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## **Chapter Eight: Economic Development**

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This chapter contains background information, goals, objectives, policies and recommended programs to promote the retention and stabilization of the economic base in Dekorra. This chapter includes an assessment of new businesses and industries that are desired in the Town and the Town's strengths and weaknesses with respect to attracting and retaining businesses. It also inventories contaminated sites. A labor force analysis was included in Chapter Two.

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## A. Economic Development Framework

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### 1. Economic Development Focus

This portion of the *Comprehensive Plan* assesses categories or particular types of new businesses and industries that the Town desires. These include high quality commercial and industrial uses in the Commercial/Industrial Mix: Interchange Area (Utility District) and the Commercial/Industrial Mix: Highways 51/J/V district, both as shown on Map 6. Map 6 designates a sufficient number of sites and opportunities for the Town to achieve its desired economic development focus over the 20-year planning period. Other economic development opportunities will be accommodated in the Village.

### 2. Strengths and Weaknesses for Economic Development

The Town's strengths in fostering its desired economic focus in the future are as follows:

- Location along Interstate--the only place in the State where three interstates converge.
- Access to the Interstate interchange provides new development opportunities.
- Opportunity to provide sanitary sewer services to the interchange area.
- Located 30 minutes from both the second largest population center (Madison area) and the leading tourist destination in the State (Dells area).
- Location along the route carrying visitors to Wisconsin Dells and the "Northwoods."
- Lake Wisconsin generates tourist traffic as well as permanent local population growth.
- Major state highway and rail access on eastern edge of the Town.
- Abundant natural resources.

The Town's weaknesses in advancing its desired economic base include the following:

- Town government structure limits the ability to provide economic incentives for development, like Tax Increment Financing (TIF).
- Competition with other local governments for economic development.
- Inconsistent existing interchange area development quality.
- Limited array and locations of public utilities, even with proposed sewer expansion.
- Perception that Town might not be "business-friendly."

### 3. Economic Development Programs

Dekorra has no local economic development programs. The Columbia County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) has a revolving loan program, established in 2002, meant to aid start-ups or expansions of Columbia County businesses. The fund provides 50/50 matching funds of \$20,000 per new job created. This program is for businesses with 50 or fewer employees and annual revenue below one million dollars.

Columbia County, through its participation in the Wisconsin Development Fund (WDF) Program also has funds for the establishment of a Business Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). This fund is designated to make direct business loans on a companion basis with other financing sources (public sector loans, governmental loans/grants, equity, etc.)

The Customized Labor Training Fund provides training grants to businesses that are implementing new technology or production processes. The program can provide up to 50 percent of the cost of customized training that is not available from the Wisconsin Technical College System.

The Dairy 2020 Initiative awards grants and loans for business and feasibility planning to dairy producers and processors considering a modernization or expansion project.

The Employee Ownership Assistance Loan Program can help a group of employees purchase a business by providing individual awards up to \$25,000 for feasibility studies or professional assistance. The business under consideration must have expressed its intent to downsize or close.

The COMMERCE/Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Job Creation Program is designed to increase employment opportunities for DVR clients by providing equipment grants, technical assistance grants, and customized assistance to companies that will hire persons with disabilities as part of a business expansion.

The Rural Economic Development Program makes individual awards up to \$30,000 for feasibility studies and other professional assistance to rural businesses with fewer than 25 employees. Businesses that have completed their feasibility evaluations are eligible for individual micro loans up to \$25,000 for working capital and the purchase of equipment.

The Major Economic Development Program offers low-interest loans for business development projects that create a significant economic impact.

The state's Community Based Economic Development Program (CBED) provides funding assistance to local governments and community-based organizations that undertake planning, development and technical assistance projects that support business development. Using CBED program funds, local governments can finance economic development plans, small business and technology-based incubator grants, revolving loan programs, and entrepreneur training programs for at-risk youth. Any Wisconsin city, village, town, county, tribe or community-based organization is eligible to apply for grant funding. Funds are available on an annual basis through a competitive application process. Some grants must be matched by local funds. Application materials are available from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.

The U.S. Small Business Administration's Certified Development Company (504) Loan Program provides growing businesses with long-term, fixed-rate financing for major fixed assets, such as land and buildings. 504 loans can be used to fund land purchases and improvements, grading, street improvements, utilities, parking lots and landscaping, construction of new facilities, or modernizing, renovating or converting existing facilities. A Certified Development Company is a nonprofit corporation set up to contribute to the economic development of its community.

#### **4. Reuse of Environmentally Contaminated Sites**

The Wisconsin DNR's Environmental Remediation and Redevelopment Program maintains a list of contaminated sites, or "brownfields," in the State. The DNR defines brownfields as "abandoned or under-utilized commercial or industrial properties where expansion or redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived contamination." Examples of brownfields might include a large abandoned industrial site or a small corner gas station.

Properties listed in the DNR database are self-reported, and do not necessarily represent a comprehensive listing of possible brownfields in a community.

There are three contaminated sites in Dekorra listed on this DNR database. More specific locations, property ownership information, and status of remediation efforts for these sites are available from the DNR. These properties will need special attention for successful redevelopment to occur. The location of these environmentally contaminated sites was considered when making land use recommendations in the *Plan*. The Town supports clean-up and appropriate reuse of these and other contaminated sites, but should not approve (re)development projects until remediation is completed or commitments are secured for remediation.

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## B. Economic Development Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs

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### 1. Goal

Allow for high-quality economic growth that supports farming, provides quality job opportunities, and serves Town residents.

### 2. Objectives

- a. Work jointly with Poynette and Columbia County on mutually beneficial economic development initiatives that promote the stabilization, retention, and attraction of local economic opportunity.
- b. Make the interchange of Interstate 39 and Highway CS a priority for future economic development.
- c. Plan for compact growth and small-scale businesses along the waterfront/marina area.
- d. Promote economic development efforts for farming and farm-related businesses.

### 3. Policies and Programs

- a. Support the economic **health of production agriculture** in Dekorra.
- b. Support opportunities for **farm family businesses**, home occupations and agriculturally related businesses to assist farm families.
- c. Implement standards to attract **high quality commercial development in the Interchange Area** such as hotels, restaurants and specialty retail (see Chapter Five).
- d. Direct **highway oriented commercial uses**, particularly redevelopment, to lands closest to the interchange.
- e. Direct **light industrial uses** further away from the immediate interchange area (but within 1-mile) and to a second proposed mixed use area located along Highway 51 near its intersection with County Highway J/V.
- f. **Discourage strip commercial** or industrial development between the interchange area and the rest areas, along Highway CS, and along Highway 51.
- g. Accommodate a range of **high quality employment opportunities** in areas planned as *Commercial/Industrial Mix* on Map 6.
- h. Help small businesses access County and State **economic funding sources**.

- i. **Partner with the Village of Poynette** in order to attract businesses that are appropriate for each community and work together on joint marketing of the area. Encourage the revitalization of downtown Poynette.

