businesses relating to the agriculture industry. Buena Vista has the third largest acreage of irrigated cropland (9,935 acres) out of all the Towns in Portage County. Please refer to the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources chapter of this Comprehensive Plan for further information. However, several gravel operations are located in the Town, as well as some small, home-based businesses which have the potential to thrive in the Town. Existing business types in the Town of Buena Vista include:

- Agriculture
- Services
- Trucking
- Retail
- Storage
- Tavern

Section 6.3 Strengths and Weaknesses for Attracting/Retaining Business

A. Strengths

- Easy access to Hwy 54
- Inexpensive and abundant water supply
- Strong agricultural community (abundant farmland)
- Residents are easy to work with
- Centrally located to urban communities.
- Safe community
- Gravel pits
- Attractive woodlands for residential development
- Forest land for recreation

B. Weaknesses

- Lack of population
- Too far from major population centers (e.g. Madison, Milwaukee, Minneapolis)
- Lack of financial capability to support large businesses
- No organized promotion program
- Utilities, such as municipal sewer and water, and natural gas are not available.

Section 6.4 Desired Businesses

Sites designated for new development in the Town of Buena Vista will be on a case-by-case basis because of the rural nature of the community. Desired businesses for the Town include:

- “Ma & Pa” home-based businesses
- Convenience store
- Limited non-metallic mining in designated areas
- Businesses that complement agricultural businesses
- Light manufacturing
- Shooting Range

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 Buena Vista listed with the WI DNR as a brownfield site 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.

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 expands 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**

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 Identified by the Town of Buena Vista

The following issues were identified during the comprehensive planning process:

- How can the Town keep agriculture a priority over housing and development?
- Irrigated crop agriculture is the Town's main economic base.
- How can the Town promote controlled growth?
- How can there be limited non-metallic mining in designated areas of the Town?
- How can agricultural related businesses be promoted in the Town?

Section 6.8 Economic Development Goals, Objectives and Policies

A. Goals:

1. Maintain the agricultural economic base in the Town of Buena Vista.
2. Business development areas are identified.
3. Support commerce and tourism throughout the Town.

B. Objectives:

1. Identify productive agricultural areas in the Town.
2. Encourage development away from productive agriculture areas.
3. Work with Portage County Business Council and other agencies to provide information regarding economic development.
4. The Land Use Element of this plan is used to identify appropriate areas for business development.
5. Areas are identified for potential non-metallic mineral extraction.
6. Encourage businesses that are compatible with surrounding land uses.

C. Policies:

1. Use the LESA system to help identify productive agriculture areas, to help maintain the agricultural base.
2. Provide informational resources regarding existing programs and opportunities for economic development.
3. Apply zoning districts that limit development density near productive agriculture areas.