

CEDS Meeting #2 Notes

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Steering Committee Meeting 1 Summary

Date: October 8, 2:00-3:00 PM

Place: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Committee Attendees: Angie Close, Sara Guild, Elizabeth Haskovec, Angel Laidlaw, Tony Pharo, Holly Tomlanovich, Tommy Wartman, Kimm Weber

Staff Attendees: Dennis Lawrence, Eric Sonnleitner

Meeting Overview:

- The meeting started off with an overview of Meeting 1
- NCWRPC staff provided an overview of Chapter 3 – Economic Conditions. Data was examined for the following economic topics: Income & Poverty, Tourism, Housing, Broadband, and Gross Regional Product (GRP)
 - Income & Poverty data examined: median household income, income distribution, poverty, and poverty by race
 - Tourism data examined: direct visitor spending, tourism supported jobs, and the total economic impact of Tourism
 - Committee members suggested looking into why Adams County has had such a drastic decrease in direct visitor spending, especially with the recent expansion of Sand Valley. Adams County's decrease in visitor spending is in contrast to the growth experienced in the Region.
 - Housing data examined: monthly housing cost distribution, monthly housing cost burden, and housing sales trends
 - Broadband data examined: broadband accessibility and broadband adoption
 - Changes in GRP were examined for the Region and its counties, as well as the State
 - Committee members highlighted the slow growth in GRP experienced in Wood County in contrast to the strong growth experienced elsewhere in the Region & State. The closure of the Wisconsin Rapids paper mill in 2021 was mentioned as a potential cause of this.

- NCWRPC staff provided an overview of Chapter 4 – Existing Infrastructure. Infrastructure was grouped into two categories: Transportation and Utilities.
 - Transportation Infrastructure examined: Highway network (Interstate & Federal Highways, State Highways, County Highways), Transit, Airports, Railroads, and Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities
 - Committee members mentioned that Merrill & Langlade County have on-demand Transit services. NCWRPC will adjust transit section in document accordingly.
 - Utilities Infrastructure examined: Water & Wastewater facilities, Energy facilities, Telecommunications, and Business & Industrial Parks
 - Committee members mentioned the potential new ATC transmission line project proposed in Lincoln and Marathon Counties.
 - Committee members suggested adding information about the BEAD broadband expansion efforts and table of awards by county.
- NCWRPC Staff provided an overview of Chapter 6 – Economic Development Resources. Economic Development Resources are grouped into four categories, Federal, State, Regional, and Local
 - Committee members suggested adding the WI Dept. of Revenue & UW-Extension to list of resources
- Committee & Staff members proceeded to begin conducting a SWOT Analysis. An overview of the SWOT discussion starts on the next page.

SWOT Analysis Notes

- Due to time constraints, only Strengths & Weaknesses were discussed at this meeting, and Opportunities & Threats will be discussed to begin the next meeting.
 - Committee members suggested grouping similar Strengths into categories (workforce strengths, recreation strengths, etc.) This could be repeated for the other components of the SWOT Analysis as well.
- Topics discussed during Strengths discussion:
 - Investments and Collaboration in Forestry industry (WIST, UWSP Forestry program, Langlade County Training Facility WIG Grant)
 - Desirable pace of life
 - Outdoor Recreation
 - Safe place to live
 - Low cost of entry to start a business
 - Strong food & agriculture processing industries
 - Retirees – source of knowledge, volunteerism, community involvement, resources, etc.
 - Region has a positive “Northwoods” reputation
 - Region is desirable – people want to be here
 - Health care options – while there are quality healthcare options in the Region, accessibility in rural areas and a lack of doctors, nurses, and other medical staff could all be considered as weaknesses or threats
- Topics discussed during Weaknesses discussion:
 - Distance to major airports poses difficulties for business attraction efforts
 - A lack of pre-existing infrastructure in place to attract businesses
 - Rural Health Care (especially in regards to capacity & prices)
 - Childcare access in rural communities
 - Aging housing stock
 - Attractiveness of the Region for younger populations
 - Drinking water quality
 - Shortage of available land that is ready for development
 - Lack of training resources for elected officials
 - Lack of financial resources
 - Perception issues with economic opportunities available
 - Shortage of experienced staff for local governments
 - Slow population growth