

Strategic Plan to Achieve Identified Economic Development Goals

Through input of the committee and the Economic Development Summit, the following strategies have been developed to assist in accomplishing the goals identified through this strategic planning process. The goals are listed in the order of priority identified by the planning team.

2008-2009 Goals and Implementation Steps

1. **Educate local businesses and local communities on programs currently available through the Chisago County HRA-EDA.**
 - A. Create a brochure that summarizes the various programs for use by elected officials as well as businesses. Complete a mass mailing of the brochure to cities and businesses.
 - B. Host Business Round Table meetings at least once per year, to provide networking opportunities for businesses and present programs highlighting various financial programs.
 - C. Create and update a distribution list for local EDAs on state, regional and local economic development training seminars.
 - D. Continue to have Chisago County HRA-EDA staff attend local EDA meetings at least biannually.
 - E. Create a Chisago County "Ambassador Team" which would serve as the contact organization for new and expanding businesses and be knowledgeable of programs available.

2. **Update and expand marketing efforts for economic development in Chisago County.**
 - A. Brand "Chisago County" and its communities through the use of the Chisago County HRA-EDA logo and slogan, "A Natural Resource for Business".
 - B. Promote the "Small town atmosphere" and living in Home Town America, with close proximity to the metropolitan.
 - C. Create "feature stories" which focus on service and personnel and encourage local newspapers to create a "Business of the Week" column.
 - D. Focus on a "Go Green" initiative and target market environmentally friendly businesses which complement the natural resources and protected areas within Chisago County.
 - E. Develop a focused marketing program which consists of post cards, e-mails, etc; and present the information to real estate brokers.
 - F. Look at marketing of the County from a "business approach" rather than a "community approach" and incorporate a reward program for business leads which result in new businesses and employment.
 - G. Consider hiring a "recruiter" or sales staff member for Chisago County to recruit businesses/jobs to the County.
 - H. Inventory and remind residents what unique County assets exist, such as the number of miles of bike trails, number of bait shops, Wild River State Park, wineries, and other natural resources.

3. **Complete a market study for Chisago County to obtain commercial absorption rates and forecast future land use needs and redevelopment opportunities within communities in the County.**
 - A. Inquire with companies what information they want/need in a market study to ensure a clear focus with a returned value.
 - B. Research the ability to attract Agri-business and green businesses.
 - C. Obtain quotes from at least two reputable firms and budget for the completion of a market study.
 - D. Upon completion of a market study, share the results with local realtors, businesses and developers.
 - E. Upon completion of a market study, share the results with local government units and work in cooperation to plan areas for future commercial and industrial development.

4. **Conduct Business Retention and Enhancement visits to manufacturing/ industries in Chisago County.**
 - A. Meet with local EDAs and economic development groups to educate on the business retention and expansion process.
 - B. Coordinate business retention and expansion visits with other organizations (e.g. MN Work Force Center, DEED, the Greater MN Chamber of Commerce, etc.) completing similar surveys or visits to avoid duplication, and share data collected.
 - C. Conduct local business retention and expansion visits annually inquiring what their current issues or concerns are and what the City/County can do to assist.
 - D. Research and discuss incentive programs for existing businesses as a part of business retention and expansion visits.
 - E. Create a directory and sponsor manufacturing round table events so complementary businesses get to know each other.
 - F. During future business retention and expansion visits, identify business needs and follow-up with information on applicable financial/technical programs.
 - G. Create an atmosphere which is more business friendly, working with local and county government official to stream line processes and identify other issues.

5. **Create synergy between all communities in Chisago County to ensure a collaborative approach to economic development.**
 - A. Continue to work together on strategic planning with quarterly meetings with city, county and township representatives.
 - B. Continue to have diverse representation from various areas of the county on the Board of Directors for the Chisago County HRA-EDA and forward agendas and invite local EDAs to attend.
 - C. As local government units, continue to support the Chisago County HRA-EDA office and the funding of its activities through the county.

- D. Develop statistics for a fact sheet illustrating the spin-off benefits of business development such as residency of employees, etc. and educate all communities on the positive aspects of working together versus competing against one another and illustrate the benefits of a new business in one city and the positive impact it has on all cities and townships in the County.
 - E. If JOBZ is available, continue to cooperate on the transfer of JOBZ acres as needed/appropriate.
 - F. Investigate the employment of a “shared” economic development staff person for the cities within Chisago County.
 - G. Encourage Chisago County mayors to meet on a quarterly basis to share information on their local government units.
 - H. Research the creation of an annual “virtual job fair” for the county through Central MN Jobs and Training.
6. **Educate the public on the benefits of economic development within the County and reasons for financial incentives.**
- A. Promote successes and spin-off benefits such as grants that are now local revolving loan funds, spin off development, taxes paid, etc. through monthly press releases in various local newspapers and radio stations.
 - B. Educate the public on economic impact of business development including but not limited to payroll by employers, housing impacts; through the distribution of data at various events such as home shows, kiosks, the county fair, local festivals.
 - C. Facilitate economic development through coordination with Community Education programs or courses.

Five Year Goals and Implementation Steps (2009-2013)

7. **Level the playing field with Wisconsin – taxes, etc.**
 - A. Work with local legislators to create a Border Cities Development Zone for Chisago County.
 - B. Support JOBZ with through contacts with local legislators
 - C. Explore tax differences in surrounding states and promote areas in which MN and Chisago County are more affordable such as affordable housing options.
 - D. Develop a “phantom business” and analyze the differences in running a business in Chisago County versus elsewhere, including shipping costs, workers compensation, income taxes, property taxes, etc and promote the benefits to doing business in Chisago County.
 - E. Market the strengths of doing business in Chisago County versus elsewhere including promotion of the quality education and quality workforce.

8. **Pursue Funding for Economic Development.**
 - A. Outline available local, regional and state funding programs and market these to local businesses (e.g. SEED funds, Minnesota Investment Fund, etc.)
 - B. Seek new non-traditional funding opportunities.
 - C. Assist communities with the establishment of local revolving loan funds.
 - D. Sponsor business round-tables to assist in establishing business connections and promoting the use of local suppliers, or relocation of suppliers to Chisago County.
 - E. Explore the invitation of business leaders from other countries which focus on green industry or renewable energy (e.g. Sweden) to visit and consider the cration of a Foreign Exchange Program.
 - F. With input from businesses, investigate the development of a commercial cooperative to allow local independent businesses to work together to order supplies and services (e.g. health insurance) to reduce costs to local businesses. Also review cooperative city purchases to reduce public expenditures.
 - G. Advertise county-wide funding programs available via a billboard, web sites, etc.

9. **Create partnerships with Chisago County businesses for programs such as business and job training.**
 - A. Increase communication and connect high schools and technical colleges with businesses and let them know what services and educational programs are available. Partner with schools so students and parents know the level of skill and education needed to work at local industries and the wages paid.
 - B. Promote satellite technical courses/higher educational offerings available in Chisago County.
 - C. Meet with the twenty (20) largest employers in the county to learn what the county can do to assist with educational and training programs.

- D. Work with local Chambers of Commerce to sponsor programs to educate local businesses on trends in retail such as multiple product lines to offer consumer convenience, delivery services, etc.
- E. Support MN Jobs and Training with their virtual job fair.
- F. Work with Pine Technical College to link Chisago County high schools to the "Gold Collar Program".

10. Survey residents to obtain information on their current education, skills and job and interest in local employment.

- A. Work with high school alumni lists and campaign to "Return to your Roots" after they have started their careers and/or families. Plan events around holidays in which alumni are most likely to return to the area.
- B. Complete an on-line county wide survey as well as offer local resident written surveys to obtain information on the current education levels residents have, their skills and job interests and current employment status. Inform residents of the types of skills Chisago County manufacturers and businesses require.
- C. Work with local high school students to obtain information on their plans for higher education and the education level and job skills of their family members.

11. Educate the public on economic impacts of doing business locally.

- A. Create a marketing campaign which places a "face" on local business owners – through web sites, billboards, etc. Focus on the small town businesses and promote "Keep it local/Shop at home"
- B. Create a county wide directory of businesses including a website for home-based businesses.
- C. Require a business permit to identify new businesses and develop a county marketing program to recognize new businesses.
- D. Work with local communities and their Chambers of Commerces to host local functions such as community expos.

12. Work with the County, local cities and townships and MnDOT to develop a regional transportation plan.

- A. Work with the County Planning and Public Works Departments, local cities and townships, the regional development commission and MNDOT to develop a regional transportation plan.
- B. Coordinate transportation planning with the Rush Line Task Force.
- C. Assist communities with Highway 8 expansion issues.
- D. Lobby for transportation funding at a state and federal level for the Chisago County area and state/federal and public/private partnerships.
- E. Investigate the establishment of a transportation utility fee to support county wide transportation improvements.

13. Recruit satellite technical college courses to be offered within the county.

- A. Work with Pine Technical College to offer more virtual training programs.
- B. Discuss training needs with employers.
- C. Contact technical colleges and request they offer satellite programs in Chisago County.
- D. Encourage local businesses to offer mentorship programs and facilitate the process with higher educational facilities.