

Foth Infrastructure & Environment, LLC
Meeting Notes

Economic Development Focus Group
Burnett County Comprehensive Plan

Date: October 15, 2008

Location: The Lodge at Crooked Lake, Siren, WI

Present: John Stroschine, *NWRPC*; Norman Bickford, *Village of Webster*; John Richards, *NWEC/Town of Wood River*; Ted Gerber, *Community Bank*; Mark Dahlburg, *NWEC/Village of Grantsburg*; Shaun Mularkey, *Foth*; Mike Kornmann, *UWEX*

Notes By: Shaun Mularkey, Foth; Mike Kornmann, UWEX

The meeting began with introductions and a presentation on the Burnett County Comprehensive Planning process, data and trends, and major issues relative to Economic DEvelopment as identified by the county Comprehensive Planning Committee. These issues were discussed and validated and the following questions were discussed in detail:

Questions:

- I. Where should Burnett County focus its economic resources?
 - Existing business parks and incubators have been very successful – continue to expand this
 - Industrial expansion
 - Past emphasis on tourism, but is not a high paying industry
 - Niche farming and commercial farming growth; Switchgrass ag is a possibility for biofuel
 - Protecting ag land – Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program
 - Since the county is becoming more of a retirement destination, encourage retirement friendly services
 - Organize for-profit organization(s) to develop business parks, recruit manufacturing plants to the county, provide business retention programs, and other organizational programs
 - Continue to find prospects and market the County/region
 - Encourage the growth of business clusters based on similar or complementary industries
 - Finding small businesses operating out of the home to expand based on other local businesses that could use their products
 - Regional cooperation
- II. What do you feel are the essential building blocks of a high-growth economy with high-paying jobs?

- “Cool” communities with a high quality of life – amenities, shopping, etc.
 - Quality schools
 - Walkability/Bicycling for families with children
 - Recreational opportunities for youth and adults
- III. Are there any impediments to greater economic development in the county/region? What are they?
- Attitudes that are adverse to change
 - Lacking of job training opportunities in the county
 - Aging population, loss of younger population
 - Finding suitable manufacturing space
- IV. What resources, talents, initiatives, and enterprises in your community are present that enhance economic development of the region or vice versa? Do you have examples of such?
- Industrial revenue bonds
 - Robust county website being developed
 - Regional loan fund
 - Tech zone
 - Business plan competition –financial awards and loans
- V. Are there any barriers to collaborative efforts in the county/region? What are they?
- Some factions within county
 - Lack of funding
- VI. What collaborative initiatives can you imagine that would enhance economic gains in the county/region? Do you have examples of such?
- Business collaborations
 - Mayor’s Breakfast
 - Business After 5