CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Determining what the existing economic conditions are within the Town of Eldorado provides a factual basis upon which to build the Town’s goals, strategies and actions (see Chapter 2 – Framework Plan). This section inventories the Town’s labor force characteristics, provides an economic base analysis, and a brief discussion of various assets and opportunities that the Town has with respect to attracting further economic development. This chapter, along with Appendix C: Economic Development and Chapter 2: Plan Framework and Implementation address the Wisconsin Smart Growth law requirements.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS AND NARRATIVE

Below is a summary of the key economic development points and a brief narrative of what this means.

Labor Force Characteristics

The Facts:

- According to the 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 71.7 percent of the Town of Eldorado’s population 16 years old and older was in the civilian labor force. This is a higher participation rate than in the county and state.
- According to the 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 97.2 percent of the civilian labor force was employed in the Town, compared to 96.0 percent in Fond du Lac County and 95.3% in the state.
- The unemployment rate is at record lows within Fond du Lac County and the state after reaching highs of 9.0% (2009) and 8.7% (2010) during the “Great Recession”, respectively.

What it Means:

- The Town has generally had a healthy sized workforce. Reductions in the workforce could be partially related to an aging of the population as more residents enter retirement age. Overall, unemployment rates are of concern only in the sense that it has been difficult for employers within the area and the state to fill available skilled and unskilled workforce positions. Workforce and talent attraction and retention are key issues within many communities throughout the state.

Commuting Patterns

The Facts:
- According to the 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the Town’s workforce traveled an average of 23.2 minutes to their workplace. This was more than the county and the state.
- In 2015, 85 people work in the Town of Eldorado, but live outside; 3 people live and work within the Town; and 675 people live within the Town but work elsewhere.
- Top workplace destinations for Eldorado residents include the City of Fond du Lac (29.9%) and the City of Oshkosh (10.0%).
- Top places of residence for persons working in Eldorado include the City of Fond du Lac (12.5%), City of Ripon (4.5%).

What it Means:
The Town has limited employment opportunities and most people leave the Town for work. The Town’s workforce is very mobile, utilizing local highway access to commute to nearby employment centers. Over 40 percent of Town residents travel between 15 to 24 minutes to work, reflecting the top 2 employment destinations of the City of Fond du Lac and the City of Oshkosh.

Economic Base Analysis

The Facts:
- Management, Business, Science, and Arts occupations (26.8%) and Sales and Office occupations (25.3%) employed over half of the Town workforce in 2013-2017.
- Manufacturing (21.3%) and Educational, Health and Social Services (15.5%) industry sectors employed over a third of the Town workforce in 2013-2017.
- Manufacturing will be the largest industry in Fond du Lac County in 2028 (11,002 jobs or 21% of total employment), followed by Health Care and Social Assistance (7,510 jobs or 14.1% of total employment). 2018 total earnings for Manufacturing was $70,662, while the total earnings for Health Care and Social Assistance was $61,559.
- Between 2018 and 2028, the largest increase in jobs in Fond du Lac County will occur in Health Care and Social Assistance (938 jobs) and Construction (421 jobs, $70,662 – 2018 Total Earnings).

What it Means:
The Manufacturing industry sector currently employs the largest share of Town residents (21.3%) and is expected to continue to employ the largest share of workers in the county (20.6%) in 2028. Workers in this industry have relatively high earnings, when compared to other industry sectors.
Strengths and Weaknesses

**Strengths**

- Superb highway access, particularly USH 41.
- Close proximity to Fond du Lac and the Fox Valley.
- Good work ethic.
- Friendly community.
- An attractive and safe community atmosphere that provides for a high quality of living.
- Quality school districts serving the area.
- Reasonable tax rates and relatively low land values.
- Access to recreational areas such as parks and the Eldorado Marsh.
- Natural areas and open space.
- High educational attainment.
- Mid-high-income – suggesting disposable income to support non-essential businesses (i.e. entertainment, restaurants, and specialty shops).

**Weaknesses**

- Residents can easily drive to Fond du Lac to purchase services and products;
- Similarly, many residents travel outside of the Town to work and find shopping, dining and entertainment choices in nearby cities.
- Lack of businesses catering to people’s everyday needs that further entices residents to drive to Fond du Lac.
- Competition from existing development centers limits the market area for businesses in Eldorado.
- Opposition to development from Town residents who perceive business uses as a threat to the Town’s rural, agricultural character and quality of living.
- Availability of infrastructure (e.g. sewer, water and telecommunications)
- Networking opportunities for businesses
- Access to high speed internet
- Business attraction
- Lack of public transportation
- Lack of diversity in economic base and employment options
- Lack of amenities and service needs for seniors

**POTENTIAL FRAMING CONCEPTS (key issues)**

- **Business Retention & Attraction (Focus)**
  - Downtown redevelopment
  - Development along the I-41 corridor
- **Rural Tourism Opportunities (Focus)**
  - Agri-tourism
  - Utilization of the Marsh
  - Family friendly stop on the Mascoutin Valley State Park Trail