

6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

6.5 Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To promote economic development and businesses that foster a strong, diversified and balanced economy.

Objectives

- a. By working with La Crosse County and other area jurisdictions on regional economic development initiatives that benefit the City and region and evaluating the initiatives' return on investment by considering social, environmental, economic and fiscal factors.
- b. By creating an economic development plan for the City that addresses background data, available sites, incentives and the City's overall economic development goals.
- c. By taking advantage of and promoting the upkeep of the well connected fiber optic and information systems network in the Onalaska area. With this system in place, the region is poised for new economic growth.
- d. By bolstering the City's economic base by proactively fostering public/private partnerships for community development.
- e. By identifying properties that are suitable for the expansion of business and industrial parks by conducting a commercial building lands inventory.
- f. By continuing to service new industrial and business areas with all necessary public utilities.
- g. By promoting tourism, eco-tourism and related businesses that capitalize on the City's cultural, environmental and geographic resources.

Goal 2: To focus on creating a healthy City that provides for a quality of life that attracts and retains a creative, skilled labor force.

- a. By marketing the assets of the region to stimulate high-quality economic growth. These assets include convenient access to railroad, air, trucking and the interstate as well as the outstanding natural amenities of the area.
- b. By working with the High School, the Technical College, Viterbo University and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse to continue development of vocational programs that address the labor needs of both existing employers and businesses targeted for recruitment.

- c. By identifying and recruiting companies that provide a needed product or service in Onalaska. Possibilities mentioned in the community survey include a food co-op, restaurants downtown and increased tourism/recreation businesses.
- d. By encouraging high-technology/clean manufacturing industries to locate in the City of Onalaska to provide improved employment opportunities.
- e. By continuing to implement the downtown redevelopment plan to create a strong central business area and to enhance the City's waterfront by partnering in the creation of safe and convenient access and improvements.
- f. By encouraging home occupations, where appropriate, as a way to promote jobs in the community without requiring new land to be developed.
- g. By developing a strong downtown with cultural attractions and services that create a high quality of life.

Goal 3: To strengthen and enhance the existing business districts.

Objectives

- a. By directing retail businesses to established commercial corridors and districts through the use of this comprehensive plan.
- b. By encouraging the clustering of compatible uses; e.g., retail and professional services.
- c. By maintaining a balance of industrial, commercial and residential land uses to stabilize and enhance the City's tax base and provide high quality employment opportunities.
- d. By communicating with business and industry leaders on a regular basis to ensure their needs are being met.
- e. By striving to promote the City of Onalaska as a friendly place to do business.
- f. By attracting firms that complement existing industries and increase business for established companies.
- g. By working with special commercial district businesses, such as in the downtown, to assist in the promotion and continued investment in these unique areas.
- h. By maintaining and improving housing as it relates to the enhancements of business districts and fostering reinvestment in the business districts.

Goal 4: To foster high quality, architecturally interesting development and redevelopment that strengthens Onalaska's economy.

Objectives

- a. By continuing to use programs to assist new and existing businesses, such as Tax Incremental Financing (TIF), Business Improvement Districts (BID), community development authority and the La Crosse County revolving loan program.
- b. By encouraging reinvestment, redevelopment and infill development on vacant or underutilized land in the downtown business district and using cluster and node development concepts for infill development along STH 16.
- c. By continuing to work with downtown business owners and Centering Onalaska to promote a unique identity for the area.
- d. By encouraging public/private investments in business district improvements.
- e. By promoting long term investment in developing areas by encouraging mixed uses.
- f. By continuing to improve on architectural and landscape architectural standards for development and redevelopment by promoting the use of building materials that have greater longevity, design that complements or improves the character of commercial areas and equal, high-quality materials and architectural detailing on all facades.

6.6 Policies and Recommendations

Downtown, Tourism and Recreation Based Economic Development

- 1) Continue to meet with and provide technical assistance to the Onalaska Center for Commerce and Tourism and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to promote the Great River State Trail and La Crosse River State Trail as a means of increasing tourism.
- 2) Explore the opportunity to re-locate the Onalaska Center for Tourism to the downtown area.
- 3) The downtown area shall be developed with uses that create a unique destination for tourists and residents, such as unique restaurants, retail and recreation oriented businesses
- 4) The City should continue its efforts to acquire the downtown waterfront property and be an active partner in its redevelopment, which could spark the

revitalization of the downtown area economy.

Design Standards

- 5) Continue to enhance the aesthetic quality of businesses throughout the City by updating the zoning ordinance and subdivision codes as necessary and considering the creation of an overlay design district to provide for improved longevity in improvements, insure stability in property values and to promote long-term investment in the City.
- 6) Ensure adequate parking for all business areas. In the downtown area and other appropriate locations, creative and flexible parking solutions and/or requirements should be encouraged to achieve a balance among economic vitality, convenience and efficient land use. The zoning ordinance should be amended as necessary to allow for these parking solutions.
- 7) Whenever possible, business developments and redevelopments should be designed so vehicles servicing the site can move from one location on the site to another without re-entering a public street.

Commercial and Light Industrial Economic Development

- 8) Continue to encourage existing business and industrial parks to be fully developed before allowing new parks to be developed.
- 9) Amend the zoning code as necessary to allow for more flexibility in location of home occupations where compatible with neighborhood areas.
- 10) Promote the following types of businesses in Onalaska: corporate offices; service-oriented businesses, such as finance and insurance; corporate agricultural services offices; and high-tech industries, such as computer software, medical equipment manufacturers and medical service providers.
- 11) Require substantial projects to submit independent impact analyses so that the City can better assess the full effect of these projects on infrastructure and the local economy.
- 12) Encourage well-planned and attractively designed commercial land uses.
- 13) Onalaska is located in the Western Wisconsin Technology Zone. The City should take advantage of this opportunity to attract new technology businesses.
- 14) Assist entrepreneurship and new business development by providing (or working with other agencies, such as the La Crosse Area Development Corporation and Greater La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce, to provide):
 - Management assistance (programs on entrepreneurship, business accounting,

- market research, product development, management)
- Overhead assistance (incubators, shared services, below market rents)
- Financial assistance (microloan programs, U.S. Small Business Administration, revolving loan funds)
- Networking opportunities (roundtables, CEO networking groups, trade associations)
- Feedback (business appreciation events and promotion of the successes of small and emerging businesses in Onalaska)

Coordinated Economic Development

- 15) Continue to coordinate local economic development activities with the La Crosse Area Development Corporation, neighboring municipalities, Forward Wisconsin, the La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce and the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.
- 16) Consider renewing the City's membership with LADCO based on value if these services are found to provide a benefit to the City's economic growth. Membership could help the City by:
 - Encouraging communication between Onalaska and businesses to ensure that existing business needs are being met.
 - Determining what types of industries and businesses Onalaska can attract.
 - Promoting contact with local elected officials, economic development representatives and community development groups to coordinate policies and projects, thereby increasing efficiency, reducing costs, minimizing policy conflicts and maximizing business development outcomes.
- 17) Coordinate economic development with available housing, education systems, health care systems, etc.
- 18) Ensure development of businesses that are accessible by a variety of multi-modal transportation options. This includes locating businesses so that employees and/or potential customers can safely walk, bike, drive or take public transportation to work or shop.
- 19) Consider creating an economic development plan for:
 - Improving retention and expansion capabilities of existing businesses
 - Developing or improving the support system for entrepreneurial development
 - Targeting and attracting new businesses
 - Redeveloping the downtown/waterfront (update the existing plan as needed)

Public/Private Partnerships

- 20) Focus on public/private partnerships that serve growing sectors in the economy, and that bring in both individual and institutional dollars. A public/private partnership may be described as "a cooperative venture between the public and

private sectors, built on the expertise of each partner, that best meets clearly defined public needs through the appropriate allocation of resources, risks and rewards”.

- 21) The following policies should be used as a tool to assess whether a public/private partnership should be employed:
- The desired outcome would not occur within the same time frame or of the same quality without the partnership.
 - A consistent, fair and transparent review process must be followed for all public/private initiatives. Sufficient qualified private sector companies must exist to ensure a competitive process.
 - The City must demonstrate to Onalaska residents and businesses that decisions made with respect to public/private partnerships are fully informed and justifiable, and have been found to be the best alternative.
 - The public receives value in terms of jobs, brownfield redevelopment, needed services, etc. from the initiative.
 - The roles of the public and private sectors in the partnership should be based on which party can provide the functions most efficiently and cost effectively.
 - Quality service, which is responsive to the needs of the public, must be ensured. The City should verify the record of proposed new businesses with regard to this item. If the business has a poor record of quality service, the partnership should not be approved.
 - New quality jobs should be created or existing jobs preserved.
 - Data have been collected for infrastructure capacity and capacity can be met.
 - The partnership promotes redevelopment of a brownfield site or other underutilized or vacant land within the City limits.
- 22) Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) is a specific type of public/private partnership. The following should be addressed when determining whether to allow a TIF District (TID):
- The desired outcome would not occur without the financial incentive.
 - The developer should be in need of a public subsidy. Public money should not be used to subsidize a private gain, unless that gain in turn benefits the City of Onalaska and its residents.
 - The number and type of jobs that the development will create should be evaluated.
 - The City should determine costs associated with new development. This includes possible new housing development; regional and local transportation impacts; and added municipal services, including fire and police protection, EMS, administrative services, street and stormwater maintenance, new vehicles and equipment, etc.
 - Development receiving TIF funding should meet and exceed benchmarks for exemplary building and site design. The development should integrate with the landscape and enhance the community character.
 - The TID must comply with existing community plans, such as this Plan, the City’s Greenway Plan and Parks and Open Space plans.

23. When making public purchases for goods or services, the City should utilize Onalaska businesses when possible. For example, the Park and Recreation Department could contract with local grocers or food vendors for concession stands. This helps promote positive relationships between the City and local businesses and helps retain that sector of the economy.