

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Providing a good climate for business development enhances a community's overall well-being both in financial terms as well as in morale and civic pride. By providing for its businesses, and industries and the residents that comprise its workforce, a community insures its future success.

Labor Force and Economic Base

The labor force is defined as those members of the population 16 years or older who are employed, or if unemployed, are looking for jobs. Table 25 gives an overview of some of the characteristics of the population and labor force in the Town of Willard, per 2021 American Community Survey estimate. Data is also available for the class of workers in the Town of Willard (Table 26).

Table 25 Employment Status		
	Count	Percent
Population 16 years and older	412	
In Labor Force:	257	62.38%
Employed	234	56.80%
Self-employed	13	5.06%
Unemployed	10	3.89%
Armed Forces	1	0.24%
Not in Labor Force	154	37.38%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey

Table 26 Details Class of Workers		
	Number	Percent
Private wage and salary workers	78	55.7%
Sole Proprietor	21	15.0%
Non-Profit	18	12.9%
Self-Employed	13	9.3%
Government	10	7.1%
Unpaid Family	0	0%
Totals	140	100.0%

The economic base of Willard consists of a number of different occupations and industries. Figure 9 breaks down the Town of Willard economic base into 11 industry groups. The largest group of Willard residents is employed in the manufacturing industry (68). The healthcare industry employed the second most people (39) from Willard.



Town of Willard Employers

Table 27 lists the employers in the Town of Willard Businesses without paid employees are not included in the report from the WI DWD.

Employer Name	Type	Approx. Employees
River Country Coop Convenience Store	Hourly	1-7
Looney Bin Bar & Grill	Hourly	1-3
Axe Tree Service	Per Job	1-4
Darin Duncan Logging, LLC		1-4
Lechleitner Builders, Inc.		1-4
B&A Farms	Hourly	1-4

Source Town of Willard

Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Environmental Remediation and Redevelopment Program maintain 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 oftentimes self-reported, and do not necessarily represent a comprehensive listing of possible brownfields in a community. Table 28 lists the remediation activities in the Town of Willard as of March 2009. One remediation activity was listed and had a status of 'closed'.

Status	Address	Type	Juris
Closed	03-55-535458 WI DOT (STH 27 & CTH D)	LUST*	DCOM**

Source: DNR's Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS)

*LUST – Leaking Underground Storage Tank

**DCOM - Department of Commerce

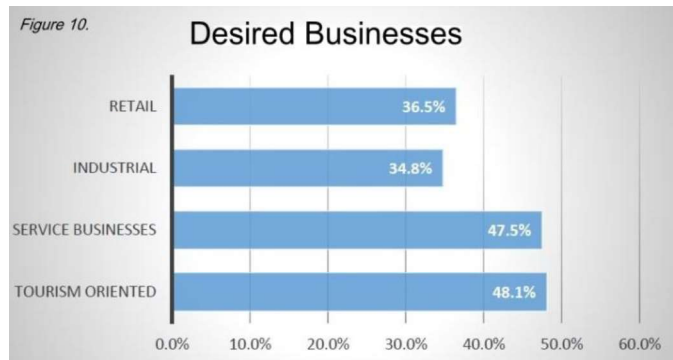
Attracting and Retaining Business and Industry

Business attraction activities are designed to encourage businesses and industries that are expanding or planning to relocate, to choose your community, new businesses enhance and diversify the economic base, and improve the quality of life. In order for Willard to attract new businesses or retain existing ones, it must provide a competitive and attractive environment. Like most towns in Rusk County, Willard has both strengths and weaknesses for attracting and retaining business and industry. Below is a list of those strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Proximity to State Highway 27	No workforce
CTH I and CTH D	Low lying ground
Near railroads	

Desired Businesses and Industries

Types of new business and industry were discussed during the comprehensive planning process. The Town of Willard would like to attract light industry and home-based businesses in the future. Survey results indicate that tourism oriented and service businesses are to be encouraged by the Town. See Figure 10.



Economic Development Programs

This section provides information on existing programs available at the County, State and Regional level to attract/retain businesses and industries in to the Town of Willard and Rusk County. There are several options available for small businesses in the Town of Willard and Rusk County seeking technical assistance. One is the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation (WBIC), a partner organization formed by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC). Although its office is located in Washburn County, its service area is a ten-county region, which includes Rusk County. Beginning in 1996, WBIC has developed a unique array of technical, financial, and business support services for start-up and expanding businesses. This work involves analyzing a firm's financial needs including preparation or review of financial projections, analyzing requirements and procedures of the various financing programs, identifying the appropriate funding sources, structuring sources and uses of funds, and the preparation of forms and documents needed in applications.

Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation

The Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation (NWBD) is a non-profit corporation formed by NWRPC to address the critical need for business financing in northwest Wisconsin. It is targeted at the best economic development opportunities of the area: the timber and wood products industry, tourism, and other manufacturing and service industries. NWBD manages three revolving loan funds (RLFs) and a technology seed fund. The overall goal of the RLFs is to stimulate private sector investment in long-term business assets and to create new jobs. The funds partially fill the gap in private capital markets for long-term fixed rate financing. The technology seed fund can be used to complete research and development activities and validate the technology, develop prototypes, and file patents and copyrights.

In addition to the NWBD loan funds, Rusk County is part of the Northwest Wisconsin Regional Economic Development Fund (NWREDF), a financing tool available to businesses that will invest private funds and create economic impact in the ten-county area served by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC). Currently, businesses located in seven of the ten counties served by NWRPC are eligible to apply for funding under the NWREDF program. Funding for the program was provided by communities in these seven counties pooling their local Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for Economic Development Revolving Loan Funds (RLF's). The local CDBG RLF's were funded by grants provided to the communities by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's CDGD program.

In late 2000, a community-based venture capital (equity) fund called the Wisconsin Rural Enterprise Fund, LLC (WREF) was established by the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation. It was formed to create a capital fund that would provide self-sustaining, moderate growth through

financial investments made in rural businesses that meet the WREF criteria. Technology intensive businesses, which have the potential to create high-skilled, high-wage jobs in rural areas, are the targeted businesses. Currently, it is the only Northwest Wisconsin community-based venture capital fund. Its members include, besides WBIC, rural electric cooperatives and local community development organizations.

USDA Wisconsin Rural Development

Several loan and grant programs of benefit to the county and local business development are available from the USDA Rural Development. One of those programs is the Community Facility Guaranteed Loans Program, which provides funding to local units of government to construct, enlarge, extend, or otherwise improve community facilities providing essential services in rural areas and towns. The Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants Program helps develop projects that will result in a sustainable increase in economic productivity, job creation, and incomes in rural areas. Projects may include business start-ups and expansion, community development, incubator projects, medical and training projects, and feasibility studies. The purpose of the Business and Industry Direct Loan Program is to improve, develop, or finance business, industry, and employment and improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities. Loan purposes include purchase and expansion of land, equipment, buildings, and working capital. Loans to public bodies can be used to finance community facilities and construct and equip industrial plants for lease to private businesses.

The Community Facilities Direct Loans and Grants Program provide funding for essential community facilities (CF) such as municipal buildings, day care centers, and health and safety facilities. Examples include fire halls, fire trucks, clinics, nursing homes, and hospitals. CF loans and grants may also be used for such things as activity centers for the handicapped, schools, libraries, and other community buildings.

Wisconsin Department of Commerce

At least three programs are available to local units of government through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. The first program is the Community Development Block Grant for Economic Development (CDBG-ED). Its purpose is to provide resources to local governments that will enable them to assist economic development projects in their community. The local unit of government is the applicant and recipient of the funds. A specific business, which must be located in a municipality of 50,000 or fewer, is loaned the funds for eligible business development uses. When the funds are repaid to the local government, they may stay in the community to be used as a revolving loan fund to assist other businesses in the community.

The second program is the Community Development Block Grant Public Facilities for Economic Development (CDBG-PFED). Its purpose is to provide grant funds to local governments that will enable them to provide needed public facilities (i.e., streets, sewer mains, water mains, etc.) to private business enterprises that are going to create full-time jobs by starting or expanding their businesses because of the availability of the funded public facilities.

The third program available from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce is the Community-Based Economic Development Program (CBED). Its purpose is to provide financing assistance to local governments and community-based organizations that undertake planning or development projects or that provides technical assistance in support of business (including technology-based businesses) and community development.

Wisconsin Departments of Tourism and Commerce

The Tourism Development Initiative is a multi-faceted program designed to assist tourism businesses that have been severely affected by consecutive winters with minimal snowfall. The program offers planning and training grants that focus on tourism development and diversification at the business and municipal levels. A Snow Emergency Loan is available to qualifying small businesses that can document significant revenue loss caused by the lack of snow.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Available from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is a program called the Transportation Facilities Economic Assistance and Development Program (TEA). The intent of the TEA program is to help support new business development in Wisconsin by funding transportation improvements that are needed to secure jobs in the state. A governing body, a business, a consortium group, or any combination thereof can apply for TEA program funding.

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission is a cooperative venture of the local units of governments in the ten counties of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, and Washburn and the five regional tribal nations of Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Red Cliff, St. Croix, and Lac du Flambeau. The purpose of NWRPC is to assist its member communities to promote sustainable economic development, develop public facilities, provide planning and technical services, efficiently manage and conserve natural resources, and protect the environment. Every five years, NWRPC, with the cooperation of the local units of government in its region, prepares a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the entire Northwest Region.

Table 29	Economic Development Goals, Objectives and Policies
Goals	
1. Build community identity by revitalizing community character and enforcing building standards	
2. Promote the stabilization of the current economic base.	
Objectives	
1. Discourage retail commercial use that may create excessive traffic flow through the Town.	
2. Encourage new retail, commercial and industrial development to locate in designated area and adjacent county highways.	
3. Encourage businesses that are compatible in a rural setting.	
4. Industrial development must not negatively impact environmental resources or adjoining property values.	
Policies	
Encourage home-based businesses that do not significantly increase noise, traffic, odors, lighting or would otherwise negatively impact the surrounding areas.	
Review the costs and benefits of a proposed development project prior to approval.	
Commercial and industrial development will be directed to designated areas consistent with the Future Land Use Map.	
Steer intensive industrial uses to areas that have the service capability to support that development.	
Develop new ordinances that establish minimum aesthetic standards to eliminate commercial, industrial and agricultural property with excessive debris, blighted property and dilapidated buildings.	