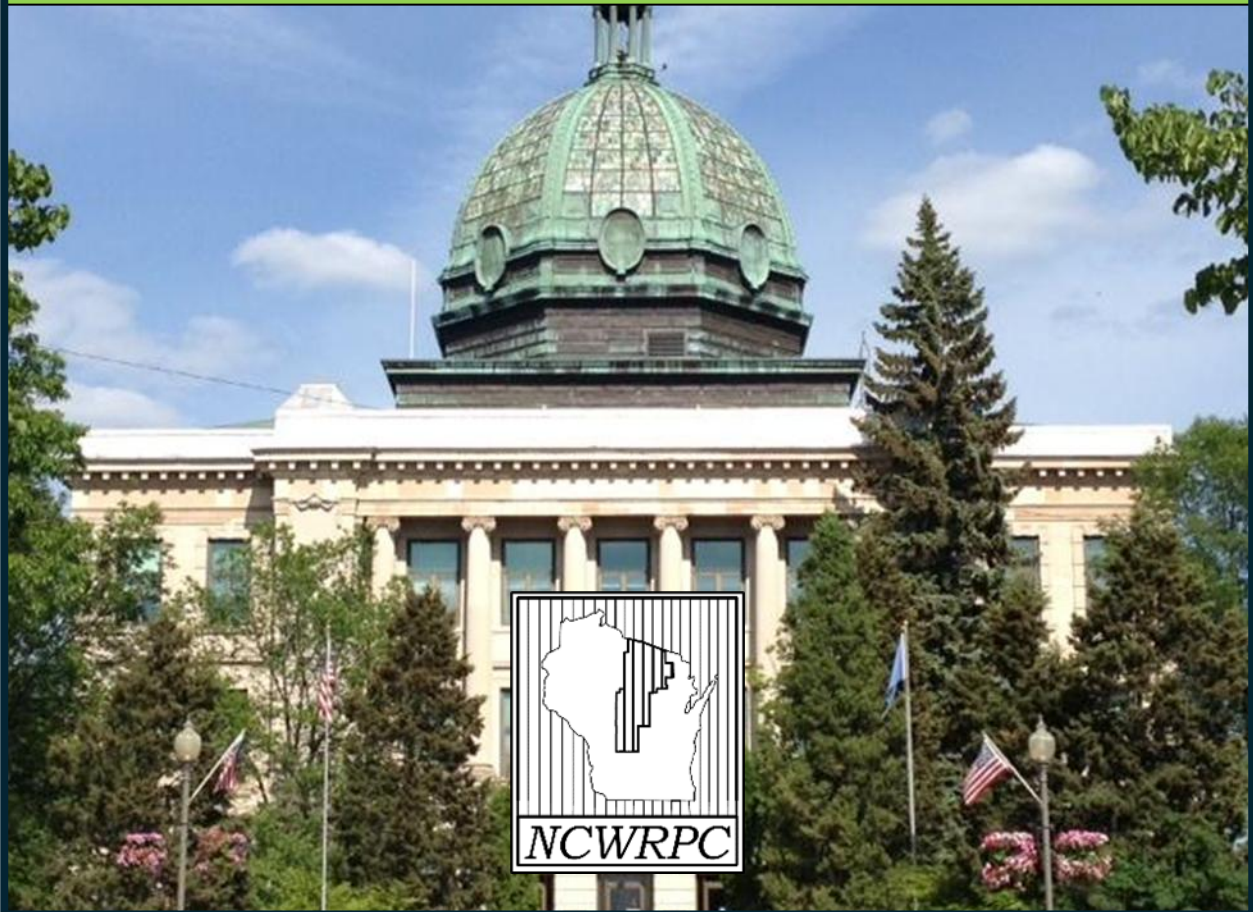




**Rhineland Chamber of Commerce
Conference Center Feasibility Study**



Acknowledgements

Rhineland Chamber of Commerce Staff

Lauren Sackett, CEO

Rachel Boehlen

Angela Badeau

Katie Younker

Rhineland Chamber of Commerce Room Tax Committee

Patrick Reagan, City of Rhineland Administrator

Kris Hanus, City of Rhineland Mayor

Lindsay Flick, Town of Pelican

Dan Brekke, Town of Pelican

Brett Aylesworth, Rhineland Ice Arena

Janet Jamison, Hodag Dome

Erin Skinner, Rhineland AmericInn

Rhineland Chamber of Commerce Ex-Officio Board Members

Patrick Reagan, City of Rhineland

Bob Luder, Downtown Rhineland, Inc.

Tony Pharo, Oneida County Economic Development Corporation

Krystal Fochs, former President

This study was developed with assistance from the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC).
For more information contact:

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC)

210 McClellan St., Suite 210

Wausau, WI 54403

715-849-5510

www.ncwrpc.org



Table of Contents

Executive Summary..... 5

Introduction..... 7

Previous Plans and Studies 8

Conference Center Benefits..... 9

Demographics 11

Conference Center Trends 16

Ownership and Management 20

Operation Costs 20

Construction Costs 22

Land Costs 22

Financing..... 23

Conference Center Needs Analysis 26

Comparable Facilities 29

Recommendations..... 31

Conclusion 37

Appendix A: List of Venues by Square Footage Within 100 Miles of Rhinelander 38

Map 1: Location Context..... 41

Map 2: Potential Conference Center Locations 43

Page intentionally left blank

Executive Summary

This study, led by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), was commissioned by the Rhinelander Area Chamber of Commerce to address the lack of event and conference space that can hold a minimum of 500 attendees. It begins with an overview of the area's demographics and highlights Rhinelander's position as a destination for both seasonal and year-round activity in the Northwoods. This area of Wisconsin is known for its extensive lakes, forests, and outdoor recreation opportunities that attract not only permanent residents and retirees, but also a significant visiting population, particularly during the summer months.

Rhinelander, which receives over 660,000 visitors over the course of a year, is also the county seat for Oneida County, which saw a tourism economic impact of about \$394 million in 2024. In general, a large presence of visitors and seasonal housing gives the Rhinelander area a much larger population than its year-round population suggests, and there is an opportunity to build a conference center that contributes to the local economy, providing more community and visitor amenities and events.

Nationally, there is increasing interest in destination-based conference centers and event spaces. This is due to the high costs of holding events in large cities along with the rising popularity of distinct, one-of-a-kind experiences that smaller, tourism-oriented communities can provide. Additionally, there are over one million people within a 100-mile radius of Rhinelander, and several metropolitan areas are within a half-day drive: Chicago, Duluth, Twin Cities, Madison, and Milwaukee, as well as smaller metropolitan areas like Wausau, Fox Cities, Eau Claire, and La Crosse. Within 100 miles of Rhinelander, there are only eight venues that offer a single room larger than 8,000 square feet, indicating an opportunity to offer a larger multipurpose space than competing locations.

This feasibility study analyses the size and configuration of conference center space along with a description of desired conference center trends and features. It also estimates land, construction, and operation costs for a conference center based on square footage along with a list of financing programs and strategies. Finally, it analyses the City's existing hotel market and provides recommendations on how many hotel rooms are needed to support a conference center.

Based on the findings in this study, **the recommendation is to build a conference center in the City of Rhinelander with a minimum leasable floor area of 11,400 square feet.** This conference center features one multipurpose space of 9,000 square feet that can be divided into three smaller spaces of 3,000 square feet each. This accommodates 500 attendees seated in crescent rounds, 600 banquet style, or 1,000 theater style. This space would also allow for 45 exposition booths measuring 10 feet by 10 feet each. The remaining 2,400 square feet consists of breakout space that can seat 260 theater style, which can be partitioned into four 600-square-foot conference rooms. When factoring additional space for circulation, utilities, a kitchen, restrooms, and storage, **the result is a 17,100 square foot facility estimated to cost approximately \$6,993,900.**

The study also provides a series of potential conference center sites as well as information pertaining to zoning, parking requirements, acreage needed, and hotel units needed, which vary by site. Each site's pros and cons are also listed, though this study does not limit a potential conference center to just the five sites that are identified. **Cost estimates are \$167,235 per hotel room and \$40,080 per acre of land** in addition to the construction costs. Finally, rough estimates for operating costs are provided, and it is expected that the conference center will initially operate at a loss until its popularity and utilization rates increase over time, which will depend on extensive marketing to larger metropolitan areas. But the economic activity and tax revenue that a conference center can generate often makes up for this loss, and there are a variety of approaches that can make up for the lack of revenue during its first few years.

In summary, a conference center with the capacity to house more attendees in one room than most competing venues, combined with a thoughtful design that embraces Rhinelander's Northwoods character, has the potential to make a significant economic impact to the greater Rhinelander area. It also expands the public facilities and opportunities that the community has to offer.

Page intentionally left blank

Introduction

In 2025, the Rhinelander Area Chamber of Commerce approached the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) looking for guidance on conference center trends and the feasibility of creating one in Rhinelander. The Chamber requested NCWRPC to create a feasibility study that detailed the configuration and location of a conference center as well square footage and cost estimates to determine what size of conference center would be appropriate for the Rhinelander area.

The Rhinelander area continues to develop as an appealing place to live year-round as well as a destination for tourists. Employment is strong and housing prices have risen dramatically in recent years. The area’s extensive lakes and forests provide abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, and the City’s folklore embodied in the well-known Hodag gives it a unique identity. But its distance from larger cities results in a lack of nearby conference and event space, meaning there could be an opportunity to create and market a destination-based conference center for local, regional, and statewide functions.

In a 2025 article titled *Consider the Alternative*, The Meeting Magazine explains the growing popularity of conference destinations in smaller markets due to higher costs and stronger competition for availability in conference centers in “First tier” cities, such as Chicago. As budgets and staffing tighten at many organizations, “Second tier” cities (Milwaukee, for example) and Third-tier cities (primarily smaller towns and rural areas that are known for being a destination location) are growing in attractiveness. Third-tier cities, despite their lack of major airports, limited venue options, and smaller local population base are becoming known for niche events which are typically small and unique. This is due to their affordability and ability to provide a more personalized and one-of-a-kind experience as opposed to larger, more generic conference centers in large metropolitan areas. Attendees also appreciate utilizing smaller, less crowded airports, spending less time navigating traffic and transit, and spending less money on registration fees and lodging in smaller cities. Event organizers also appreciate the local sense of pride and helpfulness they often experience when working with chambers of commerce and other local organizations in smaller communities. For example, Mariposa County, California, a rural area that is home to Yosemite National Park, recently conducted a conference center feasibility study. Although the study noted that a large component of a destination conference center’s success relies heavily on advertising to larger markets, it highlighted the rise of outdoor recreation and wellness retreats that can utilize flexible conference and lodging space.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism’s latest data, the economic impact of tourism in Oneida County increased by 3.5 percent from 2023 to 2024, which is greater than the statewide increase of 3.3 percent. Total countywide economic impact in 2024 was \$394 million, resulting in Oneida County ranking 17 out of Wisconsin’s 72 counties. This impact is a result of direct visitor spending, employment driven by tourism, tourism workforce income, and state and local tax revenue. See Table 1, below, for details.

Table 1: Tourism Economic Impact in Oneida County 2024

Economic Impact Category	Total 2024	% Change from 2023
Total Economic Impact	\$394.0m	3.5%
Direct Visitor Spending	\$302.8m	3.7%
Employment	2,220	3.6%
Total Labor Income	\$74.2m	3.0%
State and Local Taxes	\$24.5m	3.8%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Tourism 2024

Previous Plans and Studies

Various plans and studies have supported a new conference center in the City of Rhinelander for over 15 years. These include:

City of Rhinelander Comprehensive Plan 2016

While this plan doesn't specifically mention a conference or convention center, it supports making Downtown Rhinelander a destination with enhanced connections to the Wisconsin River. It also supports expansion of the current economic base, which can be done through the development of a conference center.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan 2025

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) maintains this plan to provide advice for its ten-county region. Economic Development goals that can be achieved through the development of a conference center include:

- Support infrastructure needed for economic development.
- Support and develop a diverse economic base ensuring economic growth and resiliency.
- Develop tourism and the knowledge-based economy into leading economic sectors.

North Central Wisconsin Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2026

The first goal of the CEDS is to "Promote and increase communication between regional and county economic development, workforce development and other organizations." The CEDS stresses the role conferences play in reaching this goal, and a new conference center in the region would help support this ongoing activity.

Oneida County Comprehensive Plan 2025

This plan identifies the Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Rhinelander, Inc. as taking a lead role in supporting community events that benefit the economy. Economic Development goals include "Conserve and enhance the quality of life in the county by promoting the infrastructure and human resources that will foster economic development compatible with Oneida County's rural Northwoods character."

Rhinelander Waterfront Redevelopment Plan 2009

Prepared by NCWRPC, this plan recommends conducting a convention center feasibility study. At the time, the plan noted there were few options for weddings, conferences, and trade shows. According to the plan, "suggestions for a viable convention center location included the current location of the band shell and the parcel on the northeast corner of the Davenport St. Bridge." The plan's appendix accommodated a conference center of up to 20,000 square feet.

Rhinelander Downtown Economic Development & Streetscape Plan 2015

This Plan was prepared by Vierbicher in 2015, and it recommended a downtown hotel and conference center. It identified the block bound by Davenport, Courtney, and Young Streets as an ideal location for one with views of the Wisconsin River.

Altogether, these plans indicate past support for a conference center and a desire to grow the local, county, and regional economy.

Conference Center Benefits

Economic Impact

The International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM) considers convention and conference centers as engines of growth and economic impact. In 2024, IAVM stated that room stays and business events had returned to 2019 levels, with a projected 5 percent increase in travel spending in 2025. IAVM is critical of articles that focus on operating losses for these sites, as they often don't factor in the positive economic impact they have on the surrounding ecosystem.

Destination Marketing Association International states that 75 percent of a convention attendee's direct spending goes towards hotels, food, and beverages, with about 80 percent of attendees staying in a hotel altogether. For example, the City of Bowling Green, Kentucky (pop. ~80,000) found that their Sloan Convention Center had an annual impact of \$25 million per year for their county's economy. Like many similar facilities, this more than offsets the operational costs of the facility. Similarly, the Village of Schaumburg, Illinois (pop. ~77,000) found that their convention center contributed \$43 million to the local economy, adding \$2.2 million in local tax revenue in 2023 primarily from visitor spending, which is being used to pay off the building. Though much larger in scale than a small-town conference center, the Seattle Convention Center (SCC) has estimated that visitors generate over \$49 million in tax revenue per year, and attendees have spent over \$8.2 billion since SCC's opening in 1988. These and many other examples illustrate the potential revenue that convention and/or conference centers can bring into a community.

Financial performance varies between venues, and it is typical for conference space to operate at an annual loss. For example, a study for a potential conference center in Ashland, Kentucky found that the median annual loss was \$8.86 per square foot and the average annual loss was \$10.98 per square foot for 26 comparable facilities they analyzed. These reflect the net leasable square footage rather than the total square footage. Restrooms, kitchens, mezzanines, and other similar rooms are not included in the calculation. However, as illustrated in the previous paragraph, revenue generated throughout a community by such facilities often exceeds the annual expenses of operating a facility.

Employment generated by conference centers also contributes to the local economy. Table 2, below, summarizes the earnings and tax revenue generated for every new job that could be added to the local economy as a result of a new conference center. Earnings per job created range from \$27,564 to \$89,361 per job, and tax revenue generated ranges from \$1,200 to \$15,473 per job. This economic impact should be considered when evaluating the projected costs and revenues associated with constructing and operating a conference center.

Table 2: Economic Impact Per Conference Center Job Created

NAICS Code	Job Description	Change in Earnings	Change in Taxes on Production and Imports
561591	Convention and Visitors Bureaus	\$46,136	\$2,494
561720	Janitorial Services	\$27,564	\$1,200
561920	Convention and Trade Show Organizers	\$89,361	\$4,243
721110	Hotels (except Casino Hotels)	\$48,270	\$15,473
722320	Caterers	\$56,837	\$4,265
236220	Commercial/Institutional Building Construction	\$74,691	\$3,019

Source: Lightcast 2024

There are also a variety of financing approaches, partnership opportunities, and ownership models that affect financial performance. Sometimes, on-site hotel rooms need to be built to support a conference center with sufficient lodging and revenue, and in other cases, conference centers are used to justify adding more hotel rooms to a community lacking in hotels. Financial components of conference centers are analyzed in detail later in this study. In summary, a conference

center has the potential to generate revenue for the City of Rhinelander and Oneida County, but any conference space must be constructed, owned, and operated carefully to reduce the likely annual financial loss for the facility itself.

Local Quality of Life

Conference centers expand cultural and event offerings for the surrounding community, enhancing not only tourism but also expanding activities that year-round residents can participate in. A conference center's economic impact also means that additional revenue generated by local businesses as well as an expanded tax base can be further reinvested into expanding the community's job opportunities and amenities. Finally, investment in a conference center can spur development and revitalization nearby, which can be used to address blight and existing underutilized property.

Workforce and Tourism Attraction

The 2025 Oneida County Housing Study, created in partnership between Oneida County Economic Development Corporation (OCEDC) and NCWRPC, identified Rhinelander as an emerging "hub" of economic activity for the Northwoods. For example, there has been considerable job growth between manufacturing, hospitality, and retail in the area over the past decade, and many jobs start in the \$40,000 to \$50,000 range, reaching the \$60,000 to \$70,000 range in just a few years for certain workers. There are also many workers in the Rhinelander area earning between \$110,000 and \$200,000. Housing availability has not kept up with the demand for workers, but those who relocate tend to appreciate the area's lifestyle and stay in the community long-term even if they relocated from a larger, more affordable house in another market to the area.

Additionally, the Town of Minocqua is currently exploring expanding its indoor recreational amenities to allow for more year-round activities by conducting a sports arena feasibility study. This follows the recent expansion of the outdoor Minocqua Winter Park in 2021. The YMCA of the Northwoods is also considering constructing a new YMCA facility in Minocqua. Given the increase in economic development, housing, and outdoor recreation opportunities throughout Oneida County, the area could appeal to those from other regions in Wisconsin as a conference destination, attracting workers and tourists who may return to the area after experiencing it.

Summary

There is the opportunity for Citywide and Countywide economic impact that results from a carefully designed conference space in the City of Rhinelander. As the Northwoods continues to expand its tourism economy, a conference center would not only provide venue space for local residents, but also draw visitors and their spending from outside of the area, offsetting the costs of building and operating one.

Demographics

This section of the study analyses Rhinelander and Oneida County’s U.S. Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data to track trends in population, households, age, income, and employment. This provides a sense of what factors may influence the feasibility of a potential conference center.

Population

Table 3 shows that the population for the City of Rhinelander and Oneida County have grown at a faster pace between 2010 and 2024 compared to Wisconsin as a whole, but slower than the nation. Household (HH) growth was slow in Rhinelander compared to Oneida County, the state, and the nation. By contrast, Oneida County’s growth in households was faster than its overall population growth. In general, households are getting smaller as people have fewer children and the large baby boomer population is now primarily made up of empty nesters.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics

Location	2000	2010	2020	2024	2010-2024 Net Change	2010-2024 % Change
Rhinelander Pop.	7,735	7,798	8,285	8,316	518	6.6%
Rhinelander HHs	3,214	3,545	3,794	3,573	28	0.8%
Oneida Pop.	36,776	35,998	37,845	38,167	2,169	6.0%
Oneida HHs	15,333	16,003	17,404	17,493	1,490	9.3%
WI Pop.	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,893,718	5,914,872	227,886	4.0%
WI HHs	2,084,544	2,279,768	2,428,361	2,479,480	199,712	8.8%
US Pop.	281,421,906	308,745,538	331,449,281	334,922,499	26,176,961	8.5%
US HHs	105,539,122	116,716,292	126,817,580	129,227,496	12,511,204	10.7%

Source: U.S. Census 2000, 2010, & 2020; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2024

Population within 100 miles

According to other conference center feasibility studies, proximity to large population centers increases the probability of a conference center being successful, especially to draw visitors who are close enough that they don’t necessarily need to rent a hotel. The population of all counties that overlap with a 50-mile radius is 473,379, and those that overlap with a 100-mile radius totaled 1,664,319 in 2024. Because this includes Brown (Green Bay), Chippewa (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire (Eau Claire), and Outagamie (Appleton) Counties, which all have major convention centers and barely touch the 100-mile radius, it is important to analyze the population in counties that overlap with the 100-mile radius but do not include these larger cities. The result is a population of 1,018,867, which is still considerable given the predominately rural and small-town character within that radius. In summary, this entire population is likely less than a two hour drive from Rhinelander, reflecting a large population base of potential conference center users.

Age

The City of Rhinelander’s median age is similar to statewide and national trends, but Oneida County’s median age is much higher. This could be due to a higher share of retirees living on lakefront property and more working families with children living in the City to be closer to work, schools, or other services. In general, the County, state, and nation’s population is aging, but the share of residents aged 65 and over decreased slightly in Rhinelander between 2010 and 2024. See Table 4.

Table 4: Age Characteristics

Location	Median Age			% under 18		% 65 and Over	
	2010	2020	2024	2010	2024	2010	2024
C. Rhinelander	39.5	42.5	38.2	21.2%	19.1%	19.1%	17.2%
Oneida County	47.2	51.4	52.7	18.4%	16.7%	21.7%	28.3%
Wisconsin	38.5	39.6	40.2	23.6%	21.4%	13.7%	18.5%
United States	37.2	38.2	38.9	24.0%	22.0%	13.1%	17.2%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2020, & 2024

Income

Table 5 lists the median household income as well as per capita income. Incomes in the City of Rhinelander are much lower than county, state, and national incomes, but this is common in incorporated areas as they have smaller lot sizes, more apartments, and a greater variety of housing choices that support a greater variety of incomes. This contrasts with rural Oneida County, where larger tracts of land and extensive waterfront results in higher incomes that can afford more expensive housing. Though incomes also grew the slowest in Rhinelander compared to the county, state, and nation, an income of \$34,401 in 2010 had the same purchasing power as \$48,964 in 2024, indicating that the \$51,421 median household income grew slightly faster than inflation according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator. It is also important to note that, according to Lightcast, an economic modeling platform, the local cost of living index is 100.9, meaning that the cost of living is only 0.9 percent higher than the national average.

Table 5: Income Characteristics

Location	Median HH Income				2010-2024 % Change	Per Capita Income 2024
	2000	2010	2020	2024		
Rhinelander	\$29,622	\$34,401	\$40,350	\$51,421	49.5%	\$29,065
Oneida Co.	\$37,619	\$45,857	\$58,156	\$69,371	51.3%	\$42,684
Wisconsin	\$43,791	\$51,598	\$63,293	\$77,485	50.2%	\$43,373
United States	\$51,994	\$50,046	\$64,994	\$80,734	61.3%	\$44,673

Source: U.S. Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2020, & 2024

Employment

Employment in Oneida County decreased between 2010 and 2024, which correlates with an increase in median age and an increase in the number of retirees. Despite this, there was an increase in employment of City of Rhinelander residents, which reflects its lower median age and higher share of adults in their prime working years. Having an available workforce is essential for operating a conference center and an increase in employment indicates that economic growth has occurred over the past decade and a half. See Table 6.

Table 6: Employment Characteristics

Location	2000	2010	2020	2024	2010-2024 % Change	2010-2024 Net Change
Rhinelanders	3,416	3,798	3,564	3,913	3.0%	115
Oneida Co.	17,199	17,802	16,554	17,462	-1.9%	-340
Wisconsin	2,734,925	2,869,310	2,983,277	3,031,042	5.6%	161,732
United States	129,721,512	141,833,331	155,888,980	161,297,155	13.7%	19,463,824

Source: U.S. Census 2000; ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010, 2020, & 2024

Industry Concentration

Location quotient (LQ) compares local, state, and national employment data by economic sector. It measures the ratio of jobs that a locality has in an economic sector compared to state and national ratios.

LQ is based on a model that the local economy can be divided into two sectors: The “basic” (or non-local) sector, which are employers providing goods and services that are purchased or consumed by customers outside City of Rhinelanders, and the “non-basic” (or local) sector, which are goods and services consumed in City of Rhinelanders. The basic economy generates revenue by providing goods and services that other regions desire, but do not have. It is also known as the export economy, and it is usually the goal of many economic development programs. If a City’s basic sector of the economy is weak, residents depend more on buying goods and services from other locations, which is known as industry sector leakage.

Economic decline occurs when residents depend heavily on importing goods and services and have relatively few desirable goods and services to export to other places. When the basic sector of the economy is strong, revenue is generated, which is circulated within the local economy by both basic and non-basic employees. As a result, retaining and growing businesses and employees is essential to the City’s economic well-being. The location quotient can be described by the following equation:

$$LQ_i = (e_{ti} / e_{tT}) / (E_{ti} / E_{tT})$$

e_{ti} = regional (County) employment in industry *i* in year *t*

e_{tT} = total regional (County) employment in year *t*

E_{ti} = national employment in industry *i* in year *t*

E_{tT} = total national employment in year *t*

If LQ_i is greater than 1.00, it is considered an exporting sector, while if it is below 1.00, it is an importing sector. Exports bring money from outside the county into the local economy and imports represent local dollars flowing outside the county. Table 7 on the following page provides a summary of the location quotient analysis results for City of Rhinelanders. The following industries are considered export industries in Rhinelanders:

- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Accommodation and Food Services

A conference center in Rhinelanders would need to consider the needs of all local employers and especially focus on what facilities may be needed to serve the needs of these exporting industries and the events they would like to attract, since they have the greatest presence in the Rhinelanders area.

Table 7: Industry Concentration (LQ) Analysis

NAICS	Description	LQ	Avg. Earnings Per Job	Estimated 2025 Jobs	Projected 2035 Jobs	Net Change	Percent Change
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3.16	\$46,170	377	361	-16	-4%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.01	\$0	0	0	0	0%
22	Utilities	0.62	\$176,191	21	22	1	5%
23	Construction	0.84	\$69,369	510	500	-10	-2%
31	Manufacturing	1.88	\$84,292	1,326	1,411	85	6%
42	Wholesale Trade	1.08	\$84,696	359	389	30	8%
44	Retail Trade	1.96	\$42,910	1,741	1,741	0	0%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	0.93	\$56,677	400	431	31	8%
51	Information	0.73	\$68,486	138	138	-1	-1%
52	Finance and Insurance	0.64	\$93,693	257	263	6	2%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.56	\$57,774	95	99	5	5%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0.32	\$93,579	237	238	2	1%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.34	\$102,890	69	54	-15	-22%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	0.65	\$40,799	408	384	-24	-6%
61	Educational Services	0.09	\$32,635	21	23	1	7%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1.59	\$94,795	2,133	2,315	182	9%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.59	\$32,028	106	115	9	8%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	1.13	\$27,359	970	971	1	0%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	0.61	\$29,762	311	315	4	1%
90	Government	0.33	\$86,700	481	475	-6	-1%
99	Unclassified Industry	0	\$0	0	0	0	0%
N/A	All Industries	N/A	\$66,615	9,959	10,244	285	3%

Source: Lightcast 2025

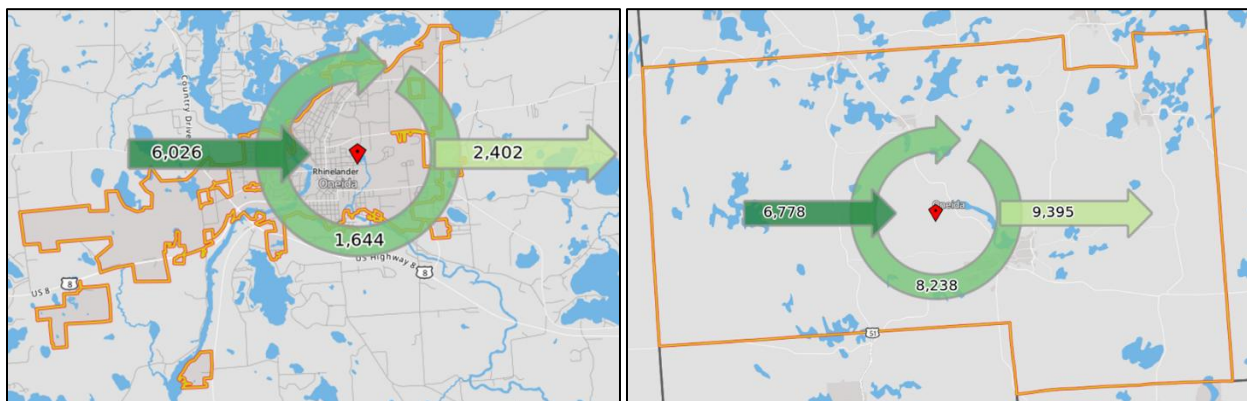
Commuter and Seasonal Population Trends

The Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce utilized Placer.AI to provide seasonal visitor data for this study. Between March 2025 and February 2026, 659,900 visitors from over 50 miles away spent an average of 2.3 days in the City of Rhinelander, and 234,700 of these visitors came from over 200 miles away. These figures grow to 790,000 visitors from over 50 miles away spending an average of 2.9 days in the 54501 ZIP Code, with 264,100 of them being from over 200 miles away. Finally, for Oneida County as a whole, 1.9 million visitors from over 50 miles away spent an average of 3.9 days in the County, and 628,900 of these visitors came from over 200 miles away.

According to the 2025 Oneida County Housing Study, about 40.5 percent of all housing units countywide are “for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use” which ranks the county among the highest in Wisconsin in terms of its share of housing units that people are using as vacation homes. For the City of Rhinelander, a total of 242 seasonal housing units, combined with 448 hotel room units, and an average household size of 2.23 means that the City can house 1,539 people at full capacity in addition to its year-round population. There are also visitors staying in numerous Tourist Rooming Houses (e.g. Airbnb, VRBO), and other visitors who only visit for the day. Therefore, Rhinelander and its surroundings experience high seasonal visitation rates in addition to the year-round population, with May through September experiencing the most visitors.

Commuting patterns also reflect how many people visit the City every day. U.S. Census-on-the-Map in Figure 1 indicates that, in 2022, 6,026 workers commuted into Rhinelander every day, with an additional 1,644 residents remain in the City to work. With only 2,402 City residents leaving to work in another community each day, Rhinelander serves as an employment hub with its positive overall net commuter flow. By contrast, more people leave Oneida County each day for work compared to those who enter the County, with 9,395 outbound commuters compared to 6,778 inbound commuters. Another 8,238 commuters both live and work in Oneida County. A conference center could further expand the job opportunities available in Rhinelander, allowing more Oneida County residents to work closer to home. This is because of not only the staffing needed to operate a conference center, but also the economic benefits a conference center has on existing employers and potential new businesses.

Figure 1: City of Rhinelander and Oneida County Commute Patterns



Source: U.S. Census-on-the-Map 2022

Conference Center Trends

This section of the Feasibility Study is heavily informed by the following three conference center feasibility studies and their respective authors:

- Bartlesville, Oklahoma: Hunden Strategic Partners/Convergence Design
- Ashland, Kentucky: Conventions, Sports, & Leisure (CSL) International
- Southern Indiana: Johnson Consulting

As experts in the conference center industry, these consultants have extensive information contained in their respective studies that expand upon the topics covered in this study.

Conference Center Users

Those who host events and and/or attend events at conference centers can be grouped into four main categories. Organizations that typically sponsor events utilizing conference center space for meeting purposes include corporations, associations, educational institutions, and government entities. Additionally, certain businesses and associations host trade shows that are more consumer-oriented where participants can feature and sell their products to the general public who attends them. Finally, SMERFE (Social, Military, Education, Religious, Fraternal, and Ethnic) Organizations convene to participate in networking and discussing issues rather than holding an event that related to commerce. Due to the variety of users and attendees, flexibility in conference center design is essential to meet a wide range of user needs.

Types of Facilities

Below is a summary of the different types of facilities, which are similar to each other, but cater to different kinds of events:

- Conference Centers are geared towards education, training, and meeting events. They are typically combined with a hotel and feature technology that supports the needs of its users.
- Convention Centers include the same features as a conference center while also including exhibit space. They are designed to attract visitors from outside the local market but also are utilized for events that draw locals.
- Exposition Halls feature extensive exhibit space but don't typically have a variety of meeting spaces found in conference and convention centers. Exposition Halls are frequently a component of fairgrounds.
- Event Centers include spaces found in conference and convention centers along with areas that can host concerts and/or sporting events.

Ballrooms and commercial kitchens are frequently incorporated into conference centers, convention centers, and event centers to support the uses listed above as well as other functions like weddings. Other programmable spaces like auditoriums, outdoor plazas, rooftop terraces, and more may also be found in some of these facilities.

Spatial Programming

Figure 2 is a summary of the main types of spaces found in conference and convention centers. These types of spaces are often “nested,” which means that the largest rooms (multipurpose rooms) can be subdivided into ballrooms (second largest rooms). Additionally, some ballrooms may be subdivided into breakout rooms, however, breakout rooms tend to have considerably lower ceilings and a more intimate aesthetic. Ballrooms typically have the most formal and ornate aesthetic due to their suitability for weddings and other formal events, whereas multipurpose rooms are plain and more open for flexibility. Subdivisions are typically made by utilizing bifold walls that provide soundproofing when in use. These walls sometimes include a single door within one “fold” so that it is possible to go between rooms without rolling the bifold doors out of the way. In general, a variety of configurations can be made to suit a variety of user needs and square footage requirements.

Figure 2: Spatial Programming

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Multipurpose Room</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground-level with covered loading docks • Ceilings 30 feet or taller with columns spaced at least 90’ apart • Ability to divide into smaller spaces with folding walls • Utility boxes every 30 feet • Carpeted but not as formal as other spaces • Largest space in a conference center 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Ballroom</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected to kitchen • Carpeted and more formal than other spaces • Technology able to broadcast live events • Ability to divide into smaller spaces with folding walls • Ceilings 25 feet or taller • Second largest space in conference center • Optional connection to outdoor patios, decks, etc.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Breakout Rooms</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpeted and formal • Ability to divide into smaller spaces with folding walls • Smaller than multipurpose and ballroom spaces • Ceilings 12 feet or taller • Not required to be on a ground floor 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Interior/Exterior Circulation and Spaces</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for artwork, furnishings, and other amenities • Connects other spaces to each other and to restrooms, entrances, etc. • Areas for kiosks, tents, and electrical/internet hookups

Source: CSL, NCWRPC

Types of Events

Below is a summary of the types of events that typically occur in conference and convention centers in Table 8. Due to their magnitude relative to the scope of this feasibility study, entertainment events and sporting events are excluded from the recommendations in this study. This is because they generally require larger and more specialized spatial programming such as arenas and stages.

Table 8: Event Characteristics

Event Type	Duration (Days)	Attendees	Visitor Patterns	Economic Impact
Conventions & Conferences	2 to 5	Specific to industry or organization	Mostly out-of-region	Highest
Exhibitions & Trade Shows	3 to 6		Both	High
Meetings & Assemblies	1 to 2		Open to the public	Mostly within region
Consumer Shows	2 to 5			
Entertainment Events	1 to 3			
Sporting Events	1 to 3			

Source: Johnson Consulting, NCWRPC

Design Trends

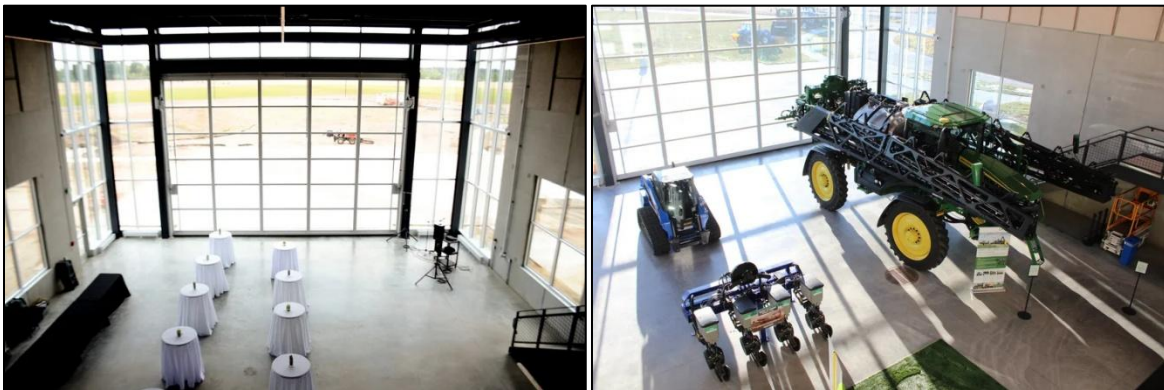
It is important to monitor demand for not only a conference center’s features, but also the amenities that the surrounding community provides. According to Hunden Strategic Partners’ conference center feasibility study for Bartlesville, Oklahoma, expectations have increased for ease, convenience, and affordability. Additionally, authenticity and high-quality flexible spaces are important for conference center users. For example, one event might utilize exhibit halls, banquet halls, breakout meeting rooms, and more, indicating that multi-purpose facilities with flexible layouts and modular furniture are sought after. Components of authenticity include walkability to other attractions in the surrounding community as well as utilizing locally sourced and unique food and beverage options within the conference space, according to CSL. Incorporating artwork that reflects local talent into a conference center creates a sense of authenticity.

Finally, with more demand for hybrid, virtual, and immersive events, there is demand for technology that supports these features.

In 2025, Extension - University of Wisconsin - Madison held its Connecting Entrepreneurial Community conference in Wisconsin Rapids, which is similar to Rhinelander in that it has a small-town feel with no major metropolitan area nearby. The format of the conference involved traditional conference and auditorium space mixed with breakout sessions hosted in several smaller venues throughout downtown that participants walked to. Lunch included an opportunity to visit the regularly recurring “Lunch on the River” which features a series of local food trucks in a public park. The feedback following this conference was overwhelmingly positive, with many attendees indicating they knew little about the area prior to attending but planned to return with family members to further explore the area. This illustrates how an authentic conference experience that is integrated with the surrounding community can generate interest in attendees returning to a destination.

Outdoor programmable space, technology, and interactive spaces are also emerging trends in conference centers. For example, the new Food + Farm Exploration Center in Plover, WI utilizes classroom and dining space used for teaching, exhibits, and cooking demonstrations as breakout rooms for conferences. This allows attendees to experience the unique agricultural focus of the Center while providing more casual conference environments that complement the formal grand hall used for larger sessions. According to CSL, this approach is known as Open Space Learning (OSL), where passersby can observe conference sessions in action. Many of these areas can also be used for mingling and networking when sessions are not active during a conference. Additionally, the arrangement allows attendees to easily wander between sessions as speakers rotate within each space. The Plover facility also features a large outdoor balcony overlooking farmland that is an extension of the grand hall. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Open Space Learning: Flexible Spaces for Exhibits and Events



Source: Food + Farm Exploration Center Website

Additional programmable outdoor spaces include the newly renovated and expanded La Crosse Center, which features a rooftop terrace with a bar used for networking, weddings, and other events. See Figure 4. Interior space has also been enhanced by the addition of panoramic windows overlooking the Mississippi River. The new Brookfield (Wisconsin) Conference Center also includes rentable plaza space that can host outdoor weddings and other events, and it is connected to indoor event space. See Figure 5.

Similarly, the City of River Falls designed its City Hall to include conference chambers that overlook an outdoor plaza with views of the Kinnickinnic River. Despite being a facility primarily designed for public meetings, both indoor and outdoor areas are rentable for functions not necessarily related to City government. A similar plaza space could be integrated into a new conference center, and various techniques can be used to either keep a plaza separate from public space or encourage the public to interact with the space when not in use.

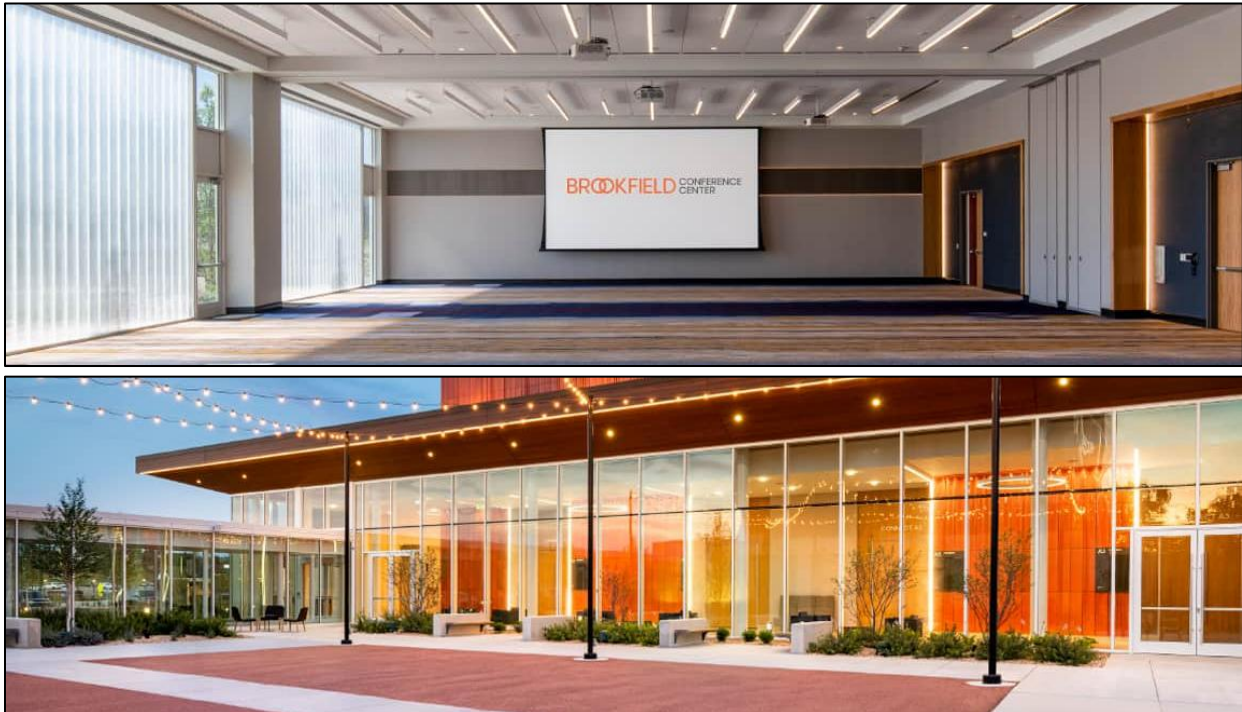
Figure 4: Rooftop and Ground-Level Rentable Plaza Space, La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI



Source: La Crosse Center Website

Overall, conference centers are encouraged to be designed with more uniqueness and flexibility than in the past, with destination conference centers that embrace the outdoors and surrounding community amenities growing in popularity. Emerging technological opportunities are also expected to be integrated to host a wider range of event formats. Despite not being a major metropolitan area, Rhinelander’s location in the scenic Northwoods provides a sense of authenticity as a unique destination as opposed to conference centers in suburban or urban settings with limited access to nature.

Figure 5: Brookfield Conference Center in Brookfield, WI Ballroom with Outdoor Plaza Access



Source: Brookfield Conference Center Website

Ownership and Management

Conference Centers may be privately owned and operated, often as part of a hotel, or they may be publicly owned and operated. The Jefferson Street Inn in Wausau, which was privately developed with Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) assistance by the City of Wausau, is a privately managed example (IDM Hospitality Management) while the La Crosse Center is an example of a publicly owned venue (City of La Crosse). According to Meetings & Conference by Northstar, some conference centers find cost more savings and efficiency with publicly run management, but there is an increase in conference centers hiring privately owned management companies to run their facilities, especially in small-to-midsized markets. This is because private management often reduces costs while providing more specialized expertise in an era where municipal and county budgets are becoming more limited.

During the creation of this study, the Rhinelander Chamber of Conference expressed a preference for a facility that was privately owned and operated due to the organization’s limited financial and staffing capacity. This would be based on the strategy of completing this conference center feasibility study and advertising a request for proposals while investigating financial incentives and/or partnerships to make the conference center more financially feasible.

Operation Costs

The Southern Indiana Conference Center Feasibility Study by Johnson Consulting projected the following revenues and expenses for a 37,000 square foot conference facility in early 2022. Note that inflation since the study was produced has been about 11 percent, so the revenue would need to be 11 percent higher if the study was conducted today. Additionally, costs may vary based on the size of a conference center as this data only represents one site. See Table 9 and Table 10.

Table 9: Projected Revenues for a 37,000-sf Conference Center in 2022 Dollars

Income Source	2022 Cost
Rental (Space/Equipment)	\$3,000 per event
Food/Beverage	
Conventions/Trade Shows	\$20 per attendee
Consumer Shows/Pubic Events	\$5 per attendee
Meetings/Conferences	\$10 per attendee
Banquets/Social	\$15 per attendee
Sports/Entertainment/Other Events	\$5 per attendee
COGS, Labor, & Expenses	60% of gross F&B sales
Contract Service	\$1,000 per event
Advertising/Sponsorship	\$35,000 annually
Other	1%

Source: Johnson Consulting

Table 10: Projected Operating Expenses for a 37,000-sf Conference Center in 2022 Dollars

Operating Expenses	2022 Cost	
Rental (Space & Equipment)	55%	of rental revenue
Salaries, Wages, and Benefits	\$725,000	annually
Utilities	\$25	per 1,000 square feet per day
Repairs and Maintenance	\$6	per 1,000 square feet per day
General and Administrative	\$2	per square foot of function space
Insurance	\$1	per square foot of function space
Materials and Supplies	\$10	per 1,000 square feet per day
Management & Professional Fees	\$5	per square foot of function space
Other	0.5%	of total expenses

Source: Johnson Consulting

By using these projected revenues and costs, Johnson Consulting estimated that revenues for the first three years would be \$1,631,000, \$1,740,000, and \$1,852,000 while expenses would be \$1,663,000, \$1,717,000 and \$1,773,000, resulting in a net operating profit or loss of -\$32,000 in year one, \$23,000 in year two, and \$79,000 in year three. This was much more optimistic than the Bartlesville, Oklahoma projections (-\$237,000, -\$212,000, and -\$186,000 in the first three years) and the Ashland, Kentucky projections (-\$618,020, -\$409,435, and -\$300,311). But in all three examples, it is apparent that conference centers tend to operate at a considerable loss initially, with revenue growing faster than expenses over time as more events are booked.

When averaging all three conference center feasibility studies and dividing the values by the total square footage of each facility, the average revenue, expenses, and net cash flow average per square foot is depicted in Table 11, which is adjusted to 2026 inflation by adding 11.1 percent to each value. Therefore, it is likely that any conference center effort will operate at a loss initially, possibly breaking even or becoming self-sufficient over time.

Table 11: Average Operating Costs per Square Foot

Year	Revenue	Expenses	Net
Year 1	\$37	\$49	-\$11
Year 2	\$43	\$51	-\$8
Year 3	\$48	\$53	-\$5

Source: Data from Hunden Strategic Partners, CSL International, Johnson Consulting, NCWRPC, and U.S. Inflation Calculator

Due to the limitations of only having data from three conference centers to analyze operating costs, all of which are much larger than what would be likely to be built in Rhinelander, Table 11 should be taken as a very rough estimate. Unfortunately, this type of data is not widely available, but the values in Table 11 can be used to project a rough estimate of what it could cost to operate a conference center. In summary, a typical conference center initially operates at a loss, but the loss is reduced or eliminated as it attracts more events each year.

Construction Costs

The cost to construct a conference center varies tremendously on a per-square-foot basis since many of them are built in downtowns of large cities where demolition, site remediation, and other factors increase costs. Additionally, their size often warrants the need for expensive parking ramps and other facilities in addition to the basic conference center square footage. In some of the conference studies researched to create this study, costs exceeded \$2,000 per square foot, which is considerably higher than the typical cost per square foot for a commercial building, which is typically less than \$1,000. Therefore, this analysis will utilize the construction costs for the Brookfield Conference Center since it was built on a vacant parking lot near existing utility connections, rather than being a more complex conference center that would be typically found in a larger city.

The Brookfield Conference Center cost \$18.5 million in 2020, which is \$23.3 million 2026 according to the U.S. inflation calculator. With 57,000 square feet of conference space, this translates to \$409 per square foot of conference space in 2026 dollars. Additionally, the Cobblestone Hotel & Suites in Rhinelander cost \$10 million for 62 new hotel rooms that opened in 2024. In 2026, this would equal \$167,235 per hotel room, adjusted for inflation. These per-unit and per-square-foot costs will be utilized later in this study to estimate construction costs for a proposed conference center in Rhinelander.

Land Costs

Land costs vary by the type of land being purchased (residential, commercial, etc.) and whether it is already developed or not. Developed sites tend to cost more due to the improvements on them and the likely demolition costs that would be needed to make room for a conference center, though blighted sites may be more affordable even with demolition. Site remediation can also add to the costs of a site if there is contamination. Each site's characteristics vary considerably regarding their influence on land acquisition costs for a conference center.

The Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) certifies land values each year. While sales prices are typically higher for real estate transactions than these DOR values, they provide a general idea of what land costs might be in Rhinelander. According to the 2025 Statement of Assessment (SOA), residential, commercial, and manufacturing, land values averaged \$29,512, \$56,449, and \$10,557 per acre, respectively. This results in a citywide average value of \$40,080 per acre.

While land costs are much higher in Waukesha County, there was interest in including land costs related to the Brookfield Conference Center in this study. In 2018, the City of Brookfield acquired 9.3 acres in a deed in lieu of foreclosure transaction. At the time, the property was valued at \$8 million. The City then subdivided and sold a 2.5-acre portion of this site for both the Conference Center and its adjacent hotel to a developer for \$2.1 million. Adjusted for inflation, this would be \$1.1 million per acre in 2026. Though Brookfield's high land costs are not comparable to Rhinelander's, this transaction serves as an example of how a municipality recognized an opportunity to acquire property and sell it for a specific need.

Financing

The following financial strategies may be used to construct a conference center:

Pay-as-You-Go Funding

This strategy requires paying for the up-front costs of constructing a conference center by allocating funds in an organization's annual budget or capital improvement plan. In most cases, construction would need to be debt-financed since most municipalities, chambers of commerce, or other organizations do not have the tax base and/or revenue to pay all at once. This would mean that the pay-as-you-go portion of the public or private entity's budget would primarily go to debt service. In the case of a privately developed and/or financed conference center, pay-as-you-go can be used as only a portion of the capital stack, with other financial sources being utilized as well. It can also be used for operational costs.

Bond Financing

Bond financing is typically only utilized for publicly owned projects as they require funding from the tax base to execute and require a project to benefit the whole community. Typically, a conference center would qualify due to the economic and educational opportunities it provides for the community. Like other forms of financing, it can be used as part of a financial stack. Below are the four types of bonds:

- General Obligation: Long-term bonds issued to pay capital construction costs.
- Limited Obligation: Like general obligation bonds, but there are limits on the tax rate levied to pay off the project.
- Special Obligation: These bonds are tied to specific tax revenue sources, such as room tax, rather than a local government's general fund.
- Revenue: These bonds utilize user fees and other sources of revenue. While they have the advantage of being used to both construct and operate a conference center, they are not likely to be used because conference centers often generate little revenue or operate at a loss, and these bonds depend on revenue from a venue's income.

Local Foundations

Cities along the Wisconsin River in Central and Northern Wisconsin have a long legacy of contributing funding for large community projects. A recent example is the Greenheck-Turner Community Center, a \$35 million, 135,000 square foot fieldhouse in the D.C. Everest School District (Marathon County) which was paid for entirely by donations and foundation funding. A conference center in Rhinelander could utilize foundation money as part of its capital stack.

Private Bank Financing

Commercial lenders often have a variety of financial products that can be used in a conference center's overall capital stack.

Room Tax

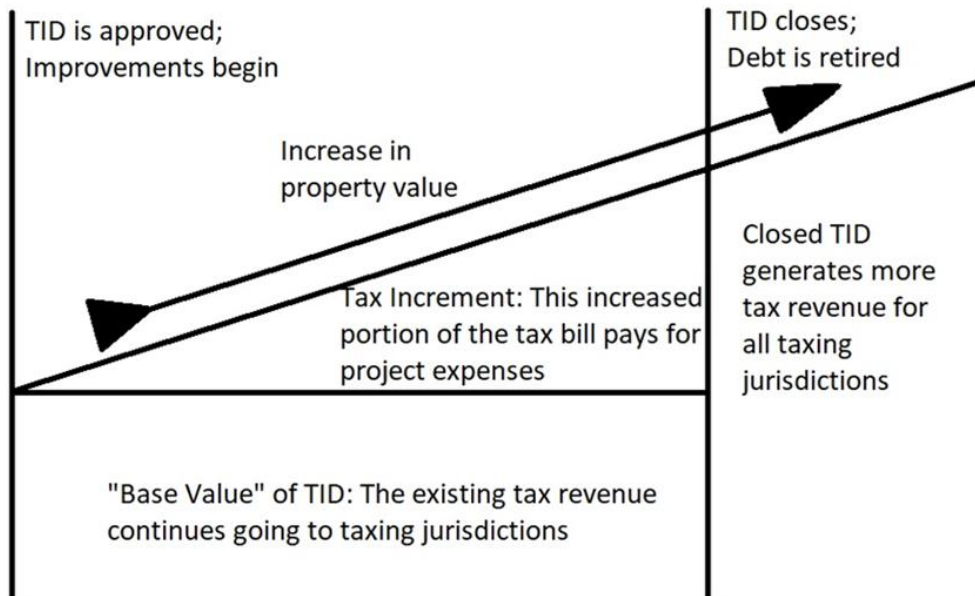
Room tax in Wisconsin may be imposed by municipalities on hotels and other lodging facilities that feature short-term stays, which are defined as 30 or fewer consecutive days. Room tax can be used to offset construction and operating costs of a conference center. For example, the City of Green Bay utilized room tax to help finance the expansion of the KI Center, and it uses room tax to offset its operating costs along with the Resch Center's costs.

Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) can be used to pay for costs associated with a conference center, especially when redeveloping a site or paying for new infrastructure serving a new development. The City of Brookfield in Waukesha County, for example, used TIF to upgrade sewer, water, and other infrastructure needed to support its new conference center. It would require the City of Rhinelander and Oneida County Joint Review Board to review and approve the project. TIF works by taking a site's existing tax revenue and keeping it in the general fund. As the property is redeveloped, its value

increases, and so does its assessed value. But the increase in taxes paid, or increment, pays off the initial investment over a certain period, such as a loan to install infrastructure or site remediation costs. After these costs are paid back, the TIF District, or TID, closes and all future property tax payments go towards the general fund, but in a much greater amount since the property's value increased during the life of the TID. See Figure 6.

Figure 6: How a Tax Incremental District (TID) Works



Source: NCWRPC

TIF involves some financial risk to taxpayers as the municipality is responsible for paying off the debt even if a project isn't successful. A newer approach to shift the risk to developers is a reverse TID, which works the same way, but the developer takes out the loan instead of a municipality, which is repaid by TIF over the life of the TID. Additionally, pay-as-you-go TIDs are a similar concept that avoids either party taking on debt, and project costs are paid for as the tax increment accumulates.

Drawbacks for TIDs include the possibility of becoming distressed if projects are not successful. They are also often difficult to explain to the public and can give the impression that taxpayer dollars are used to help developers profit. A strategy that municipalities can use is to include a development proforma (a forecast of a project's financial returns) in meeting packets when a TID is proposed. To prevent the misuse of public funds, the "but-for" test required of all TIDs in Wisconsin ensures that TID is only used for projects that wouldn't be feasible without TID, and every project must have a clear benefit to the public. Careful evaluation of development proposals that use TID and clear communication with the public regarding how TID will be used will help municipalities effectively use this tool.

Sponsorships

Local business and/or organizations can sponsor a facility and even receive naming rights based on their contribution to the construction and/or operation of a conference center. This funding source has the potential to be a long-term sustainable funding source rather than just a one-time funding source for construction.

Other Partnerships

There is the potential to work with Oneida County Economic Development Corporation (OCEDC) and/or Nicolet Technical College (NTC) to incorporate leasable business and/or incubator space into the project, as well as working with the Rhinelander Area Chamber of Commerce for chamber event programming to partially offset costs.

Grant Funding

The types of grant funding available depend on whether the property is privately or publicly owned and developed. Based on input from the Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce, the preference is to have a privately constructed and operated facility, with possible incentives from various local organizations. Several grant programs may assist with the construction of a conference center in Rhinelander:

Community Development Block Grant – Public Facilities Program (CDBG-PF)

This federal program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Though typically used for utilities and infrastructure, “community centers” are listed as a potential grant-funded activity. The project would need to demonstrate a public benefit for low and moderate income (LMI) households and/or meeting an urgent economic development need to qualify.

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)

WEDC’s Community Development Investment (CDI) Program Supports small-town projects that create a significant destination attraction, especially in downtowns, historic buildings, or on infill sites. A conference center could meet the criteria for this program.

WEDC also administers grants that help with site cleanup and/or renovation of vacant buildings, such as the Brownfield Grant Program (BF), Brownfield Site Assessment Grant Program (SAG), Idle Sites Redevelopment Program (ISR), and Historic Tax Credits.

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

EDA’s Public Works Program helps communities revitalize, expand, and upgrade their infrastructure for projects that help expand the local economy. Additionally, the Technical Assistance Program can sometimes be used to sponsor conferences and develop revitalization plans, which could help support planning and operation of a conference center.

Summary

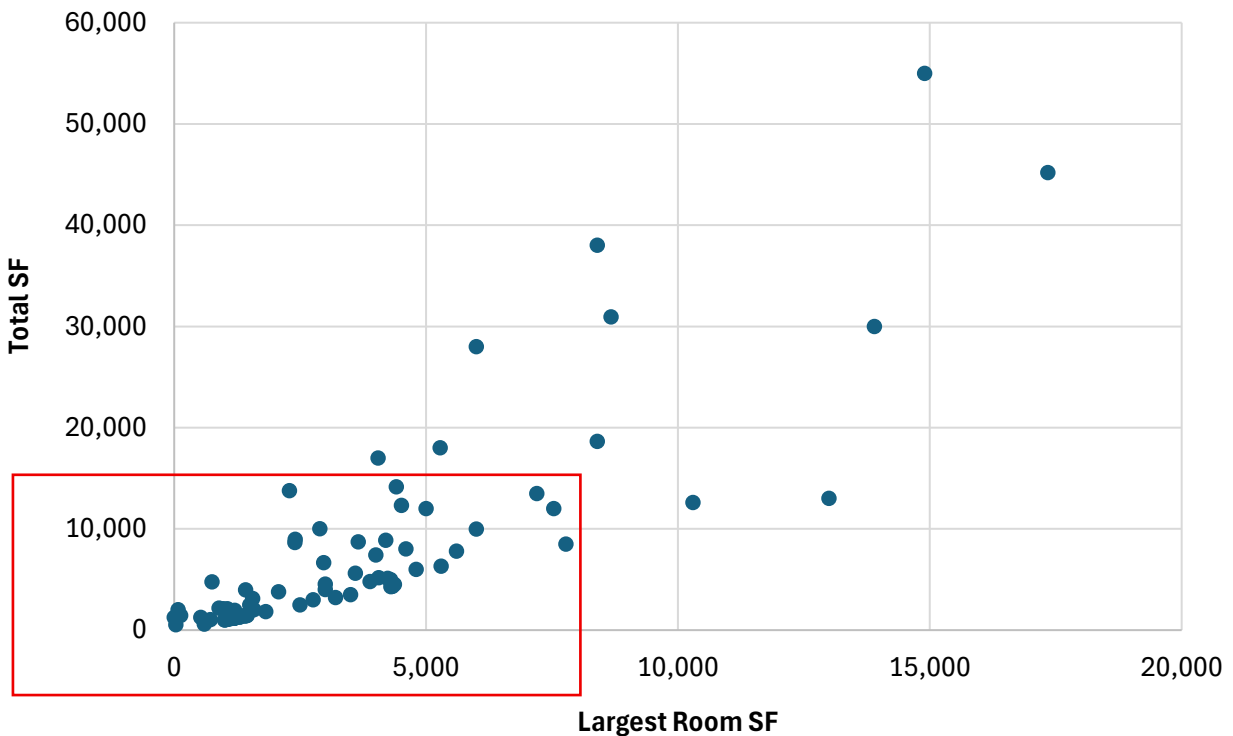
All the financial strategies listed above could be used to incentivize the construction of a conference center by reducing a developer’s construction costs. Since conference centers often operate at a deficit, additional support may be needed for long-term operations. This can be assisted by recurring line items in another organization’s budget or sponsorships and naming rights. There may also be other opportunities such as fundraisers to help support the construction and operation of a conference center.

Conference Center Needs Analysis

Existing Venues Inventory

Appendix A of this study contains a list of meeting venues over 1,000 square feet within roughly 50- and 100-mile radii around Rhinelander obtained from North Star Meeting Group’s “Find Event Venue” online search tool. This is because it is common for many hotels to have a rentable room for parties and meetings that is less than 1,000 square feet, making the list that includes all meeting spaces much longer than necessary for the purposes of a conference center feasibility study. This search tool does not include every event venue possible, since some of them are not large enough to be considered a conference center or do not have the flexibility to accommodate a variety of meetings. For example, the Rothschild Pavilion in Marathon County is over 6,000 square feet, and although it occasionally hosts conferences and similar events, it is much more commonly used for weddings or other assemblies that require one large space rather than a variety of spaces such as breakout rooms. See Figure 7.

Figure 7: Venues within 100 Miles of Rhinelander by Square Footage



Source: North Star Meeting Group

By analyzing Figure 7, a pattern emerges: most venues are either very large or below a certain size, with few options in the middle. For example, out of the 87 venues graphed in Figure 7, only 9 have a total leasable space of over 15,000 square feet, and only 8 have a single room over 8,000 square feet, the area indicated by the red box. Only 6 venues meet both those standards. According to the meetings.com meeting room space calculator, an 8,000 square foot room can seat just under 670 people at standard 5-foot round tables. Crescent-style seating, where attendees only sit around one-half to three-quarters of a table to maintain sight lines to a presenter, is common for conferences. In an 8,000 square foot room, this results in the capacity dropping to just 466.

During meetings throughout the development of this feasibility study, Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce members indicated a preference for capacities in the 500-1,000 range to accommodate larger meetings, such as for state agencies, that the City had hosted years ago but can no longer accommodate. It is important to note that state agencies often require specific per-diem rates for hotel rooms and conferences, so this should be taken into consideration when projecting revenues and expenditures in a new conference center.

Figure 7 provides three scenarios for Rhinelander to consider:

1. By staying under 15,000 square feet in total and having the largest room size being 8,000 square feet or less, a conference center would be similar in size to other venues, avoiding the risk of overbuilding the space relative to what the local market can support.
2. Building a conference center that is slightly larger than most competing venues has the potential to draw more events due to having a higher capacity without providing excessive additional square footage that is unlikely to be utilized frequently.
3. Build a conference center with as few total square feet as possible to keep construction costs low while providing a single multipurpose room that is larger than 8,000 square feet to accommodate more people than most conference centers within a 100-mile radius. This multipurpose space would have the ability to be divided into smaller ballrooms.

To maximize the conference center’s potential while minimizing costs, approach number 3 is recommended and discussed further in this study’s recommendations.

Hotel Inventory

Conference centers that attract visitors from outside the area must include a certain number of hotel rooms to accommodate the influx of visitors attending an event. Additionally, other conference center feasibility studies indicate a need for a minimum number of hotel rooms within a half-mile radius of the venue so attendees can be within walking distance. The three conference center feasibility studies mentioned earlier in this study provided data on 31 conference centers for comparison and included the total square footage as well as the number of hotel rooms for each venue. On average among these examples, there was one hotel room for every 99 square feet of conference space. Table 12 provides an inventory of all hotel rooms in the City of Rhinelander.

Table 12: Hotel Rooms in the City of Rhinelander

Hotel	Rooms
Quality Inn Rhinelander	100
Clarion Pointe Rhinelander	85
Holiday Inn Express & Suites Rhinelander	99
AmericInn by Wyndham Rhinelander	51
Cobblestone Hotel & Suites Rhinelander	62
Comfort Inn Rhinelander	51
Total	448

Source: Midwest Meetings

Existing Facilities in Rhinelander

Before reviewing the types of conference facilities available, it is important to acknowledge the presence of existing facilities like the Hodag Dome in Rhinelander. Owned by the school district, this 128,000 square foot facility is the largest air-supported dome in the nation. According to the district’s website, the Hodag Dome houses a full-size turf football field, a soccer pitch, and two regulation size softball or youth baseball fields, or four futsal fields. It also has four tennis courts that are also striped for pickleball, a six lane 100-meter straight track, a community walking area, batting cages, golf simulators, and sports court flooring that can accommodate basketball or volleyball. While it has the capability to host several types of events, it is a different type of event venue than one that is being examined in this conference center study.

Additionally, there are other facilities that have conference and event space. For example, Rondele Ranch outside of the City limits recently opened the Graham Center, which has a largest room of over 6,200 square feet and a maximum capacity of 500 (See Figure 8). The Pines Event Center also has event space for up to 230. However, both venues are much smaller than a typical conference center and do not have breakout rooms. Additionally, four of the City’s six hotels have some conference rooms, but none of them have a single room larger than 2,400 square feet or a total square footage of over 9,000. These existing spaces meet the needs of their target users well, but highlight the opportunity of a larger venue with more space for larger assemblies.

Figure 8: The Graham Center’s 6,200-Square Foot Event Space at Rondele Ranch



Source: Rondele Ranch Website

Comparable Facilities

Below is a sample of facilities in Wisconsin that were chosen due to their size being similar to the conference center being proposed in this study and/or their location in a smaller, tourism-oriented community.

Brookfield Conference Center, Brookfield, WI

While this 57,000-square-foot venue is far larger than what is being recommended, it provides an example of several project components that could apply to a conference center in Rhinelander:

- Connectivity with new and existing hotel rooms
- Use of TIF funding for infrastructure costs
- Inclusion of a plaza for outdoor events
- Redevelopment of an underutilized commercial site
- Walkability to businesses in the Brookfield Square area
- Flexibility to create many smaller spaces out of larger spaces using folding walls
- Modern aesthetics, natural lighting, and technology integration

Cedar Creek Hotel and Conference Center, Rothschild, WI

Formerly known as Stoney Creek, this 107-room hotel features 18,635 square feet of conference space that can accommodate up to 900 attendees. The largest ballroom is 8,400 square feet and there are a total of 7 meeting spaces. Included is also an indoor pool area and across the street is the 55,000-square foot Central Wisconsin Convention & Expo Center.

Destination Geneva National, Lake Geneva, WI

Destination Geneva National features a total of 146 rooms and 20,000 square feet of meeting space on a bluff overlooking Geneva Lake, making it a popular destination in a smaller community for conferences and weddings, and it features an on-site golf course. Since its largest ballroom is only 4,005 square feet, the maximum capacity is just 475 theater-style or 300 banquet style.

Hotel Northland, Green Bay, WI

Though located in a much larger city, this example demonstrates how a downtown, walkable conference center can function and how a historic building can be repurposed for hotel and conference space. This hotel has 160 guest rooms and 14,784 square feet of conference space, but its largest room can only accommodate 230 since this is divided between 19 rooms.

Pine Mountain Resort, Iron Mountain, MI

This resort is located at the base of a ski hill and golf course and features 52 hotel rooms and over 20,000 square feet of conference space. Despite its size, the maximum capacity is advertised at just 300 attendees seated auditorium style and only 240 banquet style in the largest room. This resort is a great example of a remote venue that embraces its surrounding outdoor recreation amenities to create a unique conference experience.

The Lismore Hotel, Eau Claire, WI

This newly remodeled hotel and conference center transformed a 1960s hotel located in the walkable and amenity-rich Downtown Eau Claire, just blocks from the Pablo Center Performing Arts Center, which features additional event space. It features a total of 13,500 square feet of event space split between a 7,200 square foot ground level ballroom that can be divided into three smaller rooms, and a 6,300 square foot lower-level ballroom. These spaces can both seat about 440 banquet style and around 600 theater style. The Lismore also features 112 on-site hotel rooms as well as a coffee shop, farm-to-table restaurant, and rooftop bar. The renovation cost \$21 million in 2016 and features a one-of-a-kind design aesthetic featuring local artwork.

Figure 9: The Lismore Hotel: One Multi-Purpose Space that Divides into Three Ballrooms



Source: The Lismore Hotel Website

Figure 10: The Pablo Center Incorporates Eau Claire River Views in its Event Space



Source: Pablo Center Website

Needs Analysis Summary

The conference centers listed above all feature on-site hotel rooms and are similar in size to the one being proposed in this study. When comparing similar size venues, a new conference center in Rhinelander would have the potential to have a higher capacity than many other conference centers without necessarily having a larger total size if designed according to the recommendations in this study. Additionally, the Pine Mountain Resort example demonstrates that the surrounding community's amenities can help a small, remote community to support a conference center. This study also recommends further exploring these and other similar conference centers for inspiration when planning and designing a new conference center to incorporate certain design elements.

Recommendations

Based on the various analyses in this study as well as feedback from the Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce, the recommendation is that the Chamber of Commerce work with the City of Rhinelander and Oneida County Economic Development Corporation to create a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that will be advertised to private sector developers and/or management companies interested in constructing and operating a conference center in the City of Rhinelander. This conference center would meet demand that results from a lack of large venues for conferences, weddings, trade shows, and other events in Rhinelander. It is also supported by Oneida County's continued economic growth and position as a tourism destination. It should be designed to be flexible, cost-effective, and feature the latest technology and aesthetics that accommodate conference center trends identified in this report. It may also require the addition of hotel rooms based on feedback from existing hotel managers and their observations regarding vacancy rates and room availability.

Recommended Conference Center Configuration

Based on the Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce's desire to comfortably host conferences with at least 500 attendees, and the potential to capture a share of the market with few venue choices, **this study recommends a conference center with the following minimum dimensions, with a total leasable space of at least 11,400 square feet:**

Multipurpose space (9,000 square feet):

- 500 seated in crescent rounds
- 600 seated banquet style
- 1,000 theater style
- 45 convention style booths (10 feet by 10 feet squares)
- Multipurpose space can be divided into 3 ballrooms using folding walls:
 - 3,000 square feet each
 - 167 seated in crescent rounds
 - 200 seated banquet style
 - 333 seated theater style
- Interior design should be functional enough for multipurpose uses and formal enough for ballroom uses
- Spatial programming should accommodate utility boxes, loading docks, kitchen access, technology, and more. See Figure 2 for a full list of spatial programming requirements.
- Recommended outdoor plaza space should be accessible to this space.

Breakout space (2,400 square feet):

- 260 seated theater-style
- Can be subdivided by folding walls into four 600 square foot rooms (65 seated theater-style in each room)

This arrangement allows for a conference of 500 attendees sitting in crescent rounds in the largest room and allows for half of the assembly (250) to fit into breakout rooms during conferences where there are multiple session options. Additionally, weddings may be held in the ballrooms that result from subdividing the multipurpose space, or, for smaller gatherings, can utilize breakout space with or without divisions in place.

Creative use of interior finishes, windows that showcase the surrounding landscape, local artwork, lighting, and more can enhance the spaces and make them formal enough for weddings or other gatherings that desire a more upscale feel than a conference space typically would require to enable this flexibility. There is the potential to partner with a university student to create detailed floor plans, materials, and/or aesthetics as part of their capstone program for architecture, interior design, art, or similar major.

Recommended Conference Center Locations

Four sites have been identified in previous plans and by the Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce. Below are maps of each site and a description of each site's attributes.

Site 1: West Davenport Street Bridge, Northeast Corner

Current zoning: B-2 Central Business

Recommended by: 2009 Rhinelander Waterfront Redevelopment Plan

Hotel rooms within ½ mile: 85

Current ownership: Private

Pros: Views of the Wisconsin River and walkability to Downtown Rhinelander, potential for shared or on-street parking

Cons: Compact site and limited options for nearby hotel rooms; demolition/relocation of existing buildings; possible floodplain

Site 2: West Davenport Street Bridge, Southeast Corner

Current zoning: B-2 Central Business and INT Institutional

Recommended by: 2015 Rhinelander Downtown Economic Development & Streetscape Plan

Hotel rooms within ½ mile: 85

Current ownership: Private and Public (City of Rhinelander)

Pros: Views of the Wisconsin River and walkability to Downtown Rhinelander, potential for shared or on-street parking

Cons: Compact site and limited options for nearby hotel rooms; demolition/relocation of existing buildings; possible floodplain

Site 3: Oneida County Highway Department (USH 8 & STH 47)

Current zoning: INT Institutional

Recommended by: City of Rhinelander Staff, Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce Staff

Hotel rooms within ½ mile: 213

Current ownership: Public (Oneida County)

Pros: Site currently in public ownership but could someday be vacated, proximity to existing hotels, easy highway access, opportunity to create a “community gateway” that welcomes visitors entering Rhinelander, and opportunities for pedestrian bridge or crosswalk to additional hotel rooms and the Wisconsin River. County ownership presents an opportunity for a cost-effective land transaction.

Cons: Site currently developed and likely needs demolition and/or remediation prior to construction; possible wetlands

Site 4: Holiday Inn Express Vacant Lot, State Highway 17

Current zoning: B-3 General Commercial

Recommended by: Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce Staff

Pros: Vacant site with proximity to newly constructed hotel rooms and views of surrounding woodlands

Cons: Only accessible by car and not walkable to restaurants or other community amenities

Hotel rooms within ½ mile: 99

Current ownership: Private and public (City of Rhinelander)

Site 5: Public Safety Block (Alban, W. Frederick, N. Brown, and W. Phillip Streets)

Current zoning: INT-Institutional

Recommended by: City of Rhinelander Staff, Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce Staff

Pros: Mostly in public ownership, within walking distance of downtown Rhinelander and the Wisconsin River, and is likely to become vacant in the coming years as the City's Police and Fire Departments consider moving to a new building; potential for shared or on-street parking

Cons: Requires demolition and possible site remediation.

Hotel rooms within ½ mile: 85

Current ownership: Private and public (City of Rhinelander)

Note that sites that are currently in public ownership (City, County, etc.) have several advantages for conference center development as there is the potential for the developer and public entity to agree on a considerable discount when the site is purchased. For example, the land could be sold for a dollar on condition that the conference center is guaranteed to be built to a minimum assessed value to ensure that the increase in tax base makes up for the discount on the land. This helps make the project more financially feasible while converting a tax-exempt property to a privately held property that generates property taxes. If the site needs remediation, a developer may qualify for programs that help pay for the remediation if redevelopment occurs on the site. Finally, it avoids the need to relocate businesses and/or residents if demolition occurs compared to a privately held property.

Wisconsin Uniform Commercial Building Code

According to the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS), rooms for “assembly without fixed seats” have a maximum capacity of 1 person per 7 square feet for concentrated assembly (seats only), 1 person per 5 square feet for standing space only, and 1 person per 15 square feet when tables and chairs are used (unconcentrated assembly). The numbers recommended above use the meetings.com meeting room calculator to determine how many people fit in each configuration, and then the number is reduced to fit the Wisconsin Uniform Commercial Building Code in instances where the calculation is higher than the code's maximum capacity.

Recommended Marketing Strategy

The Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce should work closely with the City of Rhinelander and Oneida County Economic Development Corporation to develop marketing materials for the conference center, especially to reach markets in larger cities (Fox Cities, Wausau, Eau Claire, Twin Cities, Madison, Milwaukee, and La Crosse). The Chamber may also work with local wellness and outdoor recreation-oriented businesses and organizations to determine whether certain amenities can be incorporated into the design of the conference center to expand its ability to accommodate events that cater to these users. Finally, Chamber of Commerce staff should work with state agencies and other statewide organizations to determine what conference and hotel room rate regulations apply to their organizations to ensure that the new conference center can accommodate pricing expectations.

Lodging Recommendations

Earlier in this plan, an analysis concluded that there is an average of one hotel unit for every 99 square feet of conference space. For 11,400 square feet of conference space, this equals 115 hotel rooms within a half mile of the venue. Table 12 earlier in this study shows that, Citywide, Rhinelander has nearly four times this capacity, though access to these hotel rooms depends on the conference center's location. Additionally, a full conference with 500 in attendance would require more than double this number of hotel rooms even if only half of the attendees stayed overnight.

A developer proposing a conference center should consult with existing hotel managers to determine whether their current occupancy rates would require the need for additional hotel rooms at or near the conference center site. If there is a need for more rooms, advertising this need to interested developers is necessary and would further increase the economic impact of a conference center in Rhinelander. For the minimum need of 115 hotel rooms within a half-mile radius, Sites 1, 2, and 5 would require an additional 30 rooms and Site 4 would require another 16 rooms.

Construction Costs

Financial estimates are derived from the cost estimates discussed earlier in this study, which are applied to the recommended conference center's square footage. According to the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), on average, a conference center's circulation space (hallways, restrooms, etc.) should be 50 percent of the building's total square footage. This would mean that the recommended 11,400 square feet of conference space should be supported by 5,700 square feet of circulation space, for a total square footage of 17,100. Based on the \$409 per square foot construction cost estimate earlier in this study, this would result in a total **construction cost estimate of \$6,993,900**. While circulation space may not need to be this large, it is another opportunity to create an atrium or other gathering space that could be utilized to feature artwork or host registration tables and informational booths during events.

Based on the cost of \$167,235 per new hotel room discussed in this study, an additional \$5,017,050 would be needed to create a minimum of 30 extra rooms at Sites 1, 2, and 5, and \$2,675,760 would be needed to create a minimum of 16 hotel rooms at Site 4. It is also common for conference centers to utilize the addition of on-site hotel rooms to offset long-term operational costs. Site 3 is not expected to require additional hotel rooms, but a proposed conference center should consult with the nearby Cobblestone, Quality Inn, and AmericInn by Wyndham Hotels to determine if they have enough capacity for large events and/or if better pedestrian facilities that would connect the conference center to these hotels would be possible.

Operating Costs

Projected annual operating costs are based on Table 11 earlier in this plan, which is based on the square footage of the conference space alone and does not count circulation space. Table 13 applies the costs per square foot in Table 11 to the proposed 11,400 square feet of conference space for the first three years of the facility's operation:

Table 13: Projected Operating Costs by Year

Projected Operating Costs			
Year	Revenue	Expenses	Net
Year 1	\$424,175	\$553,890	-\$129,715
Year 2	\$492,165	\$579,886	-\$87,720
Year 3	\$544,646	\$605,685	-\$61,039

Source: Data from Hunden Strategic Partners, CSL International, Johnson Consulting, NCWRPC, and U.S. Inflation Calculator

Financial Strategy

The Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce and its partners should investigate the use of the various financial tools discussed in this study to help incentivize the construction of the recommended conference center. Assistance would likely be needed for long-term operational costs, and this can come in the form of sponsorships, foundation funding, naming rights, or a recurring line item from one or several organizations' budgets.

Zoning and Parking Requirements

Under the City of Rhinelander's existing zoning code, a conference center would likely fall under the "indoor institutional" land use which is permitted in the INT-Institutional Zoning District, while lodging falls under B-3 General Business. For parking requirements, "other uses" under the list of institutional uses specifies one space for five seats or patrons at maximum capacity. Hotels require one space per room, plus one space for each employee on the largest work shift. Based on the recommended maximum capacity (1,000 theater style), this results in a need for 200 parking stalls, plus additional parking depending on the number of hotel rooms and hotel staff if hotel rooms are added.

Additional Recommendations

Based on recent trends in the conference industry, it is recommended that a conference center incorporates features that reinforce Rhinelander's image as a tourism destination. Examples include incorporating local food/beverage and artwork, showcasing surrounding views of the Northwoods using windows and outdoor plazas, and investigating the potential to design the conference center to accommodate outdoor recreation and wellness-style events.

Acreage Recommendations

This facility would be easiest to construct on one level to avoid the need for costly elevators and other requirements, but a multi-story building may be considered to save space if land is scarce. For example, the multipurpose space and kitchen could remain at ground level for loading and access purposes, while breakout rooms could be placed in an upper level above first floor circulation space. For a one-story building, a 17,100 square foot building, plus around 1.75 acres of parking, and a required 20 percent landscaping ratio result in a minimum of 111,996 square feet of land, or 2.6 acres. However, shared parking agreements or on-street parking, along with a two-story building can drastically reduce the acreage needed, especially for the potential sites that are located near Downtown Rhinelander. Given the citywide average assessed land value of \$40,080, **a 2.6-acre site would cost at least \$104,208.**

Conference Center Alternatives

Should Rhinelander struggle to attract a developer and/or management company to build the recommended conference center in this study, there may be an opportunity to either identify and renovate an existing facility in the community for the purpose of creating conference center space, or work with an existing hotel in the community with conference space to investigate the feasibility of a remodel and expansion of their existing facilities to accommodate larger events. Underutilized buildings may also be repurposed into additional hotel rooms depending on which site is selected, rather than having to rely on new construction, which may have even lower costs if historic tax credits are used.

The former Curran School at 315 S Oneida Ave is an example of a site where an existing historic building could be renovated to save money (especially with tax credits if eligible). The site also accommodates building expansion and additional parking. Overall, there are a variety of site, building, financing, and partnership options listed throughout the study that can be used as opportunities arise.



Conclusion

The recommendations of this study address the need for a larger conference and event center than what is currently offered in Rhinelander while sizing it appropriately for the community. The recommended minimum dimensions ensure that the conference space will be competitive while avoiding a facility that is either too large and expensive for its local market or too small to be able to attract enough events. In summary, the study calls for a 17,100 square foot facility with 11,400 square feet of leasable space that includes a 9,000 square foot multipurpose room. Construction costs are estimated to be \$6,993,900 for this conference center along with \$40,080 per acre in land costs and \$167,235 in construction costs per hotel unit that may need to be added depending on the site. This facility could require as much as 2.6 acres of land, but various design and parking approaches can reduce the amount of land needed. Though it is expected to operate at a loss, at least initially, various partnerships and financial strategies can be used to offset not only construction and acquisition costs, but also operating costs.

Upon completion of this study, the Chamber and the City have a tool that can be used to market the community for this type of development to interested private developers by using the request for qualifications (RFQ) process. As the study generates interest, the City, Chamber, and other partners in the community can further refine which features, what location, which financial strategies, and what possible incentives might be used to construct and operate this facility. The result will be a facility that maximizes Rhinelander's existing businesses and opportunities while drawing more visitors and spending to the area.

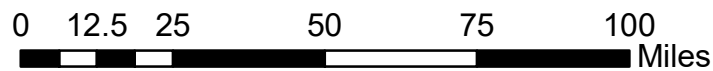
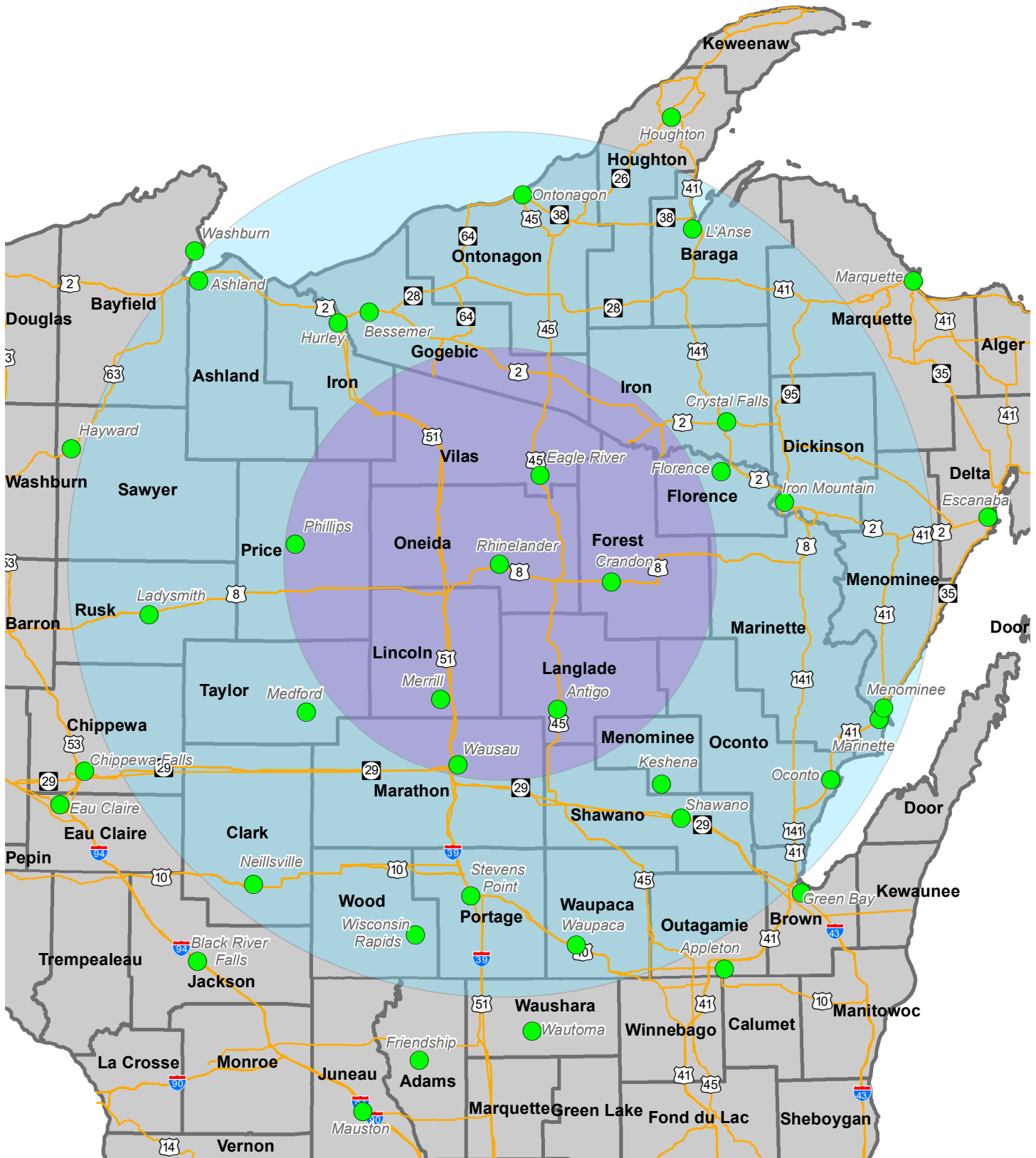
Appendix A: List of Venues by Square Footage Within 100 Miles of Rhinelander

Location	Venue	Hotel Rooms	Largest Room SF	Mtg. Rooms	Total Event SF
Rhinelander	Quality Inn Rhinelander	100	2,400	9	8,979
	Clarion Pointe Rhinelander	85	1,296	1	1,296
	Holiday Inn Express & Suites Rhinelander	99	600	1	600
	AmericInn by Wyndham Rhinelander	51	30	1	536
	Cobblestone Hotel & Suites Rhinelander	62	N/A	1	N/A
	Comfort Inn Rhinelander	51	N/A	1	N/A
	The Pines Event Center	None	?	1	?
	Rondele Ranch Graham Center	None	6,236	2	8,276
Minocqua	Lake of the Torches Resort	101	7,776	1	8,500
	The Waters of Minocqua	106	4,000	5	7,425
	Dillman's Bay Resort	40	1,500	3	2,480
St. Germain	Black Bear Lodge St. Germain	38	1,400	1	1,400
Eagle River	Hiawatha Lodge Inn	29	2,500	1	2,500
	A1 Gypsy Villa Island Resort	27	3,200	1	3,200
	Edgewater Inn & Cottages	16	1,200	1	1,200
Merrill	AmericInn by Wyndham Merrill	65	2,000	1	2,000
Tomahawk	Rodeway Inn & Suites Tomahawk	45	1,558	2	3,116
	AmericInn by Wyndham Tomahawk	56	1,200	1	1,200
Wausau Area	Cedar Creek Hotel & Conference Center	107	8,400	7	18,635
	Jefferson Street Inn	99	4,408	9	14,136
	Holiday Inn & Suites	147	5,296	4	6,300
	Fairfield Inn & Suites	87	3,888	3	4,800
	Days Inn & Suites Wausau	50	1,581	1	2,000
	AmericInn by Wyndham Wausau	67	130	2	1,456
	Grand Lodge Waterpark Resort (Bantr)	139	1,450	4	1,450
	Hilton Garden Inn	108	5,605	5	7,800
Stevens Point/ Plover	Central Wisconsin Convention & Expo Center	N/A	14,896	N/A	55,000
	Holiday Inn & Convention Center	149	8,400	6	38,000
	Baymont Inn & Suites Stevens Point	49	1,000	1	1,000
	Food + Farm Exploration Center	N/A	4,239	6	5,119
Marshfield	Super 8 Plover Stevens Point	79	3,000	1	4,000
	Hotel Marshfield	99	4,600	10	8,029
	Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference Center Marshfield	91	4,800	6	6,000
Wisconsin Rapids	Hotel Mead	150	4,050	8	17,000
Ashland	AmericInn by Wyndham Ashland	94	4,300	4	4,300
	Quality Inn Ashland	60	1,200	2	1,950
	Best Western Hotel Chequamegon	65	1,434	2	1,434
Eau Claire/ Chippewa Falls	Plaza Hotel & Suites	233	6,000	15	28,000
	Sleep Inn & Suites	72	4,200	5	8,880
	Holiday Inn Eau Claire South I-94	130	2,970	5	6,666
	America's Best Value Inn	67	4,292	1	5,000
	Residence Inn Eau Claire	107	1,008	1	1,008

Eau Claire/ Chippewa Falls	Metropolis Resort	107	2,891	1	10,000
	Best Western Plus Conference Center	85	4,332	6	4,332
	Chippewa Valley Expo Center	N/A	53,413	N/A	53,413
	Eau Claire County Exposition Center	N/A	10,296	N/A	12,616
	Lismore Hotel Eau Claire Doubletree	112	7,200	2	13,500
Hayward Area	Flat Creek Lodge	66	4,368	1	4,500
	Grand Pines Resort & Motel on Round Lake	30	1,420	4	3,974
	Ghost Lake Lodge	12	1,820	1	1,820
	Northland Lodge	20	1,200	1	1,200
Waupaca	Comfort Suites at Par 4 Resort	70	4,512	7	12,314
	Ramada Waupaca	90	4,063	4	5,173
	Econo Lodge Waupaca	42	1,197	2	1,772
Shawano Area	Menominee Casino Bingo Hotel	103	13,000	1	13,000
	North Star Mohican Casino	129	5,000	6	12,600
	Shawano Four Seasons Resort	86	1,080	1	1,080
Fox Cities/ Green Bay	Oneida Hotel and Casino	391	13,900	23	30,000
	Hilton Appleton Paper Valley/Fox Cities Expo Ctr	388	30,351	30	71,686
	DoubleTree by Hilton Appleton	226	3,599	5	5,607
	Holiday Inn Appleton	121	2,073	2	3,799
	Comfort Suites Appleton Airport	130	893	4	2,179
	La Quinta Inn & Suites Appleton	99	972	3	2,118
	Copperleaf Boutique Hotel Spa BW Premier	85	1,250	1	1,527
	Cambria Hotel & Suites Appleton	105	528	4	1,246
	Hotel J Green Bay	103	623	2	1,245
	Home2Suites by Hilton Appleton	104	1,200	1	1,200
	Hyatt Regency Green Bay	241	17,346	19	45,180
	Comfort Suites Green Bay West	115	8,673	10	30,922
	Tundra Lodge	162	5,280	16	18,000
	Hotel Northland Autograph Collection	160	2,287	10	13,787
	Lodge Kohler	144	6,000	1	9,975
	Delta Hotels by Marriott Green Bay	149	3,654	6	8,723
	Hampton Inn Downtown Green Bay	135	750	1	4,764
	The Legacy Hotel Trademark Collection Wyndham	101	3,000	4	4,550
	Holiday Inn & Suites Green Bay Stadium	118	1,425	3	1,425
	SpringHill Suites Green Bay	127	720	2	1,020
	Best Western Green Bay Inn Conference Center	145	5,000	8	12,000
	Hilton Garden Inn Green Bay	125	1,056	4	2,112
	KI Convention Center	N/A	25,228	24	80,000
	Courtyard Appleton Riverfront	97	1,151	1	1,151
Howard Johnson Inn Appleton	59	1,300	1	1,300	
Resch Expo	N/A	125,000	10	134,563	
Marinette Area	Landmark Resort	294	2,394	9	8,666
	Best Western Riverfront Inn	117	2,760	3	3,000
Iron Mountain Area	Pine Mountain Resort	55	7,534	4	12,000
	Comfort Inn Iron Mountain North	57	3,500	1	3,500
St. Germain	Black Bear Lodge St. Germain	38	1,400	1	1,400

Page intentionally left blank

Map 1: Rhinelander Convention Center - Location Context

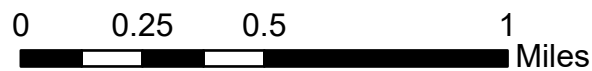
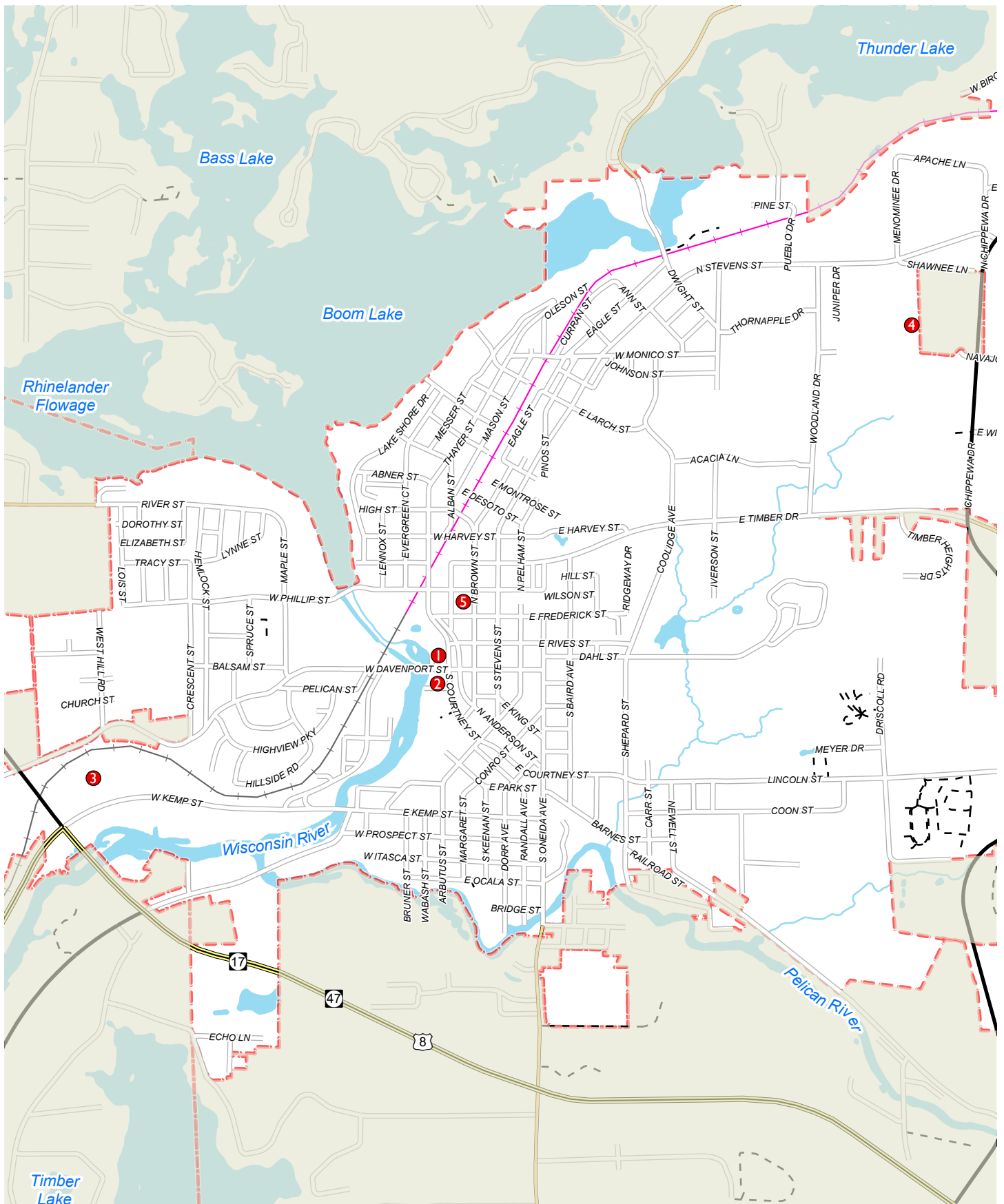


Legend

- County Seats
- Major Highways
- 50-mile radius
- 100-mile radius
- County Boundaries

Page intentionally left blank

Map 2: Rhinelander Convention Center - Potential Sites



Legend

- - - Minor Civil Division
- State Highway
- Local Roads
- Forest Roads
- Railroad (Out of Service)
- Water
- U.S. Highway
- County Highway
- - - Private Roads
- + Railroad
- Potential Sites

