

6. Economic Development

Overview

The ability of a community to attract new and innovative businesses, workers, and industries is an important element for the town's prosperity and economic survival. By providing for its businesses and the residents who comprise its workforce, the town insures its future success. The chapter contains goals, objectives, background information, and programs to promote the stabilization, retention, and expansion of the economic base in the Town of Atlanta.

6.1 Labor Force

The labor force is that portion of the population 16 years or older that is unemployed but actively seeking a job or they are already employed. Employment is counted and measured in several ways according to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Office of Economic Advisors.

Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) are based on where a person lives and includes anybody working, including those who are self-employed. What that means is that it measures the employed residents of the county. The primary source is the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted each month by the Census Bureau. CPS data employed persons at their place of residence and counts them only once even if they would hold more than one job. CPS data includes those persons "with a job but not at work" who earn no wages. Some examples could include unpaid family workers employed 15 hours or more during the survey period, workers on unpaid leaves of absence, and a significant portion of agriculture and domestic workers, but would exclude someone who is under the age of 16.

Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment (NFWS) is an estimate of jobs based on the county an employer is located in. What that means is that it measures jobs in the count. It does not include self-employed persons. The primary source is the Current Employment Statistics program (CES) and is derived from the Quarterly Census of the Employment and Wage (QCEW) which is gathered from the quarterly reports submitted by over 8 million U.S. Employer establishments covered by unemployment insurance. The QCEW program counts jobs at the place of work and counts separately each job held by more than one holder. NFWS data takes QCEW data and adds churches, private schools, RR workers, students in study, etc. For that reason the NFWS figures will always be higher than that of the QCEW figures.

Table 6.1 shows employment numbers. Each year the numbers for unemployment gradually start to increase over time **because of winter layoffs.**

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Table 6.1 Labor Force Statistics

	Number	Percent
Population over 16 years	451	100 %
In Labor Force	293	65%
Employed	286	63.4%
Unemployment Rate	7	1.6%

** From Census.gov: DP03 – Selected Economic Characteristics

Education Attainment

A good indicator of economic potential for an area is the educational attainment of its residents. A high level of educational attainment reflects a more skilled population with higher earnings. Table 6.2 shows the percentage of the populations of people over the age of 25 of the town of Atlanta and their education attainment.

TABLE 6.2 Educational Attainments

	Town of Atlanta	In Labor Force	Employed	Unemployment
Population 25 to 64 years of age	300	238	233	5
Less than High School graduate	40	30	30	0
High School graduate (or equivalency)	99	81	77	4
Some college or associate's degree	129	110	109	1
Bachelor's degree or higher	32	17	17	0

**From Census.gov: BP3006 Educational Attainment by Employment Status

EMPLOYMENT

Agriculture is the highest percentage of employment by residents of the Town of Atlanta.

Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI) are derived state administrative records and basic demographic information for the Census Bureau. Like the QCEW, the QWI counts jobs rather than employed workers and does not include self-employed workers. Unlike the QCEW, the QWI counts all jobs with a quarter, not just the 12th of the month; therefore, the job counts will differ.

The next table shows the top 10 employers in the Town of Atlanta.

Table 6.3 Prominent Employers in Town of Atlanta

Rank	Establishment	Service or Product	Num of Employees
1	Joe Schmidt	Agriculture	Under 100
2	D. C. Crete	Building	Under 100
3	Christie Mountain	Recreation	Under 100
4	Meisegeier	Agriculture	Under 100
5	CPH Welding	Industrial	Under 100

Impact of Tourism.

The Town of Atlanta has a wealth of natural resources, ecological diversity, and abundant wildlife making the area a top destination for outdoor enthusiasts and nature buffs. The Blue Hills provide recreational opportunities year-round. The Town of Atlanta’s water system includes the Chippewa River and Devil’s Creek which offer fishing and canoeing opportunities. The Town of Atlanta also includes county forest land, downhill and cross-country skiing, and a Wisconsin rustic road.

6.3 Programs & Implementation Tools

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

Financing

Economic Development Administration

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration offers two programs for helping with economic development that apply to the Town of Atlanta. 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, eco-industrial development, and redevelopment of brownfield sites. Secondly, the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program is available to (1) address the immediate needs of business and communities presently undergoing transition due to a sudden and severe job loss; and (2) demonstrate new and proactive approaches for economic competitiveness and innovative capacity for threatened regions and communities.

USDA Wisconsin Rural Development

Several loan or grant programs of benefit to the county and local business development are available for 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, extend, enlarge, 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, incomes in rural areas, and job creation. 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, employment, and industry, and improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities. Loan purposes include purchase and expansion of land, equipment, working capital, and buildings. Loans to the public can be used to finance community facilities and build and equip industrial plants for lease to private businesses.

The Community Facilities Direct Loans and Grants Programs provides funding for essential community facilities (CF) such as municipal buildings, safety and health facilities, and day care centers. There are some examples that include clinics, hospitals, fire trucks, fire halls, and nursing homes. CF loans and grants may also be used for such things as activity centers for the handicapped, libraries, schools, and other community buildings.

STATE

Wisconsin Department of Commerce

There are at least three programs available to local units of government through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce (DOC). 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 help other businesses in that community.

The second program is the Community Development Block Grant Public Facilities for Economic Development (CDBG-PFED). It's main purpose is to provide grant funds to

local governments that will enable them to provide needed public facilities (i.e. sewer mains, water mains, streets, etc.) to private business enterprises that are going to create full-time jobs by starting or expanding their business 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 Department of Tourism

The Tourism Development Initiative is a multi-faceted program designed to assist tourism businesses. With its purpose to market all of Wisconsin, the Department offers several opportunities providing local tourism groups and other organizations funding assistance to promote local events and activities. The department's newly launched website also has links and other information.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Available from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is a program called the Transportation Facilities 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 consortium group, governing body, business, or any combination thereof can apply for TEA program funding.

REGIONAL

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

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

strategy for the Northwest Region, NWRPC developed three non-profit development corporations, each focusing on a specific real need and opportunity including financing for business startup and expansions (Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation), affordable housing (Northwest Affordable Housing, Inc.), and technology-based business development (Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation).

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, lowdown-payment, and low interest financing to assist businesses in job creation/retention and growth.

Local

There are several economic development organizations dedicated to the businesses and the community in the Town of Atlanta. The following is a list of these organizations that provide assistance to local units of the government, businesses, and industries or promote economic development.

Rusk County Economic Development

Rusk County Economic Development is a county department that handles a number of functions relating to economic development. They work to attract and retain businesses through providing small business counseling, access to loan funds, and building and leasing industrial space. The Economic Development office is also responsible for tourism promotion efforts.

University of Wisconsin-Extension

The Rusk County UW-Extension Agriculture/Natural Resources Development Agent works with local business and industry groups and can provide business and marketing counseling, feasibility study assistance, and business plan development.

6.7 Summary – Goals & Objectives

GOAL: Promote attract, and maintain the expansion and development of the economic base in the Town of Atlanta.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Encourage the growth of new job opportunities and higher paying job opportunities in the Town of Atlanta.

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2. Promote the development of manufacturing and industry where infrastructure is readily available.
3. Promote the education and skilled training of the work force.
4. Encourage the start-up of new business and the retention of existing businesses.

ACTIONS:

- a. Work with job training and education providers to provide opportunities for local workers to prepare for current and future job opportunities.
- b. Maintain a business retention/expansion program.
- c. Seek new opportunities for business growth and encourage the pursuit of emerging technology companies.
- d. Monitor the availability of suitable sites for industry and the skill base of the workforce to attract companies.