

6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Town of Onalaska has developed goals, objectives, policies and actions to encourage economic development that provides for Town needs, while respecting the rural character of the Town.

Goal 1: Encourage economic opportunities that enhance the quality of life for Town residents, are appropriate for the levels of public services and facilities in the Town, and are environmentally sensitive.

Objectives, Policies & Actions

1-1: Protect and enhance Onalaska’s scenic and environmental character as an economic asset to the Town and the region.

Action 1-1a: Promote economic development that is committed to and has minimal environmental impact.

Action 1-1b: Protect the Town’s economic interests over the long term by continuing to work with La Crosse County, neighboring jurisdictions, and relevant agencies and non-profit organizations to preserve and possibly restore scenic vistas, bluffs, prairies, wetlands, and other unique natural areas. The economic interests of preserving and/or restoring these areas will maintain or increase property values, and be attractions for visitors and tourists.

Action 1-1c: Explore options to sustain and possibly increase tourism and recreation businesses in the Town through development of biking trails, cross country ski trails, parks, walking trails, wildlife refuges, and/or nature sanctuaries. Ensure that these businesses do not negatively impact the rural character of the Town, nor harm the Town’s outstanding natural resources.

Action 1-1d: Promote the Town’s unique natural resources and recreation opportunities and encourage the development of tourism-based businesses to capture these economic opportunities. Such businesses may include bed and breakfasts; outdoor supply stores; restaurants; delis/cafes; and canoe, bike, cross country ski, golf and other quiet sports rental companies.

Action 1-1e: Consider promoting the Town’s rustic roads as a way of attracting economic development. This may include proposing to the State of Wisconsin that roads be designated as “Rustic Roads.”

Action 1-1f: Develop a Purchase of Development Rights Program and support or participate in other preservation programs to preserve open spaces for

recreational uses and encourage natural resource-based tourism as a major economic activity.

Action 1-1g: Consider the general economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits of new businesses and developments proposed in the Town.

Action 1-1h: Attract the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Town.

1-2: Support business developments the Town can efficiently, cost effectively, and financially afford to provide services and utilities to; encourage reinvestment in existing commercial areas; and promote improvements to highly visible commercial areas.

Action 1-2a: Require substantial projects to submit an independent impact analyses so the Town can better assess the full effect of these projects on public services and facilities, including the long-term operational and maintenance costs of new or expanded public services and facilities. The definition of a “substantial project” should be defined by the Town.

Action 1-2b: Require new businesses to implement measures to minimize the impacts of new businesses on existing residential areas. For example, require substantial screening and/or buffering between new businesses and adjacent residential areas; and prohibit light, noise, and air pollution onto existing adjacent residential properties.

Action 1-2c: Consider working with the City of Onalaska to create a sub-area plan for the business/light industrial district between and around the Great River Road, STH 35 and STH 53.

Action 1-2d: Promote reinvestment into the business/light industrial district between and around the Great River Road and STH 53, and the redevelopment of under-utilized properties.

Action 1-2e: The commercial properties abutting the Great River Road represent the image of the Town of Onalaska. Create design guidelines with the City of Onalaska for commercial buildings, sites, signs, landscaping, etc. to address the appearance of properties abutting this road. The design guidelines should be implemented as properties redevelop along this corridor.

Action 1-2f: Work with property owners to rezone industrial zoned land in the Town to a less intensive zoning district.

Action 1-2g: Discourage heavy industrial development in the Town, and establish guidelines for appropriate light industrial site design to mitigate potential negative environmental impacts associated with such development.

Action 1-2h: Determine the threshold(s) for development on Brice Prairie, including economic; environmental; public utilities, facilities and services; agricultural sustainability; quality of life; and archeological resources.

Goal 2: The Town of Onalaska will encourage economic development that supports agriculture, and serves Town residents and visitors.

2-1: Focus economic development efforts on farming and farm-related businesses.

Action 2-1a: Support the economic health of production agriculture in Onalaska.

Action 2-1b: Consider applying for state and federal farmland protection programs and money.

Action 2-1c: Develop a Purchase of Development Rights Program and support or participate in other preservation programs to preserve productive farmland.

Action 2-1d: Support other forms of agriculture, including: value-added agriculture; organic agriculture; vineyards; orchards; research farming; community supported agriculture; businesses engaged in hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational activities; production of niche agricultural products.

Action 2-1e: Consider ways to market farms and farm products, such as organic agriculture.

Action 2-1f: Ensure Town roads serve agricultural needs.

Action 2-1g: Inform new Town residents about the existing impacts of the agricultural areas in which they live, including noise, odor, and other farming operations.

Action 2-1h: Assist local business owners by directing them to resources such as the UW-Extension *Promoting Agricultural and Business Competitiveness and a Sustainable Environment* Issue Team, the UW-Extension Center for Community Economic Development, the UW-Extension Small Business Development Center, UW-Extension programs on agribusiness and farming, and other similar programs.

2-2: Encourage new economic development that supports residential areas and meets the needs of local residents, while respecting the Town's rural character.

Action 2-2a: Prohibit "strip" commercial development along roadways. Strip commercial development can generally be described as businesses that are engaged in auto-oriented commercial activity and are arranged in a line, usually along an arterial street. Strip commercial developments are often only one lot in depth with minimal standards for landscaping and design.

- Action 2-2b:** Consider creating development standards for business development to promote high-quality site design, building design, signage and landscaping for all new nonresidential developments. Timeless designs and quality materials support buildings for long-term use.
- Action 2-2c:** Direct commercial development to the Midway Town Center, areas surrounding STH 53 and STH 35, other locations identified on the Future Land Use Map.
- Action 2-2d:** Plan for the development of existing commercial districts, such as Midway, to ensure appropriate site design and uses consistent with the needs of Town residents and the Town's rural character.
- Action 2-2e:** Provide opportunities for citizen input on desirable commercial development.
- Action 2-2f:** Collaborate with adjoining municipalities in the planning and timing of the location and form of all commercial and/or industrial development proposed in and/or adjacent to the Town.
- Action 2-2g:** Encourage establishment of proposed businesses that are compatible with the Town's status as a rural, residential, agricultural community that serves as a recreational gateway to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.