

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The Town of Somerset does not have municipal water or sewer so economic activity in the Town is restricted to those establishments that do not require such services. The businesses the Town does have are those that do not rely on water and sewerage infrastructure. There are still several working farms in the Town even though good agricultural soils are not common in the Town. Farming was the predominant economic activity in the Town as recently as 1965.

The businesses presently operating in the Town of Somerset are surprisingly diverse. These businesses include: two large gravel/stone quarries, three auto repair businesses, a regional business that sells and repairs Zamboni ice groomers for skating and hockey rinks, an eighty line phone sales and warehouse for motorcycle parts and accessories, businesses that sell parts for and install plumbing and heating systems, and a large operation that turns old warehouse timbers into upscale wood flooring for residential and business use. There are also a number of home businesses that operate in the Town.

The businesses listed above do not, however, satisfy employment needs for the Town of Somerset. The lack of a wide range of businesses supplying both well-paying jobs and satisfying the ordinary purchase needs of Town residents means that Town residents must go elsewhere for both lucrative employment and to satisfy their ordinary needs for food, clothing, services, etc. Even the Village of Somerset is lacking in employment opportunities and the provision of many goods and services.

The result is that the Town residents are dependent on the cities of New Richmond, Hudson and, to a greater extent, the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan area for both employment and shopping. The Andersen Window Corporation, based in Bayport, Minnesota, provides well paying jobs for approximately 250 Town of Somerset residents. Many more Town residents cross the Stillwater Bridge each day to go to work in the Twin Cities area.

THE ECONOMIC BASE

The Town of Somerset presently has several vacant lots that are zoned commercial along Highway 35/64. The Town should pursue a limited number of non-polluting, environmentally safe light industries and/or businesses that would not need municipal water and sewer service for these locations. The Town should also actively support the installation of a high-speed internet service which would allow high-tech home businesses to thrive without any impact on the visual rural character of the Town.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal 1

Ensure the continuation of a quality environment by promoting economic development activities and productive businesses that strengthen the local economy while maintaining commitment to the environmental needs of the community.

Policy 1.1

Consider the conservation of non-renewable resources and the natural physical environment when evaluating a commercial development request.

Policy 1.2

Areas suitable for commercial/light industrial development will be identified based on proximity to existing commercial zoning, highway access, and lack of interference with residential properties. "Strip" commercial development would be prohibited. Proposals for commercial or industrial development that do not fit these general criteria will be routinely advised to find a location in the Village Industrial Park or where village sewer service is available.

Policy 1.3

The following sites suitable for commercial, business or light industry have been identified:

1. Existing commercially zoned area on Highway 35/64 should be first priority along with rezoning of suitable parcels contiguous to presently zoned commercial as infill.

Would limit new access roads off 35/64 and encourage "cluster commercial" by arranging easements through presently occupied commercial parcels whenever possible. One such cluster already exists in this area.

Would limit new businesses or industry in this area to those generating low traffic in order to avoid congestion on what will likely remain a heavily traveled roadway whether it remains State Highway 35 or becomes a county or town road.

Would prohibit "strip" development in this area; would encourage "cluster commercial" development using infill around and behind existing commercial entities.

2. Intersection of CTH "V", Scout Camp Road and the new 35/64 corridor would be suitable for commercial/light industry development IF the final highway design for that intersection can provide easy access and support the traffic volume such development would create. Several commercial enterprises currently operate around the existing intersection. "Strip" development would be prohibited and "cluster" development encouraged. **DEPENDING ON INTERSECTION DESIGN**, this area should be able to support moderate traffic loads.

3. Intersection of CTH "C" and new 35/64 corridor would be suitable for commercial/light industrial development **DEPENDING ON** the final path of the new 35/64 corridor in that area. This area would likely support commercial/industrial development that would generate high traffic volume.

Policy 1.4

Develop ordinances for business signage and landscaping plans if the County does not act by the time this plan is adopted.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION

1. The Town Board in cooperation with the Planning Commission will develop a position paper that carefully identifies the types of businesses the Town can support and where they might best be placed considering the problems and opportunities presented by the new 35/64 corridor. This document should be prepared within one year after approval of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. The Town will initiate discussions with the County Zoning Department regarding how freeway corridor development will be addressed and what enforcement tools the County can, and is willing to provide to guide and control such development. The results should be included in plan updates.
3. Set review standards, in cooperation with the County, for all commercial ventures from home occupations to the largest of commercial establishments. Such standards should deal with traffic volume, outdoor lighting, type of business, hours of business, landscaping, screening, parking, noise, pollution, etc.

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