

Economic Development

A. Introduction

The economic development component of the *Village of Poplar Comprehensive Plan* details the activities of the local economy and identifies the employment base, analyzes the local labor force, assesses desirable new businesses, designates sites adequate for business development, identifies environmentally contaminated sites within the village and identifies applicable economic development programs.

B. Labor Force

The labor force is defined by those members of the population 16 years and older who are employed, or if unemployed, are looking for jobs. In 2000, Poplar had a local labor force of 301. The unemployment rate was 1.4 %. Of the 290 employed persons in Poplar, 95 worked in the village, 93 worked in another state and 22 worked at home. See Tables 1 and 2 for employment and place of work characteristics.

Table 1: Employment Characteristics	
Population 16 years and over	417
In labor force	301
Civilian labor force	296
Employed	290
Unemployed	6
Armed forces	5
Not in labor force	116

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2: Place of Work Statistics, Village of Poplar			
Total	290		
Worked in state of residence	197	Worked in place of residence	95
Worked in county of residence	192	Worked outside place of residence	195
Worked outside county of residence	5		
Worked outside state of residence	93		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

C. Economic Base

The economic base of a community translates into the industries and/or occupations that provide jobs for residents of the community. Table 3 lists the number and percent of employed residents of Poplar by occupation and Table 4 breaks it down further into employment by industry.

Table 3: Village of Poplar Employment by Occupation		
Occupation	Number	Percent
Employed	290	100.0%
Management, professional, and related occupations	71	24.5%
Service occupations	50	17.2%
Sales and office occupations	83	28.6%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	8	2.8%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	29	10.0%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	49	16.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Nearly 25 percent (72) of the Village's residents are employed in the education, health and social services industry sector. The manufacturing industry sector is second employing 16 percent of village residents. Considering the proximity of the metropolitan area of Duluth-Superior, many village residents are likely employed in those larger municipalities where jobs are more readily available.

Industry	Number	Percent
Employed	290	100.0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining	7	2.4%
Construction	21	7.2%
Manufacturing	47	16.2%
Wholesale trade	13	4.5%
Retail trade	18	6.2%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	26	9.0%
Information	8	2.8%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental leasing	10	3.4%
Professional, scientific, management, and administrative	10	3.4%
Educational, health and social services	72	24.8%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	26	9.0%
Other services (except public administration)	26	9.0%
Public administration	6	2.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

D. Village of Poplar Employers

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), using a database including employers who pay taxes on wages and workers under the State's Unemployment Insurance law, reports that there are 25 employers in the Village of Poplar (Table 5). Most, but not all, employers are required to pay taxes on their payroll. Also, there is a lag period from when an employer opens/or closes a business and is included on this list. General Mills (Taco Plant) by far is the largest employer in the village.

Employer Name	Type of Employment	Employment Size Range
VILLAGE MARKET LLP	Supermarkets and other grocery stores	5-9
POPLAR HARDWARE CO INC	Hardware stores	10-19
POPLAR AUTO REFINISHING INC	Automotive body and interior repair	10-19
POLAR GAS CO INC	Liquefied petroleum gas, bottled gas, dealers	10-19
VIRGIL NELSON (Nelson Oil Co.)	Other petroleum merchant wholesalers	1-4
BRET ANN ENTERPRISES LLC (Mother's Kitchen)	Full-service restaurants	5-9
GRUBE TRUCKING INC	Other specialized trucking, local	1-4
MATT H LONG (Long's Well Drilling)	Water and sewer system construction	1-4
ORTHOPEDIC & SPINE THERAPY	Offices of specialty therapists	10-19
POPLAR GOLF AND RECREATION	Golf courses and country clubs	1-4
BARNYARD BUDDIES CHILD CARE	Child day care services	10-19
POPLAR/IRON RIVER BLDG SUPPLY	Other building material dealers	10-19

MIKRON INDUSTRIES INC	Plastics materials merchant wholesalers	1-4
NATIONAL BANK OF COMMERCE	Commercial banking	5-9
TWIN PORTS ENERGY INC (1 st Propane Twin Ports)	Liquefied petroleum gas, bottled gas, dealers	1-4
ERNIE'S WELDING & MACHINE INC	Commercial machinery repair and maintenance	1-4
ARNOLD & JONES CONSTRUCTION	Residential finish carpentry contractors	1-4
VILLAGE OF POPLAR	Executive and legislative offices, combined	1-4
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MAPLE	Elementary and secondary schools	20-49
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MAPLE	Elementary and secondary schools	50-99
US POSTAL SERVICE/POPLAR	Postal service	1-4
KERES CONSULTING INC	Administrative management consulting services	1-4

Source: DWD, March 2007

E. Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) program maintains a list of contaminated sites, or “brownfields,” in the state. The DNR defines brownfields as “abandoned or under-utilized commercial or industrial properties where expansion or redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived contamination.” Examples of brownfields might include a large abandoned industrial site or a small corner gas station. Properties listed in the DNR database are oftentimes self-reported, and do not necessarily represent a comprehensive listing of possible brownfields in a community. Table 6 lists the remediation activities in the Village of Poplar. As of February 2008, there were 18 remediation activities listed, four of which had a status of open, one no action and one removed from the list.

Status	Activity Name	Activity Type	Jurisdiction
CLOSED	NELSON OIL	ERP	DCOM
OPEN	TORREYS FURNITURE CLINIC INC	ERP	DNR
OPEN	CONTAMINATION DETECTED-POPLAR SEWER	ERP	DNR
CLOSED	HURSH APARTMENTS	LUST	DNR
CLOSED	NELSONS MOBIL	LUST	DCOM
OPEN	POPLAR GOLF COURSE	LUST	DNR
CLOSED	LLOYD ERICKSON TRUCKING CO (FORMER)	LUST	DCOM
OPEN	POPLAR BLDG SUPPLY INC	LUST	DNR
CLOSED	POPLAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	LUST	DCOM
CLOSED	POPLAR RIVER - W END OF POPLAR CTY	SPILL	DNR
CLOSED	USH 2 - .5 MI E OF CTH P	SPILL	DNR
CLOSED	JONASEN LINDSAY	SPILL	DNR
CLOSED	HEARTLAND EXPRESS	SPILL	DNR
NOACTN	PV FOODS	NAR	DNR
REMOVED	WI DOT - NELSON POPLAR	REMOVED	DNR

Source: WDNR BRRTS
LUST-Leaking Underground Storage Tank ERP-Environmental Repair, NAR: No Action Required by RR Program
DCOM: Department of Commerce

F. Attracting and Retaining Business & Industry

Business attraction activities are designed to encourage businesses and industries that are expanding or planning to relocate, to choose your community. New businesses enhance and diversify the economic base, and improve the quality of life. In order for Poplar to attract new businesses or retain existing ones, it must provide a competitive and attractive environment. Like most villages in Douglas County, Poplar has both strengths and weaknesses for attracting and retaining business and industry. Below is the top five strengths and weaknesses.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. Proximity to USH 2	1. Lack of ED funds
2. Good schools	2. Village residents like status quo
3. Municipal sewer	3. Lack of community promotion
4. Available workforce w/good work ethic	4. Spotty quality water supply
5. Good quality of life	5. Lack of readily available land for sale

G. Desired Businesses & Industries

Types of new business and industry were discussed during the comprehensive planning process. The Village of Poplar would like to attract the following types of employment opportunities in the future:

- Motel
- Entrepreneurs
- Machine shop

H. Economic Development Programs and Organizations

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

The Development Association Inc.

The Development Association, Inc. is a nonprofit 501© (6) organization. Its mission is to assist with retention, expansion, creation and recruitment of businesses in Superior and Douglas County Wisconsin. Its Board of Directors, consisting of eleven members, is made up of business owners, economic development professionals, bankers and City and County government representatives. These individuals bring a variety of expertise, knowledge and vision to the table. The Development Association has been in existence for over 40 years. The organization administers the Douglas

County Revolving Loan Fund on behalf of Douglas County and also manages the Superior Business Center, Inc., an incubator facility.

Douglas County Revolving Loan Fund

This revolving loan fund was developed to promote economic growth in Douglas County through recruitment, expansion and retention of business and industry. Loan amounts are for up to \$50,000 and funds are available to businesses within Douglas County. Requirements include that at least one job per \$5,000 of RLF financing, or one job per \$8,000 of RLF financing for each commitment to hire JTPA-eligible persons and the RLF board will not consider jobs created prior to its final approval for job creation; investment prior to its approval as equity contribution; or financing disbursed prior to their approval as participation financing. Allowable use of proceeds includes land purchase, building, equipment and working capital.

Superior Life Technology Zone Program

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

Workforce Development

Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) is an accredited postsecondary educational institution serving northwestern Wisconsin. WITC Superior campus located in the City of Superior is within an easy commute of Poplar. WITC offers customized training and technical assistance to business and industry to help them become more competitive, increase productivity, and to retain workers. This customized training is available at the business site or in a campus classroom setting.

Located in neighboring Ashland County, in the City of Ashland, is Northland College. This is a four-year baccalaureate degree college that is internationally known for its environmental degree programs.

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

Business Development Assistance

There are several options available for small businesses in the Village of Poplar seeking technical assistance. One is the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation (WBIC), a partner organization

formed by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC). Although its office is located in Washburn County, its service area is a ten-county region. Beginning in 1996, WBIC has developed a unique array of technical, financial, and business support services for start-up and expanding businesses. This work involves analyzing a firm's financial needs including preparation or review of financial projections, analyzing requirements and procedures of the various financing programs, identifying the appropriate funding sources, structuring sources and uses of funds, and the preparation of forms and documents needed in applications.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Business and Manufacturing unit focuses on technical, managerial and general business education and support to Wisconsin businesses. Through the statewide Small Business Development Center (SBDC) network, Wisconsin entrepreneurs learn to start new businesses, expand their operations, and use technology to access learning, improve profits, and create new jobs. The center maintains a business-to-business network so a new business can ask for business expertise from a pertinent resource.

Access to Financing and Venture Capital

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

The Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation (NWBDC) is a non-profit corporation formed by NWRPC to address the critical need for business financing in northwest Wisconsin. It is targeted at the best economic development opportunities of the area: the timber and wood products industry, tourism, and other manufacturing and service industries. NWBDC manages three revolving loan funds (RLFs) and a technology seed fund. The overall goal of the RLFs is to stimulate private sector investment in long-term business assets and to create new jobs. The funds partially fill the gap in private capital markets for long-term fixed rate financing. The technology seed fund can be used to complete research and development activities and validate the technology, develop prototypes, and file patents and copyrights.

In addition to the NWBDC loan funds, Douglas County is part of the Northwest Wisconsin Regional Economic Development Fund (NWREDF), a financing tool available to businesses that will invest private funds and create economic impact in the ten county area served by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC). Currently, businesses located in seven of the ten counties served by NWRPC are eligible to apply for funding under the NWREDF program. Funding for the program was provided by communities in these seven counties pooling their local Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for Economic Development Revolving Loan Funds (RLF's). The local CDBG RLF's were funded by grants provided to the communities by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's CDGD program.

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

capital fund; and its members include, besides WBIC, rural electric cooperatives and local community development organizations.

Economic Development Administration

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration offers two programs for assistance with economic development that apply to the Village of Poplar. One is the Public Works and Economic Development Facilities Assistance Program, which supports the construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and development facilities necessary to generate private sector jobs and investment, including investments that support technology-led development, redevelopment of brownfield sites, and eco-industrial development. Secondly, the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program is available to (1) address the immediate needs of businesses and communities presently undergoing transition due to a sudden and severe job loss and (2) demonstrate new and proactive approaches for economic competitiveness and innovative capacity for threatened regions and communities.

USDA Wisconsin Rural Development

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

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

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

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

Wisconsin Department of Commerce

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

When the funds are repaid to the local government, they may stay in the community to be used as a revolving loan fund to assist other businesses in the community.

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

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

Wisconsin Departments of Tourism and Commerce

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

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

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

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

Northwest Wisconsin Business Development Corporation

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