Growing and Expanding Area Business—Industrial Park Alternative

Community, County
Village of Rib Lake, Taylor County

Area of Project Impact
Village of Rib Lake

Population Affected
850

Situation
The village had no available land for industrial growth, three of its industries, at the time employing 100 persons, wanted to expand but were land locked. The Village is surrounded by wetland, making annexation and developing infrastructure for a new industrial park, within half a mile, cost prohibitive. The local Community Development Foundation (CDF) sought to address these problems and help existing area businesses stay and expand in Rib Lake.

Economic Development Strategies
The CDF worked hard to help local existing businesses expand and remain in the village through its business retention program and by building community capacity for economic development and engaging in community development activities.

Implementation
The need for land for business expansion was identified through the annual retention/expansion visits by the CDF and UW-Extension personnel. Brainstorming meetings were held with the village board, school administrators and existing business to access options. The consensus from these meetings reinforced the need to maximize existing land and infrastructure. Based on community needs and consensus, CDF Board members began engaging in efforts to acquire and maximize acquisitioned land. Board members first sought out landowners adjacent to the businesses and negotiated reasonable purchase prices and land swaps. After the adjacent parcels were acquired, they were cleaned up (debris and old cement foundations were removed). CDF Board members also negotiated with the County Highway Department for a one-acre underused parcel and through the DNR and Army Corps of Engineers got the land taken off the “wetland maps.” As a result of these activities, CDF facilitated industrial growth. Great Northern Kitchen Cabinets has expanded it facility and increased employment from 65 to 100. In addition to expanding the business, the successful efforts also demonstrated to the non-resident owners that this community wants them to stay. Another company, Non-Metallic Corporation tripled the size of their building and increased employment from 8 to 20 persons. A third employer, Mann South Side Auto Repair, built a new building and now employs 3 persons. Finally, Tannery Lane Company, plans to purchase an underused parking lot for a business expansion project in 2003.

Partners and Leadership
The process included UW-Extension personnel, Village Board Members, the Rib Lake Community Development Foundation, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Army Corps of Engineers, National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and local residents.
Outcomes
Through the combined collaborative efforts of the above named individuals and organizations, the local tax base was increased by over $2.5 million, 40 new jobs were created, local businesses felt appreciated and will continue production locally. CDF is viewed as a positive asset for community prosperity.

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