

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The ability of a community to attract new and innovative businesses, industries, and workers is a key element for the community’s economic survival. Providing a good climate for business development enhances the community’s overall well being both in financial terms as well as in morale and civic pride. Numerous factors contribute to the economic development of a community, many of which extend far beyond the community’s boundaries. Therefore, in addition to the specific data on the Town of Blaine, this chapter will also include information on Burnett County and the State of Wisconsin.

Several characteristics of the population, labor force, and the economic base of the town play major roles in its economic development and will be discussed in this chapter. Additionally, the strengths and weaknesses of the town, with respect to attracting and retaining businesses, will be explored along with an inventory of the existing businesses. Finally, state, federal, county, and regional economic development programs and organizations will be reviewed.

6.2 LABOR FORCE

The labor force is defined as those members of the population 16 years or older who are employed or if unemployed are actively seeking jobs. Based on Census 2000 data, Table 6.1 gives an overview of some of the characteristics of the population and labor force in the Town of Blaine, Burnett County, and Wisconsin.

According to Census 2000, of the 224 residents in the Town of Blaine, 161 were age 16 years or over. Of that 161, 44.1 percent or 71 made up the civilian labor force. At that time, 66 were identified as employed and 5 were unemployed.

As identified in Table 6.1, of the 146 town residents 25 years and older, 32.9 percent have some education beyond high school, with 8.9 percent possessing a bachelor’s degree or higher. Compared to the County (14.0%) and the State (22.5%), the 8.9 percent of town residents with a higher-level degree is considerably lower.

Table 6.1: General Characteristics of the Population 2000

Characteristics	Town of Blaine	Burnett County	Wisconsin
Civilian Labor Force	71	7,316	2,869,236
Unemployment Rate	7.0%	5.8%	4.7%
Labor Participation Rate	44.1%	57.7%	69.1%
Education Beyond High School (25 and over)	32.9%	40.1%	50.6%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher (25 and over)	8.9%	14.0%	22.4%
Per Capita Income	\$12,895	\$17,712	\$21,271

Median Household Income	\$31,250	\$34,218	\$43,791
Poverty Rate (Individual)	15.3%	8.8%	8.7%
Median Age	50.5	44.1	36.0

Source: U.S Census 2000 (SF 1 & SF 3)

The town’s median age (50.5 years) is considerably higher than the state (36.0 years) and the county (44.1 years) median age. Burnett County has the fourth highest median age in the state.

The labor force participation rate is the number of residents who are either working or looking for work divided by the total population over 16 years of age. One of the primary reasons for the low labor force participation rate is the large portion of the population over the age of 65. An increasingly aging labor force, a low birth rate, and the loss of younger workforce members will have dire consequences on the future labor supply of the county and, therefore, will have an effect on, not only the county, but the town’s economy.

Burnett County’s unemployment rate has been consistently higher than the state rate but has remained fairly close to the national rate. Large fluctuations in seasonal jobs in construction and tourism cause the unemployment rate to elevate during some months of the year, thus, contributing to a higher annual average rate.

Although in 2000-2001 Wisconsin had a higher majority (69%) of high school students who pursued some form of post secondary education after graduation compared to a national estimate (60%)¹, the state lags behind the nation in its ability to retain those students following completion of their degree programs. The national average state retention of degreed students is 71.3 percent compared to the Wisconsin average of 61.6 percent.² The Town of Blaine, like the county and the state, suffers from this college out-migration. Additionally, the Town and County have a lower number of students seeking post secondary education than the state; however, it should be noted that Census 2000 post secondary education data does not include those who have participated in vocational or technical training/certificate programs unless the minimum of an associate degree was or will be awarded. Given the large manufacturing presence in the state, vocational/technical programs have high participation rates in these areas. Though enrollment in technical/vocational programs in university and technical college systems is not considered post-secondary attainment by the Census, it is believed that some individuals who hold certificates from these programs may have self-reported this enrollment as some level of college education on census questionnaires but just how many is unknown.³ It is most likely that the composition of the industry base and the lack of professional jobs in the County contribute to the lower percentage of Town of Blaine citizens possessing higher degrees.

¹ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

² Indiana’s Human Capital Retention Project. Graduate Migration from Indiana’s Postsecondary Institutions. Bloomington, IN. Indiana Fiscal Policy Institute. March 1999

³ Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. Mortarboards, Paychecks, and Crystal Balls: The Link Between Education and Wisconsin’s Labor Force. October 2002

6.3 ECONOMIC BASE

The Town of Blaine, located in northern Burnett County, borders the Minnesota state line to the west, Douglas County to the north, and Washburn County to the east. State Highway 35 runs north-south through the middle of West Blaine, making it accessible from other areas in Wisconsin and northern and eastern Minnesota, particularly the Duluth/Superior metropolitan area and the Hinckley area.

Employment by Industry

Table 6.2 lists the number and percent of employed residents in the town by industry sector from Census 2000 data plus the 2002 annual average pay for each industry sector for Burnett County based on the Covered Employment and Wages Report. Wage data for 2000 is not available at the community level. Furthermore, 2000 county level wage data is not available using the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) because of the changeover from the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes to the NAICS during this time period; therefore, the 2002 average annual pay is used in the table.

Table 6.2: Town of Blaine Resident Employment by Industry using NAICS			
Industry	Census 2000 Number	Percent	2002 Annual Avg. Pay for Burnett County
All Industries	66	100.0%	\$22,943
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	8	12.1%	\$25,759
Construction	10	15.2%	\$23,731
Manufacturing	11	16.7%	\$31,852
Wholesale trade	0	0.0%	ND
Retail trade	2	3.0%	\$14,358
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	7	10.6%	\$28,468
Information	0	0.0%	\$22,770
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	0	0.0%	\$22,077
Professional, scientific, mgmt., administrative, and waste mgmt.	2	3.0%	\$27,067
Educational, health and social services	6	9.1%	\$23,000
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food serv.	14	21.2%	\$8,734
Other services (except public administration)	3	4.5%	\$16,931
Public administration	3	4.5%	\$25,004

Source: U.S. Census 2000; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

ND: Non Disclosable--data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards

As indicated by the table, three industry sectors dominated resident employment. Over 21 percent of residents were employed in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services industry (strongly related to the strong tourism-related atmosphere of Burnett County), while roughly 17 percent were employed in the manufacturing industry and 15 percent of residents were employed in the construction industry.

Town of Blaine Employers

Table 6.3 lists the employers in the Town of Blaine as of March 2003 as reported by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. Businesses without paid employees are not included in the report from the WI DWD. Within the employment size ranges, however, the companies are not necessarily in rank order.

Table 6.3: Employers in Town of Blaine in Order of Number of Employees

Employer Name	Product or Service	Employment Size Range
Town Of Blaine Burnett County	Executive and Legislative Offices	5-9
Markville Plumbing & Heating	Plumbing, Heating, and Air Conditioning	1-4
Chain of Lakes Landscaping Inc	Landscaping Services	NA
T & T Logging	Logging Services	NA
Hillside Inn	Bar/restaurant	NA

Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, March 2003; Town of Blaine
NA – Not Available

Worker Commuter Patterns

Table 6.4 indicates the number of people who live or work in the Town of Blaine and who commute to work. It includes the locations of their places of employment and the locations of their residences. Of the 66 residents in the Town of Blaine that commute to work, 36 percent work in the Town of Swiss. Over 12 percent of Blaine residents work in neighboring Minnesota. All 66 working residents in the Town of Blaine commute to their place of work. A total of 24 people work in the Town of Blaine; two-thirds of them are residents of the town itself.

Table 6.4: Town of Blaine Commuting Patterns 2000

Live In:	Work In	Count	Travel To:	From:	Count
T. of Blaine	Town of Swiss, Burnett Co.	24	T. of Blaine	Town of Blaine, Burnett Co.	16
	Town of Blaine Burnett Co.	16		V. of Webster, Burnett Co.	2
	V. of Webster, Burnett Co.	6		V. of Prentice, Price Co.	2
	C. of Shell Lake, Washburn Co.	3		Twp. of Dell Grove, Pine Co. MN	2
	T. of Grantsburg, Burnett Co.	3		C. of Sandstone Pine Co. MN	2
	C. of Hinckley, Pine County MN	3			
	C. of St. Paul, Ramsey Co. MN	3			
	C. of Duluth, St. Louis Co. MN	2			
	T. of Meenon, Burnett Co	2			
	V. of Solon Springs, Douglas Co.	2			
	C. of Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co.	2			
Totals		66	Totals		24

Source: Census 2000, MCD/County to MCD/County Worker Flow files

6.4 ATTRACTING AND RETAINING BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Due to the rural nature of the Town and the lack of public facilities such as water and sewer, the Town of Blaine does not have the public infrastructure necessary to accommodate any major commercial and industrial development. Although the town is intent on maintaining its present day rural atmosphere, limited commercial and light industrial development may potentially be accommodated in the future along portions of STH 35. Several attributes highlighting strengths and weaknesses to attracting and retaining business and industry have been identified. Strengths include a main thoroughfare state highway, and adequate land available along that corridor for some types of development. Weaknesses include no public water and sewer and local roads not designed for heavy truck traffic.

Attracting retail, tourism, and service-oriented businesses has been discussed as important business sectors to consider in the future if the town decides to expand business attraction measures in the area. To be successful, an attractive and competitive environment will need to be provided. Entrepreneurship and small business development is necessary to create new jobs and provide stability to the local economic base.

Because of structural changes in the economy and the transition from a primarily physical-labor industrial age economy to an intellectual-labor, information age or knowledge-based economy, the development of technology-based businesses has become even more important to attract high-skilled, high-paying jobs. The Town of Blaine and Burnett County, as indicated in the following sections, has the necessary amenities, such as high-speed Internet access, adequate power sources, and access to financing to attract knowledge-based businesses.

It is estimated that 85 percent of the employment in an area is generated by the existing businesses; therefore, retaining these companies is a high priority for local officials and economic development organizations. To accomplish this, the obstacles that restrict the growth of existing businesses must be removed and assistance must be given to them to help them remain competitive in a global economy. This section provides information on existing programs, initiatives, infrastructure, and organizations available to attract/retain businesses and industries in the Town of Blaine and Burnett County.

SuperiorLife Technology Zone Program

In June 2002, Burnett County was one of six counties in Northwest Wisconsin designated as a Technology Zone (called SuperiorLife) by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. Developed out of the Build Wisconsin initiative, the Technology Zone program brings \$5 million in income tax incentives for high-tech development in the area. The Technology Zone program will help the county generate high-wage jobs through the startup and expansion of technology-based businesses. Eligible businesses will be certified by the Department of Commerce for tax credits based on their ability not only to create high-wage jobs and investment but also to support the development of high-tech industries in the region.

Workforce Development

Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC), with locations in Rice Lake and Superior, is an accredited postsecondary educational institution serving northwestern Wisconsin. Although

neither a campus nor a branch is located in Burnett County, a learning center is located in the Village of Siren. Customized training and technical assistance to business and industry is available to help them become more competitive, increase productivity, and to retain workers. This customized training is available at the business site or in a campus classroom setting.

The University of Wisconsin-Superior is a public liberal arts college offering more than 30 undergraduate majors. It provides academic programs such as accounting, teacher education, and biology and innovative programs such as legal studies, art therapy, transportation, and logistics management. In addition, its graduate studies program offers advanced degrees in teacher education and administration, counseling, visual arts, and communicating arts. For nontraditional students, UW-Superior offers options such as an extended degree program, a center for continuing education/extension, and distance learning programs.

Located in the City of Rice Lake in nearby Barron County is a campus of the University of Wisconsin. It offers a two-year program resulting in an associate of arts or science degree. The school's curriculum of liberal studies and pre-professional courses prepares the student for further study or for entry or reentry into the workforce.

Additional higher educational facilities exist in the bordering state of Minnesota. The University of Minnesota-Duluth and the College of St. Scholastica offer four-year degree programs and are located in Duluth, Minnesota. Also located in Duluth is Lake Superior College, a two-year college that offers more than 100 technical majors, programs for transfer, continuing education, and customized training for business and industry. To the south, there are many two and four year colleges located in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The Northwest Wisconsin Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (NWCEP) is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to strengthen the economy by providing effective and efficient workforce development services to businesses and workers. In existence since 1968, it administers programs to help local youth and adults gain marketable skills and find better jobs. In addition, NWCEP provides a variety of services, including workshops, conferences, and newsletters for businesses and business development. NWCEP has its main office in Ashland County with a satellite office located in Park Falls in Price County.

WoodLINKS-USA is a program designed to respond to the serious lack of skilled workers in the wood industry. It is an industry education partnership designed to enhance the wood product industry competitiveness and economic development through significant improvement of entry-level work force skills through high school curriculum. The program combines traditional classroom training with experienced based learning both in schools and in cooperating industry partners. The program is being proposed to all high schools in the area, including those in Burnett County.

Business Development Assistance

There are several options available for small businesses in the Town of Blaine seeking technical assistance. One is the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation (WBIC), a partner organization formed by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC). Although its office is located in Washburn County, its service area is the entire ten-county region. Since it's

beginning in 1996, WBIC has developed a unique array of technical, financial, and business support services for start up and expanding businesses. This work involves analyzing a firm's financial needs including preparation or review of financial projections, analyzing requirements and procedures of the various financing programs, identifying the appropriate funding sources, structuring sources and uses of funds, and the preparation of forms and documents needed in applications.

Another source for technical assistance is the University of Wisconsin-Superior Small Business Development Center (SBDC). It assists entrepreneurs, small business owners, and managers who are in the pre-venture, start-up, or existing business stage. SBDC offers confidential, one-to-one counseling on business management topics through personal visits, email, and telephone. The center maintains a business-to-business network so a new business can ask for business expertise from a pertinent resource.

Technical assistance for small businesses is also available through the SCORE Association (Service Corps of Retired Executives), which is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration. There is a chapter in Douglas County that offers help with any business questions, strategy, and concerns. Small business counseling is available via telephone, email, workshops, and activities.

Access to Financing and Venture Capital

Small businesses create the lion's share of new jobs but are the least able to obtain reasonable financing for job-creating expansions and start-ups. Because of the shortage of long-term financing, small businesses are frequently unable to match the term of financing with the life of the asset.

The Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation (NWBDC) is a non-profit corporation formed by NWRPC to address the critical need for business financing in northwest Wisconsin. It is targeted at the best economic development opportunities of the area: the timber and wood products industry, tourism, and other manufacturing and service industries.

NWBDC manages three revolving loan funds (RLFs) and a technology seed fund. The overall goal of the RLFs is to stimulate private sector investment in long-term business assets and to create new jobs. The funds partially fill the gap in private capital markets for long-term fixed rate financing. The technology seed fund can be used to complete research and development activities and validate the technology, develop prototypes, and file patents and copyrights.

In addition to the NWBDC loan funds, Burnett County has a local revolving loan fund. In 1994, the Burnett County RLF was established from Economic Development Grant funds awarded by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. The fund provides an alternate source of financing for eligible businesses wishing to expand or locate in the county.

In late 2000, a community-based venture capital (equity) fund called the Wisconsin Rural Enterprise Fund, LLC (WREF) was established by the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation. It was formed to create a capital fund that would provide self-sustaining, moderate growth through financial investments made in rural businesses that meet the WREF criteria. Technology intensive businesses, which have the potential to create high-skilled, high-wage jobs

in rural areas, are the targeted businesses. Currently, it is the only Northwest Wisconsin community-based venture capital fund; and besides WBIC, its members include rural electric cooperatives and local community development organizations.

6.5 TECHNICAL AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Town of Blaine and Burnett County have adequate transportation facilities to serve existing and future businesses. An excellent roadway system is available in the County providing easy truck freight access to businesses in the county. General cargo service is available at Duluth/Superior, Wisconsin and Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota. The largest deep-draft commercial harbor (port) is located at Superior/Duluth.

Scheduled domestic and international passenger service is available at the Duluth International Airport and Twin Cities International Airport. Two smaller municipal airports are located in the county that can accommodate corporate passenger jets. One is located in the Village of Siren and one in Meenon Township (the Burnett County Airport).

Other physical infrastructures, like sewer, water, natural gas, electrical services, and telecommunications are available in some areas of the county, but are generally less plentiful and readily available in the rural areas of the Town of Blaine. Rural areas in Wisconsin are further ahead than many urban areas in the availability of high speed Internet access. Sewer, water, cable and natural gas services are not presently available in the town. Such infrastructure would logically become available in the future if population and business numbers increase. Such growth is not anticipated over the upcoming twenty-year planning horizon.

6.6 QUALITY OF LIFE

A good quality of life is becoming increasingly important to not only residents but also employers and employees alike. This is true not only in Wisconsin but around the country. The Town of Blaine has a premium quality of personal life, with a beautiful physical environment, excellent quality and quantity of water, access to a good public education system, good public services, and an above average labor force with a good work ethic.

Natural, recreational, and lifestyle amenities abound throughout the County and tranquility and solitude of the great outdoors is plentiful. The lack of traffic jams, low crime rates, and low costs enhance the quality living environment. Clean, unpolluted air, as well as lots of open space for recreation and expansion, adds to the general overall quality of life to residents of the Town of Blaine.

6.7 BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY SITES

No industrial parks are located in the Town of Blaine. Presently there are no plans over the next 20 years to site such a park, but the town intends to consider any development plans as they might occur.

6.8 TOURISM IMPACT TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Information on tourism is not available at the town level; therefore, Burnett County data must be used for the Town of Blaine. The following information was acquired from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.

Burnett County is a vacationland for local and distance travelers and ranks 48th in the state for traveler spending⁴. Local events and natural resources significantly contribute to the number of visitors to Burnett County. Businesses that cater to tourism, such as motels, resorts, campgrounds, B&Bs, and retail stores complement the hundreds of miles of snowmobiling and biking trails as well as the many parks, golf courses, historic sites, and area attractions.

According to the State Department of Tourism, traveler spending statewide has continued to increase reaching an estimated \$11.7 billion in 2003. Visitors to Burnett County in 2003 spent a total of \$57 million. Summer is the biggest season and generated traveler expenditures of \$23 million. Winter/spring travelers spent \$19 million and fall visitors spent \$15 million.

Tourism is an extremely vital part of Burnett County's economy. Since 1993, travel expenditures in Burnett County increased 200 percent, from \$19 million to \$57 million. In 2003, full-time equivalent jobs supported as a result of traveler spending in Burnett County amounted to 1,511. Translated to total county workforce, it means that nearly 20 percent of people employed in Burnett County are in jobs supported by tourism. Employees in the County earned an estimated \$35 million in wages generated from tourist spending.

The total impact of tourism extends far into the County, making a contribution to schools and local governments. Local revenues (property tax, sales taxes, lodging taxes, etc.) collected as a result of traveler spending were an estimated \$2.3 million in 2003.

The number of seasonal homes in the Town of Blaine is significant. According to Census 2000, more than half (56.7%) of all housing units in the Town are for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

6.9 REDEVELOPMENT AND CONTAMINATED SITES

Currently, there are no open contaminated sites officially identified in the Town of Blaine. Over the 20 year planning horizon, should sites be identified, redevelopment is encouraged.

⁴ Wisconsin Department of Tourism, May/June 2003

6.10 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

There are many programs at the federal, state, county, and regional level that can help the Town of Blaine in the support and development of economic development efforts. In addition, there are programs available for individual businesses to assist in start-up and expansion. This section contains a list of the major agencies and programs that are most likely to be used by the town in its economic development efforts. In addition to programs, there are economic development organizations throughout the county that provide assistance to local units of government and businesses. These are also listed in this section.

FEDERAL

Economic Development Administration

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration offers two programs for assistance with economic development that apply to the Town of Blaine. One is the Public Works and Economic Development Facilities Assistance Program, which supports the construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and development facilities necessary to generate private sector jobs and investment, including investments that support technology-led development, redevelopment of brownfield sites, and eco-industrial development. Secondly, the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program is available to address the immediate needs of businesses and communities presently undergoing transition due to a sudden and severe job loss and to demonstrate new and proactive approaches for economic competitiveness and innovative capacity for threatened regions and communities.

USDA Wisconsin Rural Development

Several loan and grant programs of benefit to the county and local business development are available from the USDA Rural Development. One of those programs is the Community Facility Guaranteed Loans Program, which provides funding to local units of government to construct, enlarge, extend, or otherwise improve community facilities providing essential services in rural areas and towns.

The Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants Program helps develop projects that will result in a sustainable increase in economic productivity, job creation, and incomes in rural areas. Projects may include business start-ups and expansion, community development, incubator projects, medical and training projects, and feasibility studies.

The purpose of the Business and Industry Direct Loan Program is to improve, develop, or finance business, industry, and employment and improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities. Loan purposes include purchase and expansion of land, equipment, buildings, and working capital. Loans to public bodies can be used to finance community facilities and construct and equip industrial plants for lease to private businesses.

The Community Facilities Direct Loans and Grants Program provides funding for essential community facilities (CF) such as municipal buildings, day care centers, and health and safety facilities. Examples include fire halls, fire trucks, clinics, nursing homes, and hospitals. CF loans

and grants may also be used for such things as activity centers for the handicapped, schools, libraries, and other community buildings.

STATE

Wisconsin Department of Commerce

At least three programs are available to local units of government through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. The first program is the Community Development Block Grant for Economic Development (CDBG-ED). Its purpose is to provide resources to local governments that will enable them to assist economic development projects in their community. The local unit of government is the applicant and recipient of the funds. A specific business, which must be located in a municipality of 50,000 or less, is loaned the funds for eligible business development uses. When the funds are repaid to the local government, they may stay in the community to be used as a revolving loan fund to assist other businesses in the community.

The second program is the Community Development Block Grant Public Facilities for Economic Development (CDBG-PFED). Its purpose is to provide grant funds to local governments that will enable them to provide needed public facilities (i.e., streets, sewer mains, water mains, etc.) to private business enterprises that are going to create full-time jobs by starting or expanding their businesses because of the availability of the funded public facilities.

The third program available from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce is the Community-Based Economic Development Program (CBED). Its purpose is to provide financing assistance to local governments and community-based organizations that undertake planning or development projects or that provide technical assistance in support of business (including technology-based businesses) and community development.

Wisconsin Departments of Tourism and Commerce

The Tourism Development Initiative is a multi-faceted program designed to assist tourism businesses that have been severely affected by consecutive winters with minimal snowfall. The program offers planning and training grants that focus on tourism development and diversification at the business and municipal levels. A Snow Emergency Loan is available to qualifying small businesses that can document significant revenue loss caused by the lack of snow.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Available from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is a program called the Transportation Facilities Economic Assistance and Development Program (TEA). The intent of the TEA program is to help support new business development in Wisconsin by funding transportation improvements that are needed to secure jobs in the state. A governing body, a business, a consortium group, or any combination thereof can apply for TEA program funding.

REGIONAL

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission is a cooperative venture of the local units of governments in the ten counties of Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Burnett, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, and Washburn and the five tribal nations of Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, Red Cliff, St. Croix, and Lac du Flambeau in the region. The purpose of NWRPC is to assist the communities of the membership to promote sustainable economic development, develop public facilities, provide planning and technical services, efficiently manage and conserve natural resources, and protect the environment. Every five years, NWRPC, with the cooperation of the local units of government in its region, prepares a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the entire Northwest Region.

In an effort to build a focused development strategy for the Northwest Region, NWRPC developed three non-profit development corporations, each focusing on a specific area need and opportunity including financing for business start up and expansions (Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation), technology-based business development (Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation), and affordable housing (Northwest Affordable Housing, Inc.).

Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation

A strategic partner of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, the Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation, has available revolving loan funds to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed rate, low down-payment, and low interest financing to assist businesses in job creation/retention and growth.

SuperiorLife Technology Zone Program

The Technology Zone program was developed out of the Build Wisconsin initiative, which is firmly based in the concepts of promoting regional cooperation and developing a technology base. Burnett County is part of the SuperiorLife Technology Zone and won designation as such by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce (WDOC) in 2002. Each designated zone will get \$5 million in income tax incentives for high-tech development. The (WDOC) will certify eligible businesses for tax credits based on their ability to create high-wage jobs and investment and support the development of high-tech industries in the region. The SuperiorLife Technology Zone offers the potential for growth in the computer software, medical, and forestry clusters, among others.

LOCAL

Economic Development Organizations

Several economic development organizations dedicated to community and business development exist in Burnett County. Following is a list of these organizations that promote economic development or provide assistance to local units of government and businesses and industries within the county.

Burnett County Development Association

The Burnett County Development Association (BCDA) is a private nonprofit economic development association made up of a group of individuals, businesses, and governments

working to promote economic opportunities for the residents, businesses, and communities of Burnett County. The organization has representation from all areas of the county, banks, villages, utilities, and the St. Croix Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Since its inception in 1985, BCDA has worked on a variety of projects including business recruitment, retention, expansion, and financing projects. Its accomplishments and activities include coordinating efforts to serve county villages with natural gas, designation as a technology zone and providing income tax credits, promoting business fairs, communicating demographic trends, and lobbying for legislation that promotes economic and community growth.

Burnett County Industrial Development Agency

The Burnett County Board of Supervisors formed the Burnett County Industrial Development Agency. The agency's purpose is to serve as the controlling or operating entity to administer the Burnett County Revolving Loan Fund.

Other Programs

There are many more federal, state, and local programs offering assistance to businesses. They are listed in the Economic Development Manual prepared by the Wisconsin Bankers Association and the Wisconsin Financing Alternatives booklet prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce.

6.11 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

A set of recommended goals, objectives, and actions have been developed to assist the Town of Blaine in its overall effort to support, retain, and attract economic development activity.

Goal: Promote economic development activities that provide for a healthy, diversified, and sound economy with minimal effects on the environment.

Objective and Action Statements:

- 1: Maintain rural atmosphere in the town through the selection of appropriate enterprises.
- 2: Maintain some control over the types of industries that may want to come into the town.
- 3: Investigate the zoning of properties along State Highway 35.
 - a. Develop a future land use map.
- 4: Consider environmental impacts, such as noise, traffic, lighting, odor, pollution, etc., when new development is proposed.
 - a. Require environmental assessments of new industrial/commercial development.