

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

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hwy 41/141, STH 32 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce ethics/skilled
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water features – Lakes, Green Bay, Creeks, Rivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterways – lakes/streams, natural resources
Group 3	Group 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture and ag. Support businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCEDC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campgrounds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lakes and water
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large ag. base

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

OCONTO COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

- 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

OCONTO COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

- 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

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of employment opportunities • Existing jobs are lower paying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack manufacturing jobs • Limited/lack infrastructure for manufacturing
Group 3	Group 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of industry • Void of technology availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance to ports • Tech schools not affordable • Lack of high school <u>trades</u> • Poor academic attainment

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

OCONTO COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

- 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

OCONTO COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

- 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

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future services for aging community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and Federal money for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good manufacturing workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote tourism with established programs/lakes/streams/trails, etc.
Group 3	Group 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax incentives for businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New business development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep rail and roads in good condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countywide business recruitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand tourism 	

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

OCONTO COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

- 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

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough high paying jobs in county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacent big cities draw our opportunities away
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of family farms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to world economy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing of mill in Oconto Falls
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of big manufacturing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High state taxes drive business out
Group 3	Group 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundwater contamination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower school standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State mandates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annexation vs. local cooperation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing taxation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No training for local officials

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

OCONTO COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

- 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

OCONTO COUNTY MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

- Weather
- Wisconsin DoT putting in roundabouts on 32
- Wisconsin taxes – too high
- World economy – jobs going overseas
- Zoning mandates