

VISION STATEMENT:

"The region has diversified employment opportunities, including well paid knowledge based jobs. The economy benefits from advances in research and technology and supports entrepreneurialism and local business ownership. Collaborative economic development efforts across jurisdictional boundaries of governments, educational institutions, and other economic development entities, are commonplace. The preservation of natural resource amenities supports tourism opportunities, assists in attracting an educated workforce and enhances the quality of place for residents."

Issues & Opportunities:

- Diversification of the regional economy is critical to compensate for losses in the high paying manufacturing sector. There is a need to attract high paying knowledge based industries, promote local business start-ups, and encourage investment in existing business to enhance competitiveness.
- There is a need to match worker skills with industry needs, which will require collaborative partnerships between the business and educational communities.
- There is a need to capitalize on existing collaborative economic development efforts in the region, specifically to move beyond research and secure funding to implement recommendations.
- To attract new businesses and workers and retain those already here, it is important to preserve natural resources, create recreational opportunities, enhance cultural attractions and maintain a "sense of place".
- Addressing the consequences of current farm economics is necessary if family farms, part of the cultural heritage of the region, are to remain viable.



Banta Corporation, City of Merasha

So What?

- The loss of manufacturing jobs coupled with the fact that many of the industries that are growing pay lower wages, in some cases up to 20% less, has the potential to lower the standard of living for many "middle class" income families. Less income translates into fewer dollars for consumption, taxes, education, and healthcare for everyone, especially our children.
- Only 23% of Wisconsin residents over 25 have a bachelor degree or higher, placing Wisconsin 30th in the nation and below the national average. Persons with a bachelor degree can expect to earn \$2.1 million over the course of a career, nearly double the expected earnings for a high school graduate. Education is the key to greater earning potential and a better quality of life.
- Residential development in outlying areas leads to "big box" retail development on the edge of existing communities. Main streets are negatively impacted when shoppers no longer spend their time and money in downtown stores and restaurants. In addition, while sprawl may lead to greater income for the municipality in the form of taxes, it may create a greater tax burden to the property owner as the real costs of providing and maintaining services increase.
- Recreational opportunities and natural resources contribute to the quality of place, which is especially important to attract knowledge-based industries: an essential component of the "new" economy.
- Food is a powerful element of our culture and heritage, which has economic value through the products made and sold in the region. Also important is the relationship between nutrition, our health, and rising health care costs. Buying seasonal, locally grown food benefits the grower, the buyer, the consumer's health, and our local economies.



Photos provided by EAA Marketing and Communications, EAA Air Adventure, Oshkosh, WI



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Core Goals:

- Promote the expansion and stabilization of the current economic base and employment opportunities, while working to promote a positive, growth oriented, entrepreneurially supportive image to attract new business and create additional employment.
- Increase the awareness of on-going collaborative economic activities in the area to ensure maximum benefit to the regional economy.
- Create better relationships between political representatives, the business and educational sectors to effectively link and apply research and development and technology to production processes, as well as to ensure an appropriately trained workforce.
- Encourage planning to guide community development to maximize the use of existing infrastructure, facilitate the provision of shared resources, minimize costs and environmental impacts, and promote a sense of place and healthy communities.
- Promote the economic benefits of natural resources, parks, and recreation.
- Assess the options to increase the viability of family farms.

What's Next?

June through November 2004:

- Evaluate goals and identify potential policies to support them.
- Finalize policies.
- Identify targets to enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of policies over time.

January 2005:

- Milestone 3 Report will be submitted to East Central's Planning Commission for acceptance.