ECONOMIC S.W.O.T. WORKSHOP RESULTS

Wisconsin State Statute 66.1001 requires the Oconto County 20-Year Comprehensive Plan include an element that specifically focuses on economic development. This element provides a detailed description and analysis of the county’s current economic climate. To gather input on the most important economic development issues facing the county, an Economic S.W.O.T. Exercise (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) was conducted on February 20, 2007. Thirty-five people attended the workshop. Several other residents were not able to attend the workshop but provided additional input. All responses were recorded and listed below.

The participants were divided into four groups. They were asked to provide input as to the county’s economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. After each group was completed with the exercise, they were asked to identify the priority issues in each category from the lists they compiled. The top issues in each of the four categories were determined and noted in the tables below. This input will be instrumental in preparing the county’s economic development strategies found in Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive Plan. These development strategies will help Oconto County promote its strengths, minimize its weaknesses, take full advantage of its opportunities, and offset its potential threats.

**STRENGTHS**
Strengths are existing resources and capabilities that can be used as a basis for developing a successful growth plan.

**TOP STRENGTHS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Hwy 41/141, STH 32</td>
<td>• Workforce ethics/skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Water features – Lakes, Green Bay, Creeks, Rivers</td>
<td>• Waterways – lakes/streams, natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Group 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agriculture and ag. Support businesses</td>
<td>• OCEDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Highways</td>
<td>• Campgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tourism</td>
<td>• Lakes and water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Large ag. base</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADDITIONAL STRENGTHS**

- Abundance of public waterways
- Access to road information (maps)
- Agriculture land rich
- ATV trails
- Availability of high quality health care
- Availability of low cost housing
- Availability of public land – ex. Nicolet Forest and Machickanee Forest
- Available buildings
- Beautiful farm land
- Beautiful lakes
- Businesses willing to stay
- Clean water
• Daycare
• Daycare (kids/adults)
• Diversified industries
• Diversity of farms
• Educations
• Established industrial parks
• Excellent education
• Excellent medical facilities
• Existing businesses
• Existing industrial parks (Oconto, Oconto Falls, Gillett, Suring, Mountain)
• Existing NWTC campus in Oconto Falls
• Existing recreation trail (old railroad right-of-way)
• Forests with wood product
• Four lane highway
• Fresh air
• Good elementary and high school systems
• Good road systems
• Great fishing and hunting
• Great people
• Healthcare
• Higher income seasonal residents
• Highways x 2
• History
• Housing subdivisions
• Industrial parks
• Land for new housing
• Land available/develop campgrounds, recreation areas
• Local government
• Lots of small parks (rec.)
• Major highways
• Many main streets in smaller towns
• Medical facilities
• Medical facilities
• Natural beauty and woodlands
• Natural resources (lakes, forest, trails, hunting)
• Oconto River
• Opportunities for businesses
• Outdoor recreation (hunting, fishing, camping, etc.)
• Prime land for business development
• Promotion of agriculture
• Public infrastructure
• Public land with access
• Public safety services
• Quarries
• Reasonable housing
• Recreational opportunities x 3
• Recycling program
• Reliable workforce with good work ethics
• Retail and small business (i.e. gift shops)
• R-R
• Rural area near bigger city
• Schools
• Schools – primary/secondary
• Snowmobile trails
• Skilled workers
• Small communities
• Sportsman (person) clubs
• Suring Golf Course and other recreation
• Take care of aging population
• Tech. training close by
• TIF financing
• Tourism
• Tourist
• Tourist attractions
• Town festivals
• Trail system
• Trained workforce
• Unemployed residents looking for work
• Utilities/electrical and communication
• Water features
• Waters of Green Bay
• Waterways
• Work ethic
• Work ethics x 3
WEAKNESSES
A weakness is a limitation or the absence of certain strengths that keep the county from achieving its objectives.

TOP WEAKNESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of employment opportunities</td>
<td>• Lack manufacturing jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Existing jobs are lower paying</td>
<td>• Limited/lack infrastructure for manufacturing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of industry</td>
<td>• Distance to ports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Void of technology availability</td>
<td>• Tech schools not affordable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADDITIONAL WEAKNESSES

- 50 percent of workforce leaves county daily
- A better related between DNR and community
- Aging population x 3
- A younger and more open minded county board
- Attitude and lack of vision of some business owners
- Bring raw materials from distance
- Businesses are leaving the industrial parks in the county (why?)
- Cliquish population
- County cut in half at Hwy ZZ – tourism/homes
- Distance between north/south boundaries keeps county fragmented
- Distance for necessities
- Forest products lack market
- Higher standard of living
- High-tech jobs are virtually non-existent in this county
- Inability to come up with funds to supplement grants
- Infrastructure (telecommunication, utilities, etc.)
- Insufficient commercial development
- Lack 2 year and 4 year education
- Lack mentors/leaders willing to get involved
- Lack of advanced technology – WiFi
- Lack of air and rail
- Lack of attracting educated persons with new ideas
- Lack of attention to transportation – roads
- Lack of county promotion
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Lack of high tech. skills
- Lack of higher education opportunities
- Lack of investors
- Lack of manufacturing jobs
Lack of snow
Lack of support system
Lack of time
Lack professional workforce
Lack skill/professional jobs
Lack technology in rural areas
Leadership resistance to change
Length of county
Loss of small farmer
Loss of valuable workforce – commuters
Loss of younger highly educated people
Loss small business in cities
Low pay small employers
Need higher paying jobs, better salaries
No border agreements for shared services
No central location county seat
No infrastructure in unincorporated areas
No large industry
No religious owned businesses
No YMCA/YWCA
Not being aware of localities
Not developing/taking advantage more of the existing natural resources
Not enough industrial building
Not enough skilled workers (trades)
Not enough trails – connected
Not many high tech manufacturing jobs in the county
Not many shopping malls to keep families in the county
Not many turn-key buildings available for business
Not willing to experiment
Numerous small farms
Overnight lodging
Population’s educational attainment
Public perception of area as cold, old fashion, cheese-heads
Qualified leadership is not always available
Raw materials except wood needs to be transported into the county
Residents resistant to change
Retain college and tech college graduates
Separation between communities (distance)
Service industry lacks access to good, reliable workforce in northern part of the county
Shortage of skilled labor force
Signage rules
Some businesses are not getting their needs met by the OCEDC
Tourist – lack of information
Trans. Lines closing/failing
Tunnel thinking
Weather
- Weather
- We need to have college graduates return to our county
- Work ethic
- Younger people not involved
- Zoning
OPPORTUNITIES
An opportunity is any favorable situation or resource that could enhance economic development.

TOP OPPORTUNITIES

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<td>• Future services for aging community</td>
<td>• State and Federal money for development</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Good manufacturing workforce</td>
<td>• Promote tourism with established programs/lakesstreams/trails, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Group 3</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>• Tax incentives for businesses</td>
<td>• New business development</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Keep rail and roads in good condition</td>
<td>• Countywide business recruitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Expand tourism</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Abundance of forest land
- A clean river runs the entire length of the county
- Accessibility of good transportation systems – rail, highways, airport
- Affordable housing
- Ag. land for biofuels exist now
- Airport
- Amount of available land for future business
- Available labor due to high unemployment
- Availability of agricultural land (bio-energy development)
- Avoid urban sprawl
- Better use of technology
- Better zoning of our townships
- Bring back skilled workers
- Business’ kept in specific areas
- Catering to aging population services and housing
- Close proximity to metropolitan area
- Community involvement
- Competition for workforce may increase wages
- Consolidate our school management positions
- Country roads and recreation trail could be used for more recreational activities
- Countywide marketing strategies
- Countywide room tax
- Develop additional ATV trails throughout the county
- Develop bedroom communities
- Develop trail system with organizations
- Develop waterpark
- Educational facilities available for developing small business leadership
- Empty facilities
- Ethanol/biodiesel plants
- Existing vacant structures
• Expand on history
• Expansion of ATV trails
• Forest as resource
• Forestry
• Good drinking water
• Grant money for various programs
• Highway traffic
• Increased gas prices keep workforce in county
• Increases in tourism
• Inexpensive land
• Labor
• Lakes, streams – promote and develop trails
• Land for development
• Leadership for development
• Libraries funding
• Many vacant buildings
• More campsites
• More golf courses
• More hunting
• More tourism marketing
• OCEDC available for research and development of existing and new businesses
• Promote tourism w/established businesses and utilize our local natural resources
• Recreational opportunities
• Residential development
• Service businesses based on resource draw
• State and federal grants
• Space availability in existing industrial parks
• Tax credits
• Tech school remedial classes
• Technical and college level education available within commuting distances
• TIF
• Tourism resources and development x2
• Tourist
• Water features and harbors
• Willing lenders
• Willingness of communities to bring industry into the county
• Wood resources
• Workforce exists
THREATS
Threats are potential obstacles the county faces concerning economic development.

TOP THREATS

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<tr>
<td>• Not enough high paying jobs in county</td>
<td>• Adjacent big cities draw our opportunities away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loss of family farms</td>
<td>• Transition to world economy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Closing of mill in Oconto Falls</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Loss of big manufacturing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• High state taxes drive business out</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Group 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Groundwater contamination</td>
<td>• Lower school standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>• State mandates</td>
<td>• Annexation vs. local cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increasing taxation</td>
<td>• No training for local officials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADDITIONAL THREATS

- Ability to maintain quality school systems
- Airline pollution
- Ag waste products
- Aging population
- Annexation vs. local cooperation
- Better higher education out of county
- Bigger retail vs. small business villages or cities
- Blue laws – no alcohol sales
- Bored young people
- Branch plants vs. local owners
- Bus. That disregard community/surrounding
- By-passes
- C A F O
- Close minds
- Declining school enrollment
- Decrease in standard of living in the county
- DNR
- Drug problem
- Ecological groups
- Economy
- Empty storefronts
- Energy crisis
- Environmental regulations
- Foreign competition
- Frustration
- Gas fuel prices
- Gas prices – costing more to import
High taxes
Increased demand for municipal services
Increased risk of groundwater contamination
Insufficient public utilities
Job opportunities in neighboring counties (loss of skilled workforce)
Lack of good highway planning – west side of county
Lack of good school that teach to the needs of the a changing economy
Lack of knowledge in new tech
Lack of local control versus state and federal
Lack of space for existing businesses to grow
Lack of tech. services available
Local government levy limits
Local governments
Local roads are suitable for industrial traffic
Loss of business overseas
Loss of existing businesses
Loss of jobs due to business closings
Low ag. prices
Low wages
Lower school standards
Natural resources that are ignored
Newcomers seen as threats to “locals"
North vs. south attitudes
No training for local officials
Overpopulation
Perception that there is nothing north of Green Bay
Pollution of our great river
Poorly maintained retail buildings for occupancy
Proposed roundabouts
Recession/depression
Residential growth and amenities needed
Resistance to change
Resources such as manpower, money, natural resources being drained by the war in Iraq
RR loss
Ruining our shoreline
School districts not involved in ED planning
Shrinking shorelines
Terrorism
Too many jobs going off-shore
Too close to Green Bay
Trade deficit
Urban sprawl along Bayshore
Under funded ED programs
Untrained workforce
Urbanization
War is alienating our country resulting in a loss of foreign markets
- Weather
- Wisconsin DoT putting in roundabouts on 32
- Wisconsin taxes – too high
- World economy – jobs going overseas
- Zoning mandates