

7. Economic Development Plan

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide the framework for an economic growth strategy for Polk County. Its objectives are:

- To guide and stimulate economic development within Polk County and influence development in the larger surrounding Des Moines Metropolitan Area.
- To create a strategic direction for the County by providing action steps to address both short- and long-term issues affecting the area's economic vitality.

The economic development action plan will create strategies to:

- Build business and individual productivity;
- Increase investment in Polk County;
- Build on Polk County's existing economic base to strengthen in particular the financial services, logistics/advanced manufacturing, and health care sectors;
- Position Polk County for new, high-tech growth and high-wage jobs;
- Attract and retain talented people to live and work in Polk County;
- Build on Polk County's current regional economic initiatives, particularly those related to workforce development and education.

The Polk County Economic Development Task Force, a team of professionals from the public, private, nonprofit, and educational sectors, led the planning effort. Input was gathered from individuals and groups from around the metropolitan area on issues such as:

- The transportation industry
- The "brain drain"
- Venture capital investment
- Technology business development
- International trade
- Strengthening Polk County's existing industries
- Tax levels and structures
- Advanced manufacturing
- Information technology
- Regional best practices

- The financial industry
- Education and workforce training
- Health care
- Biosciences
- Retail trade and development
- The agricultural economy

The plan consultants conducted extensive research on the County's economy; reviewing best practices from across the country; interviewing economic development experts, key companies and other key stakeholders; and recommending an implementation framework.

The Economic Development Task Force held eight monthly meetings. They discussed the County's economy, helped identify background information on key economic sectors, and reviewed and refined the proposed strategies for future development.

Sector Analysis

The first step in this planning effort was to understand the local economy and to identify potential requirements or influences on land use from an economic perspective. In the March 2005 workshop, the consultants and the Economic Development Task Force identified seven industry sectors in the Polk County economy to study as they relate to the future of the County and the Greater Des Moines economy. The goal of this research was to understand local and national trends for these industries, to assist in making strategic land use decisions and policy recommendations.

The seven economic sectors identified were:

- Financial Services
- Biosciences / New Technology
- Health Care
- Education
- Retail
- Warehousing and Distribution
- Advanced Manufacturing

Ranking of Clusters

During the August and September workshops, the Task Force was invited to begin drawing some conclusions as to the sectors and sector clusters most important for the future success of the Polk County and Des Moines MSA economy. The Task Force decided to focus primarily on:

- (1) Financial Services,
- (2) Logistics and Advanced Manufacturing
- (3) Health Care

Policy Identification – Focus Sectors

The Task Force identified policies for each of the three targeted sectors. These recommendations have been updated based on comments from cities and from the Polk County Farm Bureau, recommending additional policies on the role of agriculture and related biotechnology research. The most important goal throughout this process has been to identify the strategic mix of policy recommendations that can best improve economic competitiveness and long-term growth. By sector, the primary policy objectives are as follows:

Goal 1: Enhance the Financial Services Sector

Policy 1 – Workforce Training and Continuing Education

To support full State funding for the Iowa Retraining program (260F) and the Iowa New Jobs Training program (260E); and to support full local funding for and collaboration with the Des Moines Area Community College and the Des Moines Higher Education Collaborative.

Policy 2 – Create and Support a National Brand

To collaborate with the Greater Des Moines Partnership to create a national identity for the Des Moines Area, that supports and celebrates the Financial Services Sector – “the Financial Services Center of America”.

Policy 3 – Downtown Des Moines Improvements

To continue to support improvements downtown that raise the quality of life for all residents and assist in attracting and retaining trained financial sector employees. Developments such as the new Science Center and the Riverwalk are positive steps that should be built upon.

Goal 2: Support the Logistics and Advanced Manufacturing Sectors

Policy 1 – Workforce Training and Continuing Education

To support full State funding for the Iowa Retraining program (260F) and the Iowa New Jobs Training program (260E); and to support full local funding for and collaboration with the Des Moines Area Community College and the Des Moines Higher Education Collaborative.

Policy 2 – Planned Manufacturing Districts (PMDs)

To create planned manufacturing districts (PMDs) as a mechanism to attract, retain, and expand logistics and manufacturing firms. The Task Force recommends the County and individual communities adopt legislation to enable and create planned manufacturing districts. The Land Use Plan identifies existing industrial areas in North Central Polk County that are highly suitable for planned manufacturing, and the City of Ankeny has designated several business parks in the immediate area. Many city-designated business parks, as shown in Figure 7-1, are also well-suited to planned manufacturing.

Policy 3 – Des Moines International Airport Development

To support growth at the Airport and leverage new growth around the Airport. The Task Force recognizes the importance of the Des Moines International Airport to the local economy and recommends full City and County support for its new master plan about to be undertaken.

The existing and planned business parks around the Airport should also be given high priority for business recruitment and expansion, incentives creation, workforce training, and any other tools the County can employ to insure their strong growth as a regional economic asset.

Firms that may be attracted to development opportunities around the airport because of available land and infrastructure should be targeted for recruitment.

Policy 4 – Leverage Foreign Trade Zone Benefits

Foreign trade zones (FTZ) were created in the United States to provide special customs procedures to US businesses engaged in international trade-related activities. Duty-free treatment is accorded items that are processed in FTZs and re-exported; duty payment is deferred on items for sale in the US marketplace until they leave the FTZ. These benefits help offset customs advantages that are available to overseas producers who compete with US firms.

FTZs are considered to be outside of US Customs Territory for the purpose of duty payment. Therefore, goods entering FTZs are not subject to customs tariffs until goods leave the zone and are formally entered into US Customs Territory. Merchandise that is shipped to foreign countries from FTZs is exempt from duty payment, which benefits firms that import components

to manufacture finished products for export. A variety of activities can be conducted within a zone, including assembling, packaging, destroying, storing, cleaning, exhibiting, repacking, distributing, sorting, grading, testing, labeling, repairing, combining with other content, or processing.

FTZ 107 was established in the 1970s, and includes most of metropolitan Polk County, Urbandale and Clive in Dallas County, and all of Warren County. There only two small active zones within this FTZ (a facility in Clive and one in Forest City), suggesting that the region is not taking full advantage of this designation.

Manufacturing and processing within an FTZ requires FTZ Board approval. Regional economic development organizations should assist constituent firms who seek to relocate to or expand within Polk County to consider how the FTZ can assist their business.

Policy 5 – Agriculture-Related Advanced Manufacturing and Bio-Technology Research

Polk County is home to some of the nation's leading manufacturers of agricultural products and related technology. As the nation's largest producer of corn and soybeans, Iowa leads in development of alternative fuels such as ethanol and soy bio-diesel. Research into hundreds of additional value-added products from corn and soybeans continues at Iowa State University, the University of Iowa and elsewhere. With its central locations on the interstate highway system, excellent rail service, and highly skilled workforce, Polk County is in an excellent position to support and promote advanced manufacturing of agriculture-related products.

One business park designed to support this sector is the Agrimergent Technology Park, a planned business park involving brownfield clean-up, infill and redevelopment of 1,100 acres of underutilized land in southeast Des Moines. Access to rail, highways and air transportation, available infrastructure and an existing concentration of agribusinesses and support services contribute to the viability of the Agrimergent site for its intended uses. Although costs of land assembly and clean-up have presented challenges to this project, it merits County and regional support.

Goal 3: Expand and Diversify the Health Care Sector

Policy 1 – Health Care District(s)

To establish and support the development of health care district(s) that integrate traditional medical facilities such as hospitals and surgical centers with

space for development of a wide range of support and spin-off activities, including:

- Transient/short-term housing
- Employee housing
- Retail and personal services
- Hospitality/lodging facilities
- Institutional expansion
- Supplier facilities
- Related bio-science laboratory operations
- Professional services office space
- Parking and infrastructure

The Task Force recommends that a comprehensive planning effort be undertaken as soon as possible with Iowa Health Systems and Mercy Medical Center to create a medical district inclusive of all their facilities and surrounding peripheral areas. The District is envisioned to have the powers and structure of a redevelopment district, including those tools needed to assist in land assembly, streetscape improvements and public/private development initiatives. These tools include zoning regulations, infrastructure improvements, and public funding participation. Both the City and County should be viewed as fully participating partners in the creation and implementation of the District.

Policy 2 – Workforce Training and Continuing Education

To support full State funding for the Iowa Retraining program (260F) and the Iowa New Jobs Training program (260E); and to support full local funding for and collaboration with the Des Moines Area Community College and the Des Moines Higher Education Collaborative.

Policy 3 – Coordination of Medical District Plan with Downtown Plan

To support the integration of planning for the Gateway and larger downtown with the creation and planning for the Medical District.

Since the City of Des Moines is undertaking an update of its downtown plan, efforts should be made to coordinate that research and planning work directly with the planning for the medical district. This coordination should occur for three reasons:

- To insure complementary land uses – especially in the Gateway area
- To maximize positive impacts for both the financial services and the health care sectors
- To create maximum impact of both plans by leveraging new investments in these contiguous areas

Implementation Strategies/Best Practices

Key strategies and practices for implementing the selected focus sectors are presented here for utilization by the County, Task Force members, and the broader community. These strategies and practices are in the areas of:

1. Workforce Training/Continuing Education
2. Logistics and Advanced Manufacturing
3. Health Care Campuses and Medical Districts

Workforce Training/Continuing Education

The issue of workforce training and continuing education are issues that prevailed through all three target sectors. Education was also discussed as a vital component of those sectors not included in the targeted list.

Des Moines Area Community College

The Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and the Des Moines Higher Education Collaborative are extremely important resources for the future growth of the area. In fact, they are considered examples of national quality “best practice” programs, but at present they are underfunded, particularly if the region wants to provide strong support to the identified growth sectors.

Expanding funding for these programs at these institutions is recommended as a top priority for the continued growth of the work force and as a tool to reduce the impact of the national “Brain Drain” phenomena occurring in most traditional manufacturing states. In general, this trend is that younger educated people are not returning to small to midsized cities after graduating from college, but rather are moving to more “exciting” urban communities such as Chicago and Minneapolis.

DMACC has a funding mechanism in place that can be described as a national Best Practice. Training funds for expanding companies can be obtained through the Iowa New Jobs Training Program (260E). This program supports businesses adding employees through expansion in, or relocation to, Iowa. It is designed to build the skills needed for new employees to become productive.

At no cost to the company, DMACC is allowed to sell certificates for the amount of anticipated tax revenue generated from new employee salaries. The revenue generated from the certificate sale is used to establish a training fund for the company.

The certificates are repaid by the business over a ten-year period by diverting a portion of the payroll taxes from the State of Iowa to DMACC. The amount diverted is based on the wages of the new jobs the company has added. The dollar value of training funds depends on the training needs and the projected tax revenue available to repay the certificates.

To be eligible for the 260E program, a business must currently be:

- Creating new Iowa positions;
- Locating to or expanding in Iowa;
- Providing services in interstate commerce;
- Conducting business in manufacturing, processing, assembling products, or research and development.

The Iowa Jobs Training Program (260F) helps Iowa businesses fund training for current employees. It provides state-funded forgivable loans or grants to Iowa businesses in need of employee training. A loan is forgivable if a business completes its training program and trains a specified number of employees.

Project awards are limited to \$25,000 per business site, and to a maximum of \$50,000 over a three-year period. Participating businesses are required to provide at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the training program cost as a cash match. Qualifications for this program are similar to those of the Iowa New Jobs Training Program.

Types of training provided may include:

- Skill assessment testing and training needs analysis;
- Basic skills training;
- Technical, non-technical, and safety training;
- Training-related materials, equipment, software and supplies.

Des Moines Higher Education Collaborative

In 1998 the Greater Des Moines Partnership identified the need for undergraduate and graduate courses, corporate training, and certification programs in downtown Des Moines. To answer this need, the Des Moines Higher Education Collaborative was established in 2000 and the John and Mary Pappajohn Education Center was developed and opened in 2004.

The idea of a learning center in downtown Des Moines where working adults have ready access to college courses and professional training opportunities is another “best practice.” New knowledge and technical skills are critical to maintaining business competitiveness and achieving professional advancement and a higher quality of life. The Pappajohn Center provides continuing education for working adults and easy access to undergraduate and graduate career programs for those whose work schedules often limit their opportunities for additional education.

The Des Moines Higher Education Collaborative began offering courses in August of 2000. In January 2005, the Des Moines Community School District became the eighth member of the Collaborative, joining Drake University, Iowa State University, University of Iowa, University of Northern Iowa, Grand View College, Simpson College, and Des Moines Area Community College.

The Center’s long-term self-sufficiency is dependent on the continuing support of the partnering institutions, area businesses, the City of Des Moines, and on revenues generated through use of the facility. To date, the Collaborative is being funded almost exclusively through the limited financial resources of its partnering institutions.

The primary priority to ensure the future of these education and workforce training programs is to create a sustainable and equitable funding mechanism. The Task Force identified the need for regional revenue sharing – building support for this critical educational infrastructure among the regions’ counties and cities. The Task Force also suggested that County review absorbing the Collaborative into its organizational structure to reduce overhead.

Secondary Education

The third component of the workforce implementation plan for Polk County is to strengthen the secondary education system in the Des Moines area. The Task Force recognizes the need to streamline the secondary education system, allowing for the expansion of educational programs that are keyed to the targeted sectors. While the Collaborative and DMACC have excellent programs that could be enhanced by the prior recommendations, a focus on secondary institutions can begin the process earlier. The Task Force recommends seeking opportunities to fund specialized education programs and internship opportunities.

A potential source of funding may be found in the institutions themselves. Polk County can play a leading role in creating processes for the educational institutions to share services and achieve efficiencies where possible. Centralizing shared services may alleviate some of the financial burden on the schools.

Logistics and Manufacturing – Strategy and Practices

The second area the Task Force focused on is the support network for developing and growing the existing Logistics and Advanced Manufacturing industry. Two primary tools for implementation are proposed – creating planned manufacturing districts (PMD's) and strengthening the airport and surrounding industrial/business areas.

Planned Manufacturing Districts

The Task Force identified the need to protect the area's existing manufacturing districts as well as establishing areas for future expansion. The manufacturing districts are threatened by numerous forces, including encroaching residential and commercial uses and steadily increasing land costs. Incorporating ordinances similar to those developed in the City of Chicago in the early 1990s can address some of these issues.

1) Regulatory Features

Chicago's Planned Manufacturing District ordinance was first introduced in 1988. The ordinance identifies two areas: a core zone exclusively for manufacturing/logistics uses surrounded by a buffer zone for supportive commercial uses. Residential conversions and development are prohibited in both portions of the district, but limited commercial and retail development is allowed in the buffer zone at the discretion of the zoning board.

2) Incentive Features

The PMD zones can also be designated as tax increment finance districts and enterprise zones to allow redevelopment powers to be put in place and designated incentives funding to be created.

3) Infrastructure Investments

Selective infrastructure investments are made, primarily in the form of site remediation, road and access improvements, and public utilities to make the sites "ready-to-go" for business expansion and to keep the areas' land costs competitive with alternative markets.

4) Governance

A final feature of the PMD's has been the creation of publicly supported organizations consisting of business leaders and other stakeholders in the area who function as promotion agencies and facilitators for existing and new businesses.

These key program features provide a concentration of targeted resources to achieve levels of investment and growth that otherwise would not occur. These practices need to be tailored to work within the regulatory environment of Polk

County and the Des Moines region, and to interface with existing City and County programs.

The Des Moines International Airport

The Task Force has identified the Des Moines International Airport and its growth as critical to the long-term sustained growth of the community. The Task Force identified the airport as an economic engine for Central Iowa that has already completed significant predevelopment investments. These include road and utility infrastructure and the creation of several large business parks in the adjacent area.

Over the past ten years (1995 – 2005) the airport has been undergoing a \$100 million expansion, which has included the addition of 390 acres. The airport is a department of the City of Des Moines and is programming a new master plan effort to begin in 2006. Included in this master plan will be a plan for a new runway. The Task Force recommends that the County actively work with the City to guide the new master plan effort and support the development of a new runway. Optimal support may include lobbying and potential funding assistance.

As part of the recent expansion of the airport and the surrounding area, business parks are being developed to the south and west of the airport. The sites are about one half mile from Highway 65/5 bypass and approximately six miles from Interstate 35/80.

The Planned Business Park zoning for the area allows office buildings, research/education/development offices, hotels/motels, retail/commercial businesses, warehouses and light manufacturing. As an incentive for locating in the park, businesses can qualify for a full 3 year tax abatement program.

The potential construction of a “Second Day Air” regional facility being discussed with UPS should be strongly supported, as well as expansion of other airport logistics users who can support growth in the new business parks.

As part of its embrace of regionalism, the Task Force has noted that coordination with Dallas County is needed. Dallas County’s proposed new general aviation facility, West Metro Regional Airport, could directly impact the expansion of Des Moines International Airport by capturing up to one third of the flight operations. There is concern that as executives move further to the west from the City of Des Moines into Dallas County, the development of a new general aviation facility will influence executives to move a substantial proportion of the 454 aircraft registered in Polk County closer to their homes.

Health Care - Strategy and Practices

The Task Force has identified the goal of retaining and expanding the health care industry in Des Moines as the medical center of Central Iowa, not just Polk County. The Task Force encourages the County to become active in working with the health care operators and the City of Des Moines to facilitate the creation of joint strategies that complement the capital programs of these key medical facilities and leverage new levels of growth in the surrounding areas.

Designation of Medical Campus Districts

The Task Force supports the development of medical campus districts surrounding Mercy Medical Center-Des Moines, Iowa Lutheran Hospital and Iowa Methodist Medical Center – modeled on similar campuses created around hospitals in other urban areas. Components of these districts could include:

- Expansion sites for future institutional growth
- Related testing and clinic facilities
- Medical office facilities
- Bio-science laboratory companies
- Parking facilities
- Hospitality/Patient family facilities
- Residential strategies for staff

Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Best Practices Example

In the spring of 2002 the City of Buffalo, NY reviewed a similar approach to its medical district – the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. In their report to the community, they found:

There is potential for great synergy encompassing the medical campus and its surrounding communities. That is, the whole – BNMC plus its adjoining neighborhoods – has the potential to be much greater than the sum of its individual parts. If people keep this potential in mind and work together, ... the quality of life in neighboring communities and within the medical campus can increase in concert.¹

In addition to the creation of a medical district, three contiguous individual campuses would be created, each providing smaller benefits to each of the hospitals.

¹ Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Neighborhood Workshop Summary
http://urbandesignproject.ap.buffalo.edu/bnmc/BNMC_newsletter_web.pdf

The medical district(s) should be formulated with a master plan that maximizes the addition to the local tax base through taxable real estate to return its investment to the City and County.

Illinois Medical District – Best Practices Example

The Illinois Medical District (IMD) is a special-use zoning district on the West Side of the City of Chicago, created by an act of the State legislature in 1941. The IMD is the nation's largest urban medical district: in 560 acres, a 24 hour-a-day, seven day-a-week environment that includes world-class medical centers and hospitals, with convenient access to public transportation and the major expressways. Food courts, restaurants, upscale dining, and emerging major retail are accessible throughout the District and surrounding neighborhoods. Major greenway and roadway renovations are underway and have added to the revitalization of the Near West Side.

The Illinois Medical District offers a best case review of opportunities because of its incorporation of new educational, research, biotechnology and medical development within the Chicago region.

The IMD is also the State of Illinois' largest biotechnology/medical complex, serving as an economic engine for statewide biotechnology. Included in the campus setting is research and office space designated to provide incubation for approximately 30 emerging technology-based companies.

The economic impact generated by the IMD is significant, even in Chicago. Latest estimates show that the IMD has generated:

- \$3.3 billion in economic activity
- 50,000 direct and indirect jobs
- \$80 million in annual state taxes
- \$24 million in annual local taxes
- \$2 billion in direct and indirect employment compensation

1) IMD has a planning staff that works collaboratively with private developers, the key hospitals, and surrounding neighborhoods.

2) It has the powers of a redevelopment authority and can issue bonds, assemble land, negotiate public-private development deals, and qualify for public grants.

Through its leadership the surrounding area has become a desirable mixed-income neighborhood anchored by the concentration of employment in the district.

Regionalism

Previous policy discussions have focused on feeding the area's "engine" – the City of Des Moines and the center of Polk County. The Task Force also recommends that the Des Moines MSA counties and those of Central Iowa in general adopt a more comprehensive view of the future. Three strategies are recommended for further study:

- 1) Tax/Revenue Sharing,
- 2) Improved Intergovernmental Coordination, and
- 3) Coordination of Economic Development Efforts.

The Task Force identified these three regional initiatives in order to more effectively implement the sector strategies profiled above and position both Polk County and the Central Iowa region for the next 25 years of sustained growth and development. These three initiatives relate to the sharing of services/resources and limiting direct county to county or city to city competition for residents and businesses.

Initiative 1: Tax Sharing

Based on the model of the Minneapolis/St Paul metropolitan area, the Task Force believes that putting a tax revenue sharing model in place will assist with large-scale development agreements and limit the level of competition within the region for development. Highlights of the Twin Cities model are:

Regional Framework

The Twin Cities revenue sharing area includes a population of approximately 2.7 million people in 2 central cities, 7 counties, 141 cities, 47 townships and 48 school districts in almost 3,000 square miles.

Proposed in 1969 and implemented in 1975, the system has remained relatively unchanged since that time. The taxing jurisdictions share part of growth in commercial-industrial tax base in the seven-county metro area. The Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities works to redistribute fiscal resources to:

- Allow all cities to share in region's growth
- Reduce competition for tax base
- Spread benefits of regional public investments
- Promote better planning
- Encourage regional cooperation
- Provide extra resources for redevelopment
- Encourage environmental protection

The area-wide tax base is redistributed on a per capita basis, adjusted by measure of local property wealth. A community with low property wealth (fiscal capacity) receives a relatively larger share of the area-wide tax

Commercial-industrial property is taxed at two rates: a portion is taxed at the local rate and a portion at an area-wide rate. The area-wide tax rate reduces differences across jurisdictions.

Impact on Tax Base:

According to the Metropolitan Council, which oversees the program, the tax sharing system reduces disparities between communities. In 2004, communities saw more net gainers (132) than losers (50). A total of 32% of the commercial-industrial tax base was shared, up from 7% in 1975. Also, 9% of total tax base was shared, up from 2% in 1975. The total shared tax base was \$261 million; \$339 million in taxes. The Council has found that the region's tax burden has been reallocated and cities have become more selective in competing for new developments because of their limited direct local impacts.

Project Destiny: A Potential Avenue for Revenue-Sharing

Since 2004, the Greater Des Moines Partnership has studied and promoted creation of the Project Destiny Regional Authority, including the governments of Polk, Dallas and Warren Counties and their respective participating municipal governments. The "Regional Authority" will be organized as a public/private partnership whose mission will be to advance and help finance quality of life amenities in Central Iowa.

If it receives voter authorization, the program would be funded by a one-cent (\$.01) municipal local option sales tax (Polk, Dallas and Warren counties).

The local option tax would be collected in the approving jurisdictions in Polk, Dallas and Warren counties and would be divided as stipulated by § 422B.10 of the Iowa Code and through mutual agreements between the local governments and the Regional Authority to:

- Reduce local property taxes through direct debt reduction and buffering property tax increases that are caused by the prevalence of tax exempt properties in certain jurisdictions,
- Support operations capital improvements and maintenance of publicly owned regional facilities,
- Support and assist local governments to finance the regional recreational trails system, and
- Support programming at regional and local organizations that "provide for the enlightenment and

entertainment of the public through the production, preservation, exhibition, advancement or preservation of art, music, theater, dance, zoology, botany, natural history or cultural history.”

As currently formulated:

- 65% of the revenues are to be distributed to local governments in Warren, Polk and Dallas counties for debt reduction, property tax relief and capital improvements,
- 14% to the Metro Advisory Council Regional Facilities Advisory Work Group,
- 12.25% to MAC/MPO/CIRTPA Regional Trails Capital Improvement Advisory Council, and
- 8.75% to the MAC/ Regional Arts Consortium Advisory Board.

Initiative 2: Improved Intergovernmental Coordination

The Economic Development Task Force was comprised of members from throughout the County as well as representatives from Dallas and Warren counties. One of the Task Force’s key recommendations is that several infrastructure issues, such as stormwater management, regional facilities and regional hiking/biking trails be approached on a regional basis, not just community by community, as described below:

1) Stormwater Management

The Task Force foresees that stormwater management will require intergovernmental coordination in stream basins in order to improve the quality and quantity of runoff. Education and regulation of sustainable development should embrace high-quality construction and design. A component of quality design would be the standardization of building codes, the standardization of subdivision and site development codes and encouragement of “green” building techniques.

2) Tourism

The Task Force recommends coordination and consolidation of tourism authorities in order to better promote the Metro Area as a destination for short vacations.

The regional facility support concept supported by Project Destiny should be further supported by a focused tourism effort. The Iowa Events Center, the new Science Center and other regional venues, such as Living History Farms, Blank Park Zoo or Adventureland, should be promoted as a package where visitors to the metro area can attend multiple events and extend their stay.

The Task Force recommends this measure in order to capture additional tourism revenues for attractions unique to our area and to Iowa.

3) Trails

Another Project Destiny goal supported by the Task Force is a permanent regional trails mechanism that funds and manages trails connecting counties and cities.

Biking has gained great popularity in Iowa in recent years, and is likely to grow as a means of transportation as fuel prices increase. Major trails can increase tourism, and provide new recreational opportunities for citizens. Intergovernmental coordination of trail planning, construction and maintenance is essential to the success of a trails program. This opportunity has already been well recognized by the community, but funding is needed to implement this regional program.

Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission: a Best Practice Example

One Midwestern example of an established organization that promotes regional goals is the Regional Planning Commission system in Wisconsin. The Bay-Lake RPC in northeastern Wisconsin is a useful model as it includes the region's largest city, Green Bay, and eight surrounding counties. The Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission provides planning service on area-wide issues, represents local interests on state and federal planning program activities, and provides local planning assistance to communities in the Bay-Lake Region.

In all of its activities, the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission provides an advisory planning role to local governments and local government officials. Local planning activities include but are not limited to:

- Regional Transportation Planning, including: bicycle facility plans, elderly and disabled transportation plans, highway corridor plans, transportation plans, grant writing, and technical assistance to local communities
- Water Quality Planning - The Commission provides technical assistance to communities to help protect water quality.
- Economic Development Program – The Commission creates an annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the area it services.
- Natural Resource and Land Use Inventory - Under this program the Commission is developing the elements of a Regional Master Plan that can be used by counties and other local governments as a framework for comprehensive plans required under Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" legislation (s 66.1001).

- The Commission has participated in the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program since 1979.

An important part of the Commission's work program is to provide a way to discuss problems that transcend local government boundaries and to offer joint solutions for intergovernmental cooperation.

Initiative 3: Regional Economic Development

The third regional concept encouraged by the Economic Development Task Force is for Polk County to lead an effort to further coordinate the economic development functions within the individual municipal and county jurisdictions in the Metro Area.

The following specific actions are recommended by the Task Force:

1) Regional Approach

The Task Force recommends supporting and expanding promotion of the region by leveraging promotional and marketing efforts already established. The Greater Des Moines Partnership was established as the region's economic development organization to accomplish a "united economic development effort, with one voice, one mission, one focus." Polk County should team with the Greater Des Moines Partnership to further the policy goals and implementation strategies that it has identified in this Plan.

2) Cost-Benefit Analysis

Based on an evaluation of national best practices in economic development and public-private funding partnerships, the Task Force recommends creating a standard cost-benefit review matrix for all economic development groups, municipal jurisdictions, and counties within the region for use in evaluating economic development efforts – particularly those related to business retention and attraction. This approach would enable a standardized comparison of costs and benefits related to incentive packages to create a common language between jurisdictions and "level the playing field."

3) Increased Collaboration

A third activity to promote the sort of collaborative economic development that benefits the whole region is creating or strengthening non-compete agreements between all relevant economic development entities within the region. The coordination of the economic development goals and functions envisioned in the points above should be expanded so there is more collaboration on planning infrastructure and offering incentives to encourage the expansion and retention of businesses.

Schematic Economic Development Plan

Figure 7-1 is a schematic plan depicting general locations for some of the primary economic development strategies discussed in this report. Unlike the land use plan (which focuses on unincorporated Polk County), this plan recognizes the inter-relatedness of economic development by identifying locations for various types of economic activity in both the County and the cities within the County. The circles on the plan indicate general areas, not specific locations.

Background information shown on the plan includes major educational, medical, economic and cultural facilities that affect locational decisions and enhance the region's quality of life. Major highways and railroads are also shown, along with major road improvements included in the Long-Range Transportation Plan that are considered priorities for regional economic development.

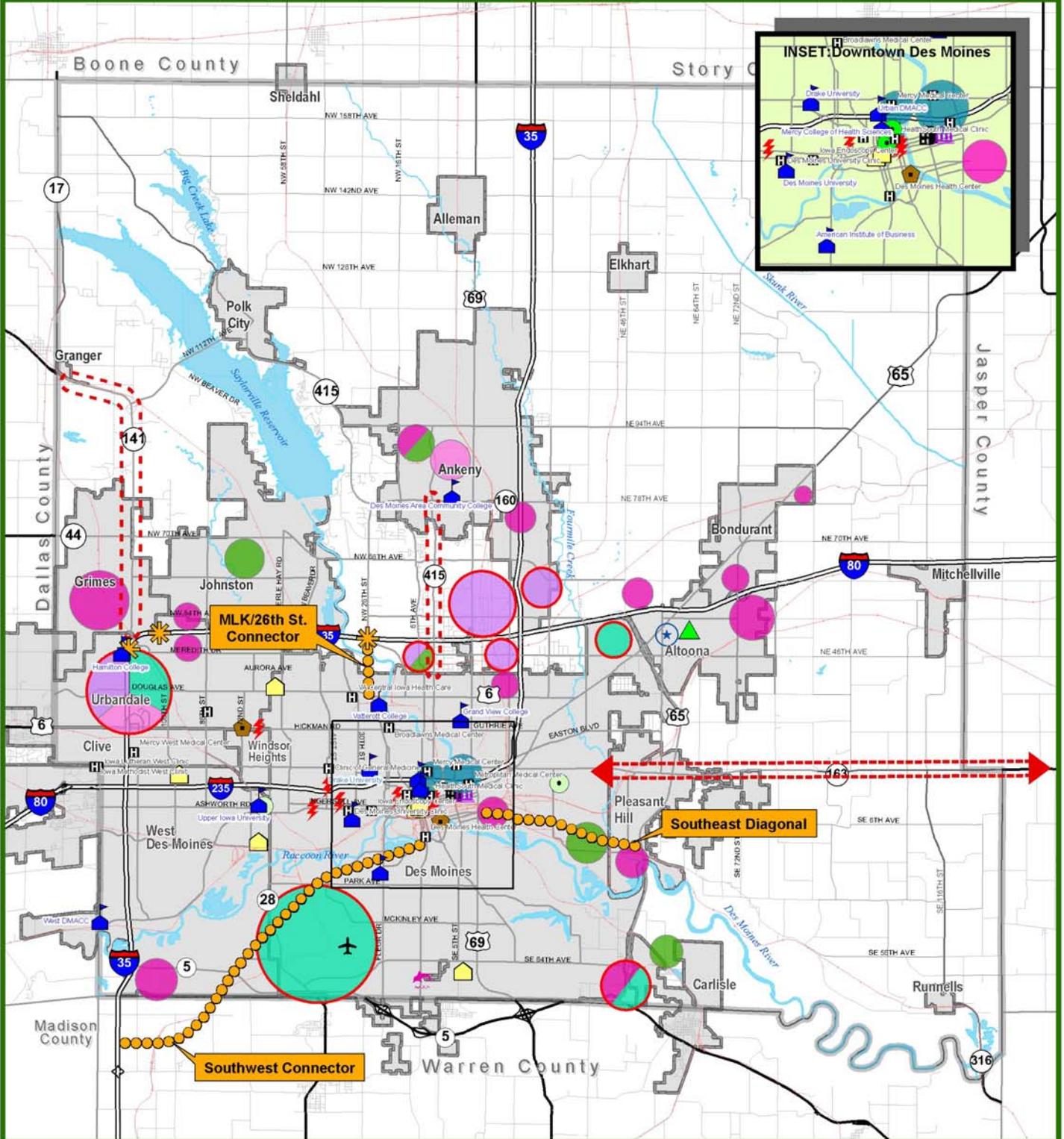
Economic development types are characterized as follows:

- **Agriculture-Related Industry:** These areas include the proposed Des Moines Agrimergent Technology Park, the Firestone Agricultural Tire plant, the Pioneer Hi-Bred campus in Johnston, the John Deere plant in Ankeny, and several existing grain storage and rail transfer sites. As discussed above under policies for Advanced Manufacturing, the Agrimergent Technology Park is designed to support ag-related research and manufacturing.² The Planned Manufacturing districts discussed below are also well-suited to these pursuits.
- **Medical District:** This category applies to the proposed medical district areas in downtown Des Moines (see map inset).
- **Mixed Use with Office:** This type is shown in two locations – along the I-80 corridor in Urbandale, and the Prairie Trail (former ISU Farm) site in Ankeny. (Mixed use may also occur at many other locations as indicated in the Land Use Plan and municipal comprehensive plans, but these represent areas with high potential for significant office development.)
- **Municipal Industrial/Business Park:** this category indicates the general location of industrial and business park districts identified in municipal comprehensive plans.
- **Planned Business Park:** Identified locations include the Airport vicinity and several locations along the I-80

² "Agrimergent Technology Park," City of Des Moines, December 2001.

and Highway 5/65 corridors that have available land, high visibility and good access.

- **Planned Manufacturing:** The largest area identified is the industrial area of unincorporated Polk County west of I-35 between Ankeny and Des Moines. This area should be considered for designation as a Planned Manufacturing District. The Crosswinds and Metro North Business Parks in Ankeny combine to create a larger area well-suited to planned manufacturing, as well as logistics.
- **Logistics:** Suitability for logistics operations is indicated by a red border around a number of the circles shown on the plan; it indicates a high degree of access to road, rail and/or air transportation.



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Existing Features	Transportation Improvements	Planned Development Locations
Colleges and Universities	New Interchange	Agriculture Related Industry
Hospital	Proposed Road	Medical District
Pro Sports	Transit/Access Management Corridor	Mixed Use with Office
Living History Farm		Municipal Industrial/Business Park
Iowa Historical Museum		Planned Business Park
Iowa State Capitol		Planned Manufacturing
Cultural Activities		Logistics
Adventureland Park		
Zoo		
Railroads		

0 2 4
Miles

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Figure 7.1

Data Sources: DMA MPO, Polk County