

6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This element details labor force trends, educational attainment, employment forecasts, income data and other economic development characteristics of the Town of Onalaska. This section also includes an assessment of new businesses and industries that are desired by the Town; an inventory of environmentally contaminated sites; and an assessment of the Town's strengths and weaknesses with respect to attracting and retaining businesses and industries.

Based on survey data, visioning sessions and public input, Onalaska's residents are interested in pursuing Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) strategies for preserving open space. Preservation of open space and, or farmland in the Town could foster the growth of tourism based businesses in the Town. This business category received strong support in the community survey. Survey respondents generally support commercial growth in the Town but are evenly split over whether or not to encourage industrial growth. The survey results also show support for economic development adjacent to areas of existing economic activity, however residents are split over whether development should occur primarily in nearby cities and villages or in the Town. Residents generally favor economic development through: tourism; restaurants/taverns/bars; grocery store; arts and entertainment activities; lodging; and other similar activities. Survey results are included in the Appendix to this plan.

6.1 Economic Analysis and Assessment

6.1.1 Existing Work Force

The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons aged 16 years and older and includes those who are either working or actively seeking work. The character of the Town's labor force—the skills, education, aptitudes and availability of its population—represents one of the most important resources for existing and potential economic investors.

Table 6.1, on the next page, shows the employment status of Onalaska residents in 2000. Of the 2,914 individuals in the labor force, all were employed in civilian occupations (none were in the Armed Forces) and only 3.5 percent of the civilian labor force was unemployed. The statistical profile reveals there are more males than females in the labor force, and for 84.7 percent of families, both parents participate in the labor force.

The lower portion of Table 6.1 shows worker breakdown by class. Private wage and salary workers constitute the largest component of Onalaska's labor force with over 79.4 percent.

It is important to note that in 2000, only about 14 percent of Onalaska residents worked in the Town; the remainder commuted to work in adjacent municipalities.

Table 6.1: Employment Status of Onalaska Residents, 2000

Employment Status	Number	Percent
Population 16 years and over	3,668	100.0
In Labor Force	2,914	79.4
Civilian Labor Force	2,914	79.4
Employed	2,812	76.7
Unemployed	102	2.8
Percent of Civilian Labor Force Unemployed	3.5	(X)
Armed Forces	-	-
Not in Labor Force	754	20.6
Females 16 years and over	1,798	100.0
In Labor Force	1,411	78.5
Civilian Labor Force	1,411	78.5
Employed	1,346	74.9
All parents in family in labor force	376	84.7
CLASS OF WORKER	Number	Percent
Private wage and salary workers	2,233	79.4
Government Workers	334	11.9
Self-employed workers in not incorporated business	236	8.4
Unpaid family workers	9	0.3

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

In 2000, the mean travel time to work for Town residents was 19.4 minutes.

6.1.2 Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is another component of a community’s labor force. Table 6.2 shows education levels in the Town of Onalaska as compared to La Crosse County and the State of Wisconsin. Over 90 percent of Onalaska residents are high school graduates or higher and nearly one-third have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Table 6.2: Educational Attainment

	Town of Onalaska		La Crosse County		State of Wisconsin	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Population 25 years and over	3,208	100.0	65,263	100.0	3,475,878	100.0
Less than 9th grade	61	1.9	2,687	4.1	186,125	5.4
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	189	5.9	4,062	6.2	332,292	9.6
High school graduate (incl. equivalency)	943	29.4	20,823	31.9	1,201,813	34.6
Some college, no degree	675	21.0	14,176	21.7	715,664	20.6
Associate degree	452	14.1	6,945	10.6	260,711	7.5
Bachelor’s degree	576	18.0	10,642	16.3	530,268	15.3
Graduate or professional degree	312	9.7	5,928	9.1	249,005	7.2
Percent high school graduate or higher	(X)	92.2	(X)	89.7	(X)	85.1
Percent bachelor’s degree or higher	(X)	27.7	(X)	25.4	(X)	22.4

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

6.1.3 Personal and Household Income

As shown in Table 6.3 income levels for Onalaska residents are higher in all categories than are income levels for the Village of Holmen and La Crosse County. Both median family and median household incomes are higher in the Town of Onalaska than in the City of Onalaska, or the State of Wisconsin. Both the City of Onalaska and the State evidence higher per capita income levels than the Town.

Table 6.3: Median Family Income, Median Household Income, and Per Capita Income, 1989 – 1999

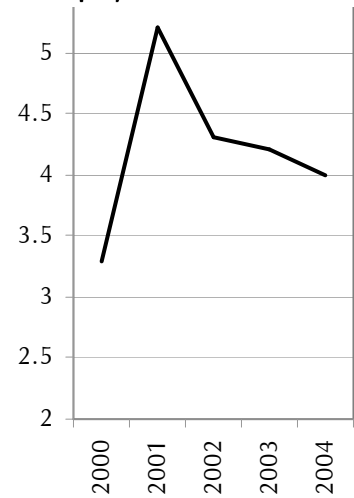
	1989			1999		
	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Per Capita Income
Town of Onalaska	\$36,577	\$38,056	\$12,917	\$54,075	\$57,268	\$19,887
Village of Holmen	\$29,564	\$31,583	\$10,973	\$42,021	\$49,375	\$17,002
City of Onalaska	\$32,624	\$37,788	\$13,605	\$47,800	\$57,264	\$24,066
La Crosse County	\$26,857	\$33,830	\$12,141	\$39,472	\$50,380	\$19,800
State of Wisconsin	\$29,442	\$35,082	\$13,276	\$43,791	\$52,911	\$21,271

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

6.1.4 Unemployment Trends

Unemployment rates show the percent of labor force participants who are unemployed and actively looking for work. The unemployment rate in the Town of Onalaska in 2000 was 3.5 percent. The unemployment rates for La Crosse County and the State of Wisconsin in 2000 were 4.1 and 3.2 respectively. Unemployment rates in La Crosse County spiked between 2000 and 2001; this is consistent with national trends following September 11th. Since then the unemployment rates in La Crosse County have gradually decreased, though they remain higher than pre-2001 levels. The average unemployment rates in La Crosse County in 2003 and in the first half of 2004 were 4.1 and 4 percent respectively.

Figure 6.1: La Crosse County Unemployment Rates: 2000-2004



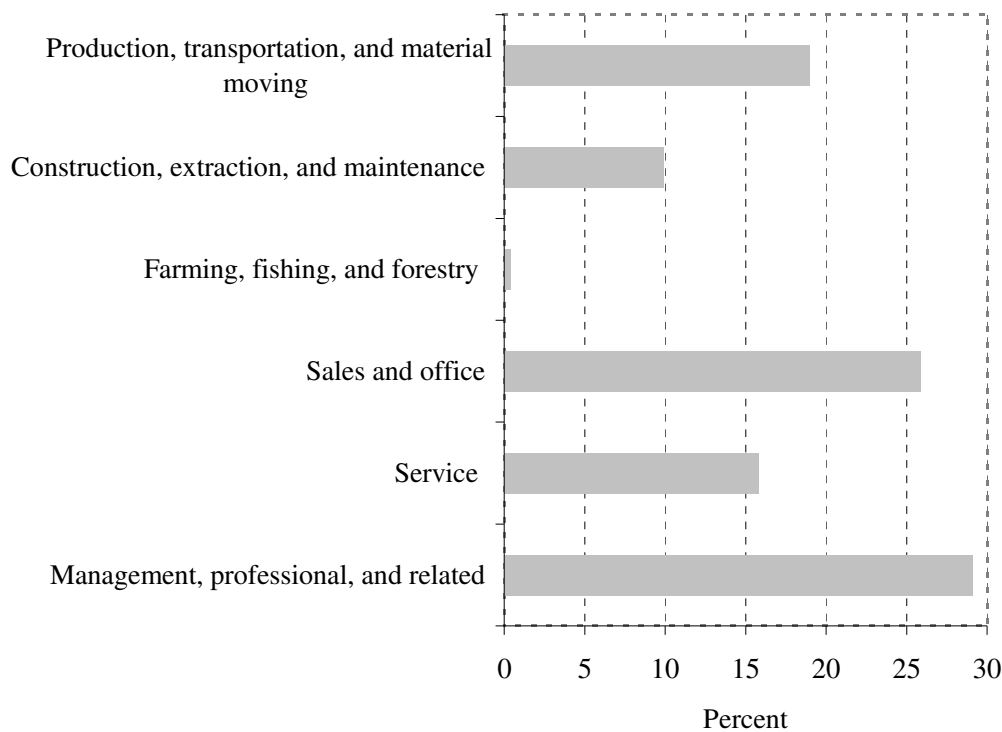
Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

6.2 Economic Base (Employers and Employees)

6.2.1 Occupational Structure

The bar chart in Figure 6.1 illustrates the occupational structure of the residents of the Town of Onalaska at the time of the 2000 Census. Onalaska’s labor force is relatively diverse. “Management, professional and related occupations” account for nearly 30 percent of the work force while “sales and office occupations” employ nearly one quarter of Onalaska’s working population. “Production, transportation and material moving” jobs account for another 20 percent, followed closely by “service” and “construction, extraction and maintenance” occupations which employ 15 and 10 percent of the population, respectively, of the Town of Onalaska. Such diversification in the occupational structure is indicative of a strong local economy; one that is less likely to be susceptible to declines affecting individual sectors of the economy. Figure 6.1 also suggests the range of job options that are available to current and future Town residents.

Figure 6.1: Occupational Structure of Residents, 2000



Source: US Census Bureau, 2000

6.2.2 Major Employers

Table 6.4 lists the top ten industry groups by employment for La Crosse County in March 2003. Two (2) industry types experienced employment increases between 2002 and 2003; most of the gains were in health care, and finance. Six (6) industry types were down in 2003; most of these job losses were in wholesaling, and merchandising. Data was unavailable for two (2) of the ten (10) industry types.

Table 6.4: Top Industry Groups: La Crosse County

Industry Group	March 2003		Number change
	Employers	Employees	2002-2003
Educational Services	30	5,428	-64
Food Services and Drinking Places	205	4,977	-5
Hospitals	(x)	(x)	(x)
Ambulatory Health Care Services	103	4039	472
Machinery Manufacturing	(x)	(x)	(x)
Administrative and Support Services	97	2421	-78
Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	54	2139	-312
Credit Intermediation and Related Activity	45	2013	216
General Merchandise Stores	12	1955	-152
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	16	1805	-78

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, 2003

According to the La Crosse Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, the top twenty (20) employers in the Greater La Crosse Metropolitan Area, (includes the Town of Onalaska) are listed in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5: Major Employers, Greater La Crosse Area

Name	Number of Employees	Location	Product Type /Business
Gundersen Lutheran	5000	La Crosse	Health Care
Franciscan Skemp Healthcare /Mayo Health	3000	La Crosse	Integrated Healthcare Network
Trane	2900	La Crosse	Refrigeration /Heating
School District of La Crosse	1267	La Crosse	Education
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	1000	La Crosse	Education
Kwik Trip Convenience Stores	1000	La Crosse	Convenience Stores
Century Tel	822	La Crosse	Telephone Utility
The Company Store	749	La Crosse	Manufacturing
APAC Customer Service	650	La Crosse	Telephone /Telecommunications
Dairyland Power Cooperative	425	La Crosse	Electric Utility
First Federal Capital Bank	418	La Crosse	Bank
Western Wisconsin Technical College	418	La Crosse	Education
Burlington - Northern - Santa Fe Railroad	400	La Crosse	Rail Transport
Firstlogic, Inc.	380	La Crosse	Computer Software

Name	Number of Employees	Location	Product Type /Business
Midwest Security Insurance Companies	350	Onalaska	Employee Benefits
Reinhart Companies	350	La Crosse	Grocery Wholesaler
Wal-Mart, Store #1679	350	Onalaska	Retail
School District of Onalaska	330	Onalaska	Education
WalzCraft Industries	330	La Crosse	Manufacturing

Source: Greater La Crosse Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

The composition of the top 10 employers in the area has shifted dramatically in recent years. Just seven (7) years ago four (4) of the top 10 employers were in the manufacturing sector, now there is only one (1) manufacturer in the top 10. The three (3) employers that disappeared from the list, La Crosse Footwear, Northern Engraving, and G. Heileman Brewing, experienced substantial layoffs and or plant closings.

6.2.3 Employment Projections

The State of Wisconsin’s Department of Workforce Development’s “La Crosse County Workforce Profile” provides insight into the regional employment forecast for the County. This section illustrates employment forecasts for the La Crosse County area and for the entire State of Wisconsin.

Table 6.6 lists the top 10 occupations experiencing the fastest growth rates and the most job openings in Western Wisconsin. Many of the fastest growing occupations fall into either the “management, professional or related occupations” category or the “service” category, and there is a particular growth trend in computer software and support occupations as well as medical support occupations. The areas with the most openings are generally “service occupations,” with some exceptions. The

professions identified for fastest growth generally fall into the major employment areas for residents in the Town of Onalaska.

Table 6.6: Western Region Occupation Projections: 2010

Top Ten Occupations		Education & Training Typically Required*	Average Wage**
Fastest Growth	Computer Support Specialists	Associate degree	\$16.65
	Network Systems/Data Communications Analysis	Bachelor's degree	\$23.49
	Medical Records/Health Info Techs	Associate degree	\$11.43
	Medical Assistants	1-12 mo. on-the-job	\$10.61
	Personal and Home Care Aides	1-month or less training	\$8.25
	Computer/Information Systems Managers	Work experience & degree	\$29.77
	Social/Human Service Assistants	1-12 mo. on-the-job	\$12.30
	Computer Systems Analysts	Bachelor's degree	\$24.14
	Home Health Aides	1-month or less training	\$9.03
	Dental Assistants	1-12 mo. on-the-job	\$10.93
Most Openings	Combination Food Preparation/Service Workers Including Fast Food	1-month or less training	\$6.91
	Cashiers	1-month or less training	\$7.60
	Retail Salespersons	1-month or less training	\$9.04
	Waiters/Waitresses	1-month or less training	\$7.55
	Registered Nurses	Bachelor's degree	\$20.23
	Truck Drivers/Heavy/Tractor-Trailer	1-12 mo. on-the-job	\$20.88
	Janitors/Cleaners, Maids/Housekeepers	1-month or less training	\$9.42
	Office Clerks/General	1-month or less training	\$10.27
	Bartenders	1-month or less training	\$7.41
	Nursing Aids/Orderlies/Attendants	1-month or less training	\$9.95

Source: WI DWD, Bureau of Workforce Information, 2002
 Western WDA includes Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon counties.

*The most common way to enter the occupation, not the only way

** Wages from Occupation Employment Statistics survey responses for region, 2001

Other employment projections were prepared at the state level. Table 6.7 lists the projected growth statewide for all occupations.

Table 6.7: Statewide Employment Projections by Occupation 2000-2010

Occupational	2000	2010	Change	Percent Change
Total, All Occupations	3,011,380	3,301,160	289,780	9.6%
Management Occupations	153,240	169,800	16,560	10.8%
Business/Financial Operations	87,950	98,200	10,250	11.7%
Computer & Mathematical Occupations	46,710	66,850	20,140	43.1%
Architecture/Engineering Occupations	50,520	51,880	1,360	2.7%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	28,970	32,370	3,400	11.7%
Community/Social Services	42,090	52,410	10,320	24.5%
Legal Occupations	15,790	17,990	2,200	13.9%
Ed, Training, & Library	177,460	203,850	26,390	14.9%
Arts/Design/Entertainment/Sports/Media	47,490	54,340	6,850	14.4%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	135,900	165,500	29,600	21.8%
Healthcare Support Occupations	78,890	98,940	20,050	25.4%
Protective Service Occupations	49,660	58,020	8,360	16.8%
Food Preparation & Serving Occupations	218,820	244,850	26,030	11.9%
Build & Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance	102,350	117,780	15,430	15.1%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	76,700	95,190	18,490	24.1%
Sales and Related Occupations	304,430	329,880	25,450	8.4%
Office/Administrative Support Occupation	476,230	495,230	19,000	4.0%
Farming/Fishing/Forestry	5,990	6,460	470	7.8%
Construction/Extraction Occupations	146,680	159,960	13,280	9.1%
Installation/Maint/Repair Occupations	117,130	124,780	7,650	6.5%
Production Occupations	415,890	407,430	(8,460)	-2.0%
Transportation/Material Moving Occupations	232,480	249,470	16,990	7.3%

Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development

As shown in the bar chart in Figure 6.1, over half the population in the Town of Onalaska is employed in “management, professional and related occupations” and “sales and office occupations”. Both of these occupational categories are well positioned to absorb much of the job growth projected in Table 6.8.

6.3 Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Comprehensive Planning Law requires communities to evaluate and promote the use of environmentally contaminated sites for commercial or industrial uses. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Environmental Remediation and Redevelopment Program maintains a list of contaminated sites, or brownfields. The DNR identifies brownfields as “abandoned or under-utilized commercial or industrial properties where expansion or redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived contamination.”

Properties listed in the DNR database are self-reported and do not represent a comprehensive listing of possible brownfields in a community. Other state and federal databases may provide more comprehensive lists for the Town.

As of September 2004, one site in the Town was listed on the Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Trading System (BRRTS). The site is considered contaminated due to a leaking underground storage tank (LUST) that has contaminated soil and/or groundwater with petroleum. Table 6.7 lists the site and site address. The property will need special attention if successful redevelopment is to occur.

Table 6.8: Town of Onalaska Brownfield Site

DNR Activity Number	Activity Type	Activity Name	Site Name	Address	Municipality	County	DNR Region
03-32-000921	LUST	OAK GROVE SCHOOL	OAK GROVE SCHOOL	W7908 CTH Z	ONALASKA TN	La Crosse	West Central Region

Source: WDNR BRRTS, [http://prodmtex00.dnr.state.wi.us/pls/inter1/brrts2\\$sw_web_fac_act_v.actionquery](http://prodmtex00.dnr.state.wi.us/pls/inter1/brrts2$sw_web_fac_act_v.actionquery), September 2004

6.4 Strengths and Weaknesses for Economic Development

The Town’s strengths for fostering its desired economic focus in the future are:

- interested and involved citizenry;
- diverse local economy;
- well-educated workforce;
- commitment to open space;
- interest in creative solutions to land use issues;
- natural and recreational resources;
- rural, isolated character;
- strong intergovernmental relationships; and
- transportation and access.

The Town’s weaknesses in achieving its desired economic goals include:

- development pressure;
- rapid growth;
- internal divisions over type, location, and quantity of preferred development;
- general environmental, and groundwater degradation; and
- transportation and access; (which, interestingly, are also strengths).