

# **CHAPTER 8**

## ***Economic Development***

### **Introduction**

The Town of Erin Prairie has two distinct characteristics related to employment and economic development. Most residents who work, 16 years of age or older, are employed outside of the Town. At the same time, as the number of people employed in farming is declining, the impact it has on the landscape and revenue it generates is significant.

This chapter will take a look at the future of the local economic base and agricultural trends and how they may affect economic development.

### **Place of Employment Characteristics**

Tables 8-1 shows that in 2000, only 12.1% of residents, 16 years and over, were employed in Erin Prairie. Most of these were likely working in agriculture related occupations, local commercial/industry, or home based businesses.

Table 8-1 Place of Work 16 Years and Over - Minor Civil Division (Town) Level

	Number	Percent
Total	387	100.0%
Worked in minor civil division level of residence	47	12.1%
Worked outside minor civil division level of residence	340	87.9%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

There is a strong economic base in St. Croix County. Over 62% of workers are employed in the County. Almost 34% of workers are employed outside of Wisconsin which shows the influence of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and the ease of commuting to these jobs (see *Table 8-2*).

Table 8-2 Place of Work 16 Years and Over - State and County Level

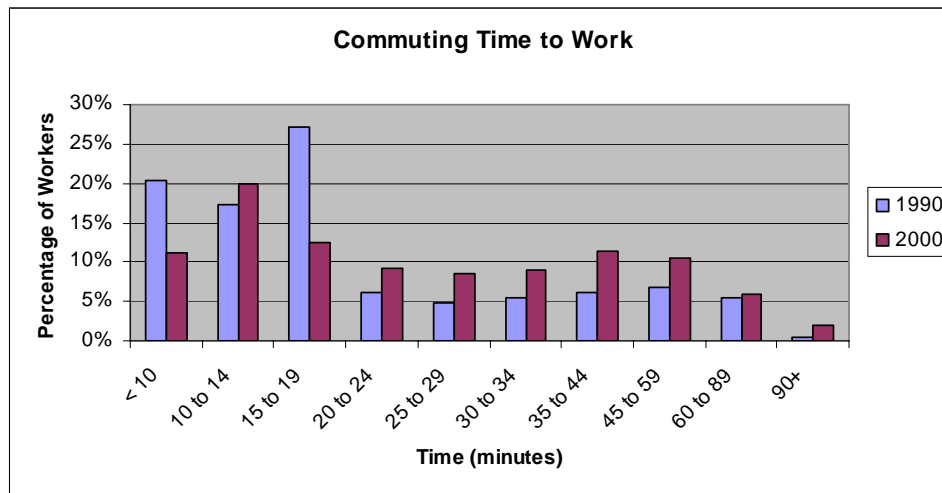
	Number	Percent
Total	387	100.0%
Worked in state of residence:	256	66.1%
Worked in county of residence	242	62.5%
Worked outside county of residence	14	3.6%
Worked outside state of residence	131	33.9%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

### **Commuter Characteristics**

With so many workers employed in St. Croix County, it is not surprising that over half of commuters are traveling less than 25 minutes to work though the number of workers traveling 20 minutes or more has increased. Some commuters are traveling over 90 minutes to work (see *Figure 8-2*).

Figure 8-1 – Commuting Time to Work.



## Employment Characteristics

Figure 8-2 shows that the occupations with the most amount of workers are production/transportation/material moving and management/professional/related occupations. Management/professional/related occupations have experienced the largest increase in number growing from 69 workers in 1990 to 130 workers in 2000.

The farming/fishing/forestry industries have seen the biggest drop in workers having 49 in 1990 but dropping to 14 in 2000. In general, most occupations are located outside of Erin Prairie.

Figure 8-2 - Occupation of Workforce Population

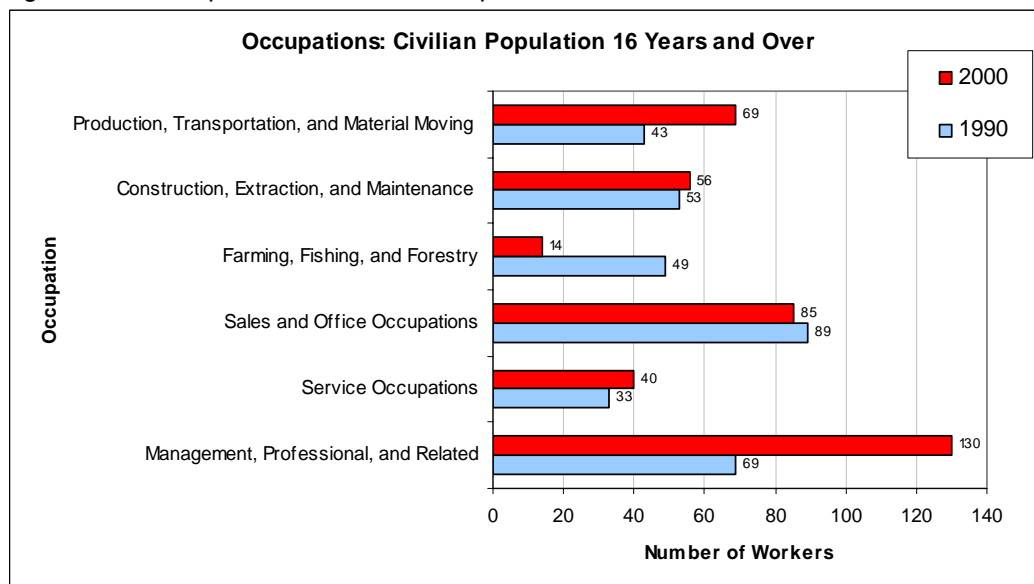
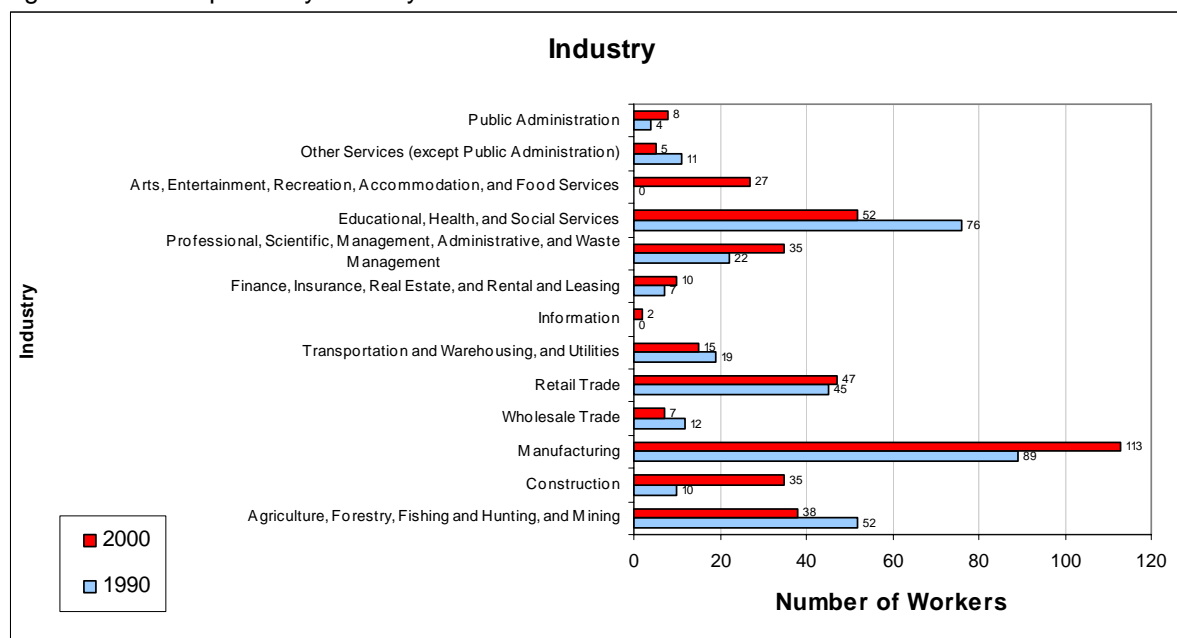


Figure 8-3 reveals that the manufacturing industry employs the highest number of working residents in the Town of Erin Prairie followed by the education/health/social services industries though almost all industries listed in Figure 8-1 are not located in the Town. The agriculture industry has the largest direct impact on the Town of Erin Prairie.

Figure 8-3 - Occupation by Industry



## Agriculture Characteristics

Agriculture is an important aspect to the Town of Erin Prairie and St. Croix County. Table 8-3 shows how the number of farms has fluctuated since 1987. Specific figures are not available for Erin Prairie but the County figures should be representative of the Town.

The total number of farms has ultimately increased but the average farm size has decreased. The increase in the number of farms is a likely due to a greater number of small/specialty farms or hobby farms developing. By definition, a farm is any business that has sales of at least \$1,000 of agricultural products.

Table 8-3 – St. Croix County Agriculture Census

	1987	1992	2002
Farms (number)	1,576	1,391	1,864
Land in farms (acres)	334,028	308,460	310,178
Average size of farm (acres)	212	222	166

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

The estimated value of farmland and buildings in St. Croix County has almost quadrupled between 1987 and 2002. These values add significant revenue to tax bases though the value of land, itself, has decreased base on use value assessments (see Table 8-4).

Table 8-4 – Estimated Value of Farm Land and Buildings

Estimated Value of Land & Buildings (dollars)	1987	1992	2002
Average per farm	\$170,445	\$198,099	\$520,418
Average per acre	\$780	\$874	\$3,229

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Table 8-5 shows that the majority of farms in St. Croix County are 50 to 179 acres in size followed closely by farms between 10 to 49 acres. Smaller numbers of farms exist on greater than 1,000 acres, although the number has increased since 1987. Many of the smaller farms are likely lands that receive government program payments.

Table 8-5 – Farm Size by Acres

Farms by Size (acres)	1987	1992	1997	2002
1 to 9 acres	64	66	47	100
10 to 49 acres	247	218	316	566
50 to 179 acres	565	480	585	731
180 to 499 acres	571	496	460	348
500 to 999 acres	107	109	82	82
1,000 acres or more	22	22	30	37

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

## **Livestock Facility Siting**

Agriculture is an important component of the Town of Erin Prairie and its identity. Recent trends in agriculture show that farms are growing larger and it is becoming common to see dairy farms with a thousand head of livestock or more. Some residents have expressed concerns over how these large farms affect existing residents and their homes, the use of ground water, and the impact on the landscape of Erin Prairie.

Chapter ATPC 51.01 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code interprets Wisconsin's livestock facility siting law, s. 93.90, Stats. According to the livestock facility siting law, a county, town, city or village ("political subdivision") may not prohibit or disapprove a new or expanded livestock facility of any size unless certain conditions apply such as not being in an agricultural zoning district, the farm violating a valid local ordinance adopted under certain state laws related to shoreland zoning, floodplain zoning, construction site erosion control, stormwater management, or violating a local building, electrical or plumbing code that is consistent with the state building, electrical or plumbing code for that type of facility.

It is important to consider the location of the facility site and use of buffers to minimize the impact of large farms on the rural landscape of Erin Prairie.

## **Agriculture Production**

Agriculture production in St. Croix County has dramatically changed over the last twenty years. The production of livestock has steadily decreased while the production of crops, especially wheat and soybeans, has increased. Corn for grain is the largest crop in the County (see Tables 8-6 and 8-7).

Table 8-6 – Farm Livestock Production St. Croix County

Livestock:	1987	1992	1992	2002
Milk Cows	35,500	29,600	24,000	23,800
Cattle and Calves	92,000	79,000	62,800	59,800
Hogs and Pigs sold	35,900	22,400	11,100	13,700

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service

Table 8-7 – Farm Crop Production St. Croix County

	1987	1992	1997	2002
Corn for Grain (bushels)	7,269,000	5,875,900	9,844,000	8,593,600
Corn for Silage (tons)	162,400	211,100	206,500	240,600
Wheat (bushels)	31,600	20,700	16,000	202,900
Barley (bushels)	95,900	87,900	131,400	25,700
Oats (bushels)	896,400	726,900	536,000	351,000
Soybeans (bushels)	370,300	360,600	709,100	1,451,100
Forage All	237,300	183,300	243,700	194,900

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service

Table 8-8 lists the total acres of cropland in neighboring counties since 1987. All Counties have experienced decreases in the total amount of acres used for cropland. Some of this land may have been sold for residential, commercial, or industrial development while some farms may have been taken out of production.

Table 8-8 – Total Acres of Crop Land

County	1987	1992	1997	2002
Dunn	271,106	248,865	234,530	254,868
Pierce	196,897	197,622	184,451	182,146
Polk	201,026	183,789	171,040	186,419
St. Croix	262,347	244,807	237,069	232,792

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Figure 8-9 shows the economic and labor impact on agriculture in St. Croix County between 1987 and 2002. Total sales have increased to almost \$98 million in 2002, though the total amount of sales per farm has decreased.

The number of hired workers has decreased but the wages paid have increased. Farms paid out almost \$10 million in wages in 2002.

Figure 8-9 – Economics and Labor Impact of Agriculture St. Croix County

Item	1987	1992	1997	2002
Total Sales	\$87,214,000	\$91,849,000	\$89,852,000	\$97,863,000
Total Sales Average per Farm	\$85,840	\$105,816	\$119,0009	\$52,502
Total Average Production Expenses	\$69,510,000	\$78,990,000	\$74,569,000	\$85,449,000
Total Average Production Expenses Average per Farm	\$44,105	\$56,786	\$49,059	\$45,695
Hired Farm Labor (Farms)	NA	607	468	297
Hired Farm Labor (Workers)	NA	1,817	1,591	1,210
Hired Farm Labor (Wages)	NA	\$6,164,000	\$6,122,000	\$9,805,000
Total Government Payments	\$6,678,000	\$4,457,000	\$5,240,556	\$5,677,000
Government Payments Average per Farm	\$8,305	\$6,794	\$3,146	\$5,632

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture: Farms with sales Greater than \$10,000

## **Inventory of Local Businesses and Employers**

The Town of Erin Prairie has few commercial businesses because of its rural character and many businesses being located within a short distance in surrounding urbanized areas. Representative businesses in the Town include taverns, a mechanic, a cabinet maker, small home-based businesses, and a gravel pit.

## **Desired Businesses**

Most future businesses in the Town will likely be agriculture related. Businesses such as grain processing or fertilizer/seed/grain sales would be expected in the area.

## **Strengths and Weaknesses for the Retention and Attraction of Businesses**

Erin Prairie has many strengths that would help agriculture businesses flourish.

1. It is already an established agriculture community where agriculture is part of the Town's cultural heritage.
2. There is a good transportation system available
3. There is little residential pressure or density in the Town
4. Proximity to a railroad
5. Most properties are ag-related zoned
6. Utilities are readily available
7. Water supply

The only foreseeable weakness for ag-related businesses would be possible conflicts that would require the rezoning of parcels.

## **Economic Development Programs**

There are many available programs at all levels that aide in economic development. These programs can be used to provide expertise, financial aide, or incentives for developing businesses.

### **WDNR Remediation and Redevelopment Program**

This program offers financial and liability tools to clean up and redevelop brownfields.

### **West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC)**

The Commission is designated as an economic development district by the Economic Development Administration. It is required to undertake economic development planning and project identification for all seven counties in the region.

### **I-94 Corridor Technology Zone**

High technology businesses in the I-94 Technology Zone including Polk County, may be eligible for state tax credits, through the Department of Commerce and the Department of Revenue, based on their ability to create jobs and investments that support the development of high-tech industries in the region.

**Community and Enterprise Development Zones**

The Wisconsin Community and Enterprise Development Zone Programs can help to expand businesses, start a new one, or relocate a current business to Wisconsin. The Community Development Zone Program is a tax benefit initiative designed to encourage private investment and to improve both the quality and quantity of employment opportunities.

**St. Croix County Economic Development Corporation**

The St. Croix County Economic Development Corporation encourages and helps economic development, retention, expansion, and capital investment.

**Transportation Facilities Economic Assistance and Development (TEA-Grant) Program**

The Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) program provides 50% State grants to communities for road, rail, and airport projects. The goal of the TEA program is to attract and retain business firms in Wisconsin and thus create or retain jobs.

**UW-Extension**

The UW-Extension provides expertise in agriculture and related business while providing research and knowledge.

**Forward Wisconsin**

Forward Wisconsin provides marketing outside of the State and recruits businesses to come to Wisconsin.

**Wisconsin Department of Commerce**

The Wisconsin Department of Commerce is the main agency in Wisconsin charged with fostering the retention and creation of new jobs, promote effective and efficient regulations, and promote economic business.

**U.S. Small Business Administration**

The Small Business Administration provides technical, financial, and managerial assistance for Americans to start or improve their businesses.

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program- EQIP**

The EQIP is a voluntary conservation program available to any farmer engaged in livestock or crop production is eligible. Farmers develop a conservation plan and implement the practice within the plan. The EQIP offers a variety of eligible practices and cost-share rate each year, which address those practices that provide the most environmental benefit.

## **Economic Development Goals, Objectives, Policies, Programs, and Actions**

**Goal 1:** Support economic activity and development that does not detract from the rural way of life in Erin Prairie or have a negative impact on the environment.

### **Objectives**

1. Promote ag-based businesses.
2. Increase the local tax base.
3. Avoid conflicts between farmland and residential areas.
4. Support Erin Prairie remaining an agricultural community while preserving its natural resources.

### **Programs, Policies, and Actions:**

1. Support continued operation and expansion of existing farms.
2. Encourage supporting businesses that work with the farming community.
3. Promote the development of organic farming and smaller businesses that provide food for local farmer's markets.
4. Ensure that businesses, no matter what size, do not adversely affect the Town's natural resources and quality of life of residents.
5. As Erin Prairie grows, consider the use of a future increasing local tax base to fund park or recreational development, if feasible.