

# 8. Economic Development

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## I. Introduction

The purpose of the Economic Development Element is to promote the stabilization, retention and expansion of the economic base, and quality employment opportunities. Evansville defines Economic Development as a focus on healthy growth by attracting and retaining a broad range of businesses, organizations and visitors to the Evansville market with agreed upon strategic objectives that serve social common good, support financial well-being, and preserve the environment. To address this requirement, this chapter includes:

- Highlights of the labor force information;
- An assessment of strengths and challenges with respect to attracting and retaining business and industry;
- A list of economic development-oriented organizations and programs at the city, county, regional, state and federal levels;
- Economic development opportunities;

## II. Economic Development Vision

Evansville promotes healthy economic growth by attracting, expanding, and retaining a broad range of businesses, organizations and opportunities by implementing strategic objectives that serve the common good, support financial well-being, enhance quality of life, and preserve the environment.

## III. Goals

- Retain and expand existing businesses in Evansville
- Attract new businesses to Evansville
- Support the local workforce
- Continue to maintain and improve the City's quality of life
- Create a supportive environment for entrepreneurship
- Identify opportunity areas within City's economic development corridors

## IV. Policies

The goals and objectives needed to expand the economic base are provided at the end of this chapter. The location for new business development is illustrated on the Future Land Use Map in Chapter 10. Policies supporting economic development goals are provided below:

- Utilize the City's Capital Improvement Program to anticipate future budget expenses and support quality City infrastructure investments that are necessary for economic development.
- Minimize conflicts between industrial businesses and residents by planning for multimodal methods of transportation and clearly marked trails.
- Use the Historic Districts and associated ordinances and design standards to enhance the attractiveness of the downtown.
- Promote a mix of land uses in both new and infill development areas, as identified on the Future Land Use Map.
- Seek and encourage businesses whose practices fit into the City's aesthetic, provide high quality employment opportunities that pay a living wage, enhance the existing mix of businesses, and operate in a way that is environmentally sustainable.
- Require pedestrian improvements and landscaping to screen parking in highway-oriented commercial, regional and walkable business districts.
- Encourage neighborhood commercial development (e.g. daycare centers, convenience stores, dentist offices, etc.) in emerging residential neighborhoods.
- Encourage the reuse, retrofit, or redevelopment of existing structures.
- Promote tax increment financing (TIF) to encourage small-scale, mixed-use development that increases the City's non-residential property values. Prohibit TIF usage for residential-only or commercial/business-only developments.

## V. Economic Development Framework

### A. Labor Force and Economic Base

Table 8.1 below provides a breakdown of employment as reported by Evansville residents from the U.S. Census' Center for Economic Studies. Note that this table shows the number of those employed in the geographic locations of their workplaces. This table does not show the top industries that employ Evansville residents. (See Figure 8B for that information.) In Table 8.1, Evansville is compared to the Janesville-Beloit and Madison Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA). Evansville is considered part of the Janesville-Beloit MSA, but not the Madison MSA. Data from 2019 was the most recently available; this means that Table 8.1 provides a snapshot of Evansville and the greater region before the COVID-19 pandemic reached Wisconsin.

The percentages in red within Table 8.1 indicate each geography's top five industries. Evansville's top industry is manufacturing. Healthcare and social assistance is the second leading industry, followed by retail trade and accommodation/food services. Construction and wholesale trade are tied for fifth place.

Evansville's top industries reflect those of both the Janesville-Beloit and Madison MSAs, though the Madison MSA features more employment in the education sector. This is likely due to the presence of the University of Wisconsin, Edgewood College, and a number of growing public school districts.

**Table 8.1: Top Industries by Geography (2019)**

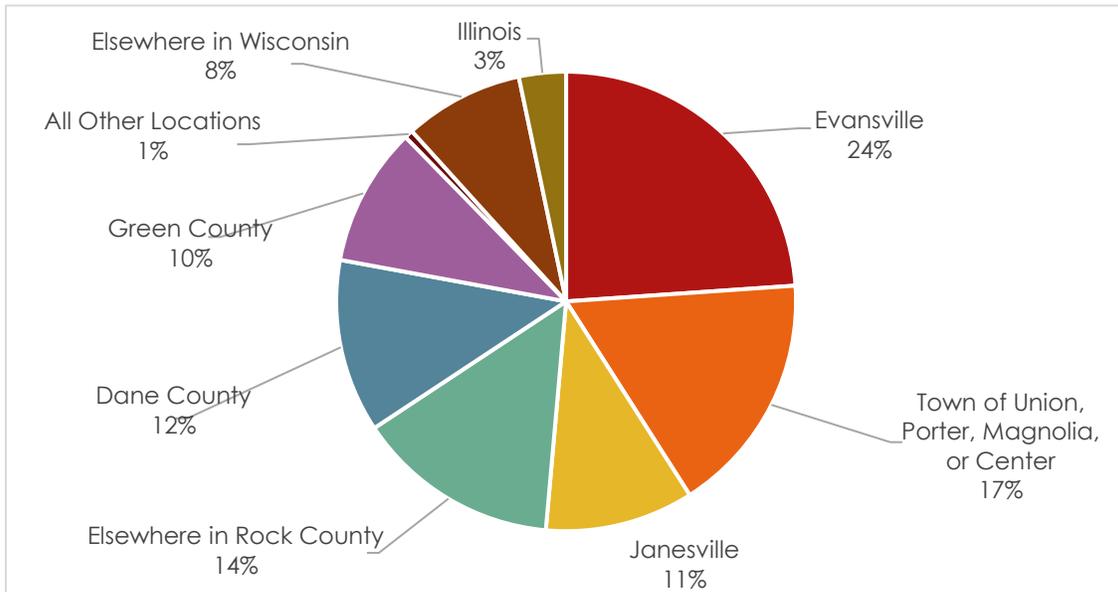
INDUSTRY	Evansville	Janesville-Beloit MSA	Madison MSA
Population Employed in Geography	1,665	67,463	403,869
Unemployment Rate <sup>1</sup>	2.7%	4.5%	2.5%
Manufacturing	24.4%	16.0%	8.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	15.7%	14.1%	14.9%
Retail Trade	11.8%	11.4%	10.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	9.7%	8.9%	7.4%
Construction	6.1%	4.8%	4.6%
Wholesale Trade	6.1%	8.7%	3.8%
Finance and Insurance	5.8%	2.2%	4.9%
Educational Services	4.9%	8.2%	10.7%
Public Administration	4.6%	4.1%	6.8%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3.7%	2.6%	6.6%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	2.3%	2.6%	3.1%
Transportation and Warehousing	2.3%	4.5%	2.3%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	1.1%	4.0%	4.7%
Information	0.6%	2.0%	4.6%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.5%	0.7%	1.2%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Utilities	0.0%	0.5%	0.4%

*1 - Table DP03, 2020 American Community Survey (5 Year Estimate)*

*Remainder of data in Figure 8.1 comes from 2019 data via On The Map, from the Center for Economic Studies*

Figure 8A provides a look from where people who work in Evansville travel. 24% of the labor force working in Evansville already lives here; a little over 30 percent come from other locations within Rock County, including a sizeable portion traveling from nearby towns.

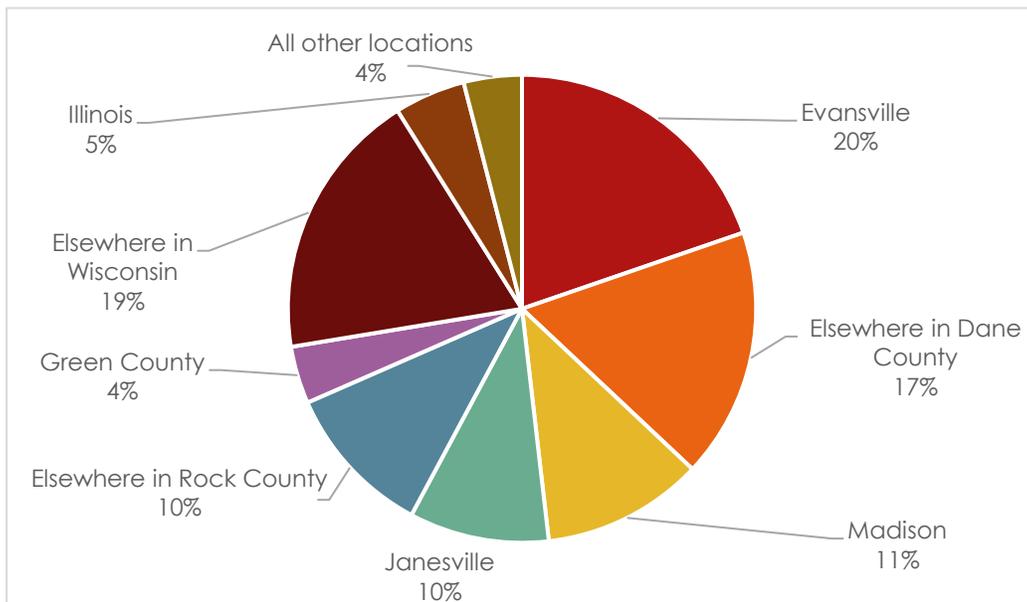
**Figure 8A: Where Workers Are Coming From**



Source: 2019 On The Map, Center for Economic Studies

Figure 8B breaks down where residents of Evansville go to work. Nearly 30% travel to Dane County. Another 20% work in other locations around Rock County.

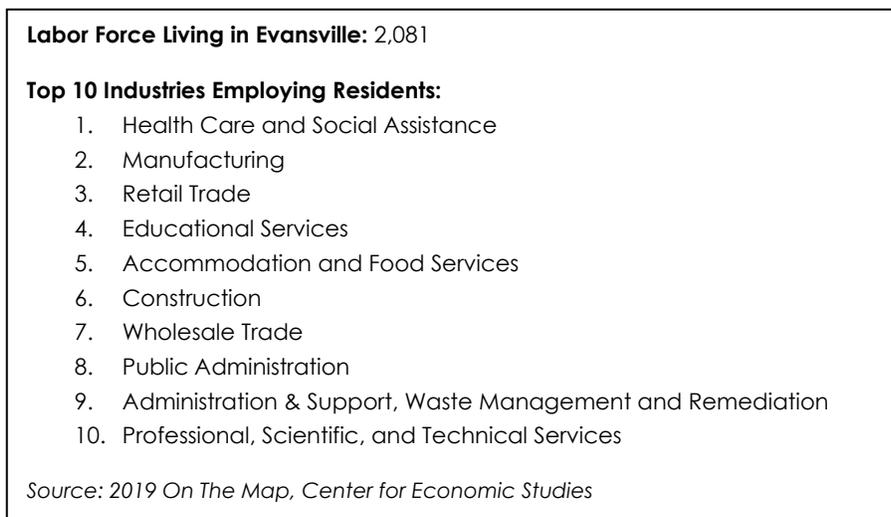
**Figure 8B: Where Residents Work**



Source: 2019 On The Map, Center for Economic Studies

Figure 8C lists the top 10 industries that employ Evansville residents. Manufacturing, retail trade, and professional services are the next largest industries. Evansville differs from both MSA areas by having more residents by percentage employed in the construction industry and fewer residents employed in the arts, recreation, accommodation, and food service industries.

**Figure 8C: Industries Employing Evansville Residents**



## **B. Regional Employment and Economic Forecasts<sup>1</sup>**

Overall employment is expected to increase over the planning horizon of this document. As presented in Figure 8.1, the unemployment rate in Evansville and the Madison MSA are at historic lows. Nationally, the unemployment rate is estimated to be at 5.4 percent.

Demographic factors continue to be a key driving force in these long-term projections. Baby boomers will continue to exit the labor force during this time period, and replacement by younger generations may not be able to keep up with demand for workers.

Wisconsin's population growth has slowed greatly over the past few decades. Traditionally, the state has experienced healthy amounts of new residents moving from elsewhere (net migration) and a birth rate that exceeded the death rate (natural increase). The state is still gaining new residents through net migration, but in far fewer numbers than in the 1990s. Regarding natural increase, 2020 marked the first time the number of deaths exceeded the number of births statewide. With net migration trending downward and natural increase becoming natural decrease, the outlook for additional workers entering the workforce is looking dim.

Overall employment in the state is expected to increase 3.5% between 2018 and 2028. This is a slower rate of growth than in years past, which the state has anticipated. Industry employment growth is expected to be highest in education and health services, professional and business services, leisure and hospitality, and the construction industry. Evansville and the Madison and Janesville-Beloit MSAs already post strong employment in these industries.

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<sup>1</sup> - This section summarizes information from "Understanding Wisconsin's Job Outlook: Industry and Occupation Professions, 2018-2028 in Brief" (July 2021), released by the Office of Economic Advisors in the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development and "Slowing Down: Wisconsin's Waning Population Growth", a 2021 study by Forward Analytics, a division of the Wisconsin Counties Association.

### C. Strengths and Challenges of The City of Evansville's Economic Climate

The City of Evansville has both advantages and challenges when seeking to attract potential businesses and industry. During the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update, workers highlighted strengths and challenges of the local economic climate. These can be found below in Table 8.2.

**Table 8.2: Highlight of Evansville's Economic Climate**

Strengths	Challenges
<b>High quality of life for residents.</b>	Lack of variety of businesses to meet people's everyday needs.
<b>A municipal electric utility that offers substantially lower rates over the long term than large, for profit electric companies.</b>	Perceived telecommunication limitations.
<b>A great location between two metropolitan areas.</b>	Residents of the City of Evansville are very mobile and can easily drive to nearby communities to purchase services and products.
<b>Young, educated local workforce.</b>	Volunteer fire department is strained by growing population
<b>Full time police department.</b>	High housing prices relative to other Rock County communities.
<b>Safe community atmosphere.</b>	Poor utilization of downtown parking.
<b>Lower housing and living costs in comparison with Dane County.</b>	Limited available sites for light industry.
<b>Historic character.</b>	Local businesses do not have hours that meet the needs of the large number of residents who work outside of the community.
<b>One-stop contact for planning, permitting, and zoning.</b>	Underutilized segments of rail infrastructure.
<b>Generally, high household and family income levels compared to state averages.</b>	Perceived high property taxes.
<b>Access to rail infrastructure.</b>	Poor proximity to the interstate.
<b>High income relative to Rock County.</b>	
<b>High quality, progressive school district.</b>	
<b>Efforts to showcase alternative energy technologies.</b>	

### D. Current Business Districts

There are five primary business environments in the City of Evansville: downtown, the Water Street industrial development area, the east side development area, neighborhood business development, and USH 14. Additionally, tourism, which is discussed later in this chapter, brings a significant amount of business into Evansville. What follows is a profile of each of these business environments.

**Downtown Evansville** is the historic heart of the community. It extends along Main Street between First Street and Union Street. Streetscaping improvements have been completed to enhance the historic character of the area. This included improvements to the street surface, sidewalks, signage, building facades, lighting, and plantings. Additional streetscaping could further enhance the user experience of the downtown, including curb bump outs to ease pedestrian crossings and additional landscaping. Future efforts should include the promotion of higher



**FIGURE 8D: VIEW OF DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE BUSINESSES.**

density residential development in and adjacent to the downtown to provide a concentrated local customer base and the addition of public gathering spaces to facilitate social interactions and provide an area for events within the downtown. These improvements are important to create a pleasant and unique experience, which is important to incentivize shoppers to visit the downtown.

**The Water Street Industrial Development Area** is a 60-acre development located south of USH 14 on the southeast side of the City. This area includes large and small industrial uses. The majority of the land in this area has been developed, and the City has seen a shortage of light industrial space in recent years. One of the priorities of the future land use map is the designation of areas that can accommodate further light industrial development within the future boundaries of the City.



**FIGURE 8E: IMAGE OF WATER STREET INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA.**

**The East Side Development Area** is located along USH 14 between CTH M and Weary Road. This area is differentiated from development along the USH 14 corridor (described below) because the focus of development is a mix of commercial and industrial. This area has additional sewer capacity to serve larger industrial businesses and freight rail access along the southern portion of the area. This area could accommodate a variety of unique development proposals with a mix of uses.

**Union Street/US Highway 14** has several businesses located along the route in Evansville. Highway 14 receives a large amount of through traffic. Most of the uses along this corridor are highway-oriented commercial establishments. The area where these businesses are located may experience development pressure from commercial establishments seeking larger parcels than those currently available downtown.

**Neighborhood Business Development** is located within existing neighborhoods. These include convenience stores, dental offices, and home occupations. These businesses provide common goods and services to nearby residents, improving the walkability of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

## **VI. Desired Business and Industry**

First and foremost, Evansville will encourage existing businesses to remain in Evansville. Coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations to work with the Community Development Department and frequently meet with business owners. These visits slowed down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Expansion of existing businesses is also something the City aims to encourage.

Entrepreneurs are a hard-to-describe aspect of business development, as their work spans industries or typical business models. Often these types of businesses are responding to emerging needs in a fast-changing economy. Thriving entrepreneurship will lead to a diverse economy that provides economic resilience and an active and vibrant business environment.

While it would be tempting to cater to any business that is interested in establishing or relocating its operations to Evansville, the reality is that some businesses are more suitable or complementary to the existing local economy than are others. The City aims to target the following types of industries.

### **A. Agriculture and Biotech Companies**

Given Evansville's rural location between major metropolitan areas, businesses that serve agricultural uses can capitalize on the agricultural land around Evansville. Numerous agriculture-related businesses already exist in Evansville, demonstrating an opportunity for complementary businesses. Examples of these include small or mid-scale processing facilities, distribution hubs, and agriculture-supporting biotech facilities.

## **B. Professional, Educational and Technical Companies**

Many communities across Wisconsin share the desire to attract professional, educational and technical companies, such as software consulting firms and software developers, because businesses like these don't rely as heavily on proximity to major roadways and rail lines. To be successful at attracting these types of companies, the City of Evansville will need to promote its central location and the numerous factors that contribute to the City's quality of life, including the potential labor source of qualified candidates already living in Evansville.

## **C. Additional Local Retail and Service Businesses**

In the 2022 Community Survey, 57% of respondents indicated a desire for more opportunities to shop, dine, and do business in Evansville. Understanding the local market demand for merchandise or services will be key for successful businesses. Currently, most residents have little choice but to patronize businesses available in nearby communities for their common needs. Many franchises and "big-box" stores do not consider Evansville, as larger populations in the nearby metro areas are more easily serviceable. Therefore, Evansville provides good opportunity for small business owners.

Service businesses (e.g. restaurants, coffee shops, sweet shop/ice cream parlors, grocery stores) are also desired in the downtown and along USH 14. These businesses, like retail choices, should seek to capitalize on the local family market and high percentage of homeowners. Potential businesses might include food (i.e. bakery, winery, and pizzeria) and theater space. Bed and breakfast establishments are also desired to meet the growing need for local accommodations and to serve non-motorized tourists using regional trails or scenic byways.

## **D. Expanded Industrial and Manufacturing Opportunities**

Industries are desired to provide quality jobs to local residents. Ideally, industries would capitalize on the City's central location, high quality of life, agriculturally oriented surroundings, skilled workers, and access to the railroad.

## **E. Construction and Skilled Trades**

Additional opportunities exist in the skilled trades, such as electrical and plumbing. Residential development is strong in the City of Evansville and the surrounding area. As such, it continues to provide an increasing share of the area's tax base and is likely to remain a steady source of employment for many younger workers.

# **VII. Economic Development Opportunities**

Use of supporting goals, objectives and policies provided in this chapter will help the City to capitalize on these opportunities.

## **A. Importance of City's Financial Strength**

Many of City assisted or public-private partnership projects may require City borrowing for either incentives or infrastructure installation. The City is obligated to always consider the "but-for" factor in all TIF agreements or projects. Additional considerations are made when determining the type of incentive offered such as the borrowing capacity of the City.

Positive bond ratings on borrowed funds lead to lower interest loans which leads to more opportunities to work with developers. Economic diversity with a City's strong financial position leads to better bond ratings, leading to better lending options, leading to more opportunities to assist developers in creating a diverse economy. The four (4) current TIDs represent a diversity in development with a mix of health care, redevelopment of an area supporting many small businesses, new commercial development and manufacturing.

## **B. Industrial Development**

The location of a railroad line through Evansville provides opportunities for industrial businesses that could utilize the railroad to reduce shipping costs. The City has begun to promote development along the active Union Pacific rail line in the City's southeast. Successful development of this corridor could spur efforts to open the northern portion of the rail line between Evansville and Oregon, thus providing a more direct route to Madison. To promote the available sites on the rail line, the City has partnered with the Madison Regional Economic Partnerships (MadREP),

which maintains a database of available, shovel-ready industrial sites in the region. Appropriate areas for construction of small scale industrial buildings are identified on the future land use map.

### **C. Tourism**

The City recognizes that tourism is an economic driver for the community as well as validation of the quality of life and resources that exist here. The Evansville Tourism Commission identifies tourism opportunities and administers the annual expenditures of tourism dollars.

The Tourism Commission has funded or supported multiple community endeavors, such as the holiday lights, Fourth of July celebrations, the Art Crawl, Evansville Underground Music, and other community-minded events that bolster Evansville's small town atmosphere and sense of place.

### **D. Expansion and Enhancement of Downtown District**

The City has implemented various recommendations of the *Allen Creek & North Union Street Redevelopment Master Plan* in order to expand Evansville's downtown further east. Future development of the City-owned 155 E. Main Street site (previously known as the old Bauer Haus property) and plans for the Ice Age Trail to run through Evansville's downtown will be future assets to the core of the community.

Evansville's historic downtown is a true community focal point that is important to the residents of the community. To maintain the integrity of this area, Evansville has design standards for non-residential property in the B-2 (central business) district in addition to the basic zoning of a property. However, the design standards do not provide specifics for lighting and façade improvements. Rather, the ordinance includes provisions for building form, including setback, height, mass, horizontal rhythms and vertical rhythms (which generally require that new development be modeled after existing development in the immediate vicinity and conform to the general design theme of the downtown area). The ordinance states that the Plan Commission will determine if new structures, building additions, building alterations, and restoration or rehabilitation correspond to the general design theme of the downtown.

To be more effective, the ordinance must provide illustrations to clarify important design considerations. Likewise, specific information related to signage, lighting, building materials, and landscaping standards should be included to more clearly define what is acceptable and avoid potential inconsistency in the basis of Plan Commission decisions over time.

Any changes to the design standards ordinance must be developed with local business owners and interest groups (e.g. Evansville Historic Preservation Commission, Economic Development Committee and Chamber of Commerce). Updating this ordinance needs to be a near-term priority in order ensure any redevelopment that occurs fits in with the future vision of the Downtown.

### **E. Previously Commissioned Plans and Reports**

Recommendations included in these plans should be implemented in conjunction with this comprehensive plan to ensure that the economic development opportunities desired are being realized. This will require coordination with utilities and community facilities, and transportation improvements identified in previous chapters. The recommendations should be reviewed every five years to measure progress and identify additional objectives.

#### **2007 R.A. Smith & Associates Allen Creek & North Union Street Redevelopment Plan**

The *Allen Creek & North Union Street Redevelopment Master Plan* was adopted by the City in 2007 to promote and guide redevelopment with the goal of expanding Evansville's downtown to include the areas around Allen Creek and North Union Street. Even in 2022, it continues to provide sound siting and design considerations for new development both near Allen Creek and around the City.

The Union Street area is an older industrial district, located in a high traffic area that has a number of large buildings and lots. Drainage is a problem due to the location of the parcels between Allen Creek to the west and a wetland

to the east. Expanding the downtown area will allow the City to improve the public space within the downtown, and may incentivize people travelling through Evansville to stop in the downtown. It will also provide a more attractive corridor through the City, improving its image. For example, new commercial buildings along Union Street could have dual frontages facing both the street and a potential bicycle and pedestrian path along Allen Creek. This path might someday be extended beyond the south edge of the City to connect with the Ice Age Trail and other regional trails described in the Transportation Element.

The plan provides recommendations for future commercial, residential, and light industrial development within the redevelopment area. These recommendations utilize Allen Creek and associated wetlands as recreational and open space assets, rather than viewing them as hindrances to development. The plan also identifies design guidelines for new commercial buildings, streetscapes, parking lots, and public spaces to maximize the effectiveness of the redevelopment and enhance the downtown environment.

### **2012 Ady Voltedge Retail Market Analysis**

Ady Voltedge, a national economic development consulting firm, completed a retail market analysis in 2012. Some key recommendations that the City can act on include:

- Refine a cohesive vision for the downtown shopping area.
- Describe a cohesive vision for the east side shopping area.
- Identify and act on areas of shared needs among business owners – activities that would provide benefits to individual business owners as well as to the shopping areas as a whole.
- Work to increase the *awareness* and *interest* in local shops among area residents.

The City should seek to implement the recommendations in the *Retail Market Analysis*, as well as ensure that the analysis is available to the business community.

### **2016 Entrepreneurship Findings and Recommendations**

A sub-committee of the Economic Development Committee prepared a report based on interviews with local business owners to answer two questions: Does Evansville need a business incubator, and what business services should or can the City provide? The results of the interviews concluded in three main goals: improve the overall perception of the City; offer programs and services to start-ups and existing businesses, and address physical space issues. Some of the specific suggestions to achieve those goals are incorporated in the goals and objectives section of this chapter.

## **VIII. Tools and resources to promote economic development**

The City of Evansville has many unique opportunities, existing plans, and partner organizations that can be of great assistance to future economic development needs.

### **A. City Economic Development Tools and Resources**

#### **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) allows communities to undertake a public project to stimulate beneficial development or redevelopment that would not otherwise occur. It is a mechanism for financing local economic development projects in underdeveloped and blighted areas. Taxes generated by the increased property values pay for public improvements and development assistance.

Tax increment Districts (TIDs) are used for a variety of purposes and can promote a variety of economic growth. The City has had eight (8) TIDs in total with five (5) currently open as of 2022. The districts themselves represent a diversity of economic development and opportunity:

- TID 5 was established as a redevelopment district. This district was used to improve the downtown area, preserve many historic buildings and offer incentives to strengthen the business community in the downtown. Funding was used primarily for infrastructure including stormwater management, a new bridge,

sewer improvements, water main replacement, sidewalks, and beautification of the area as well as providing direct incentives for 11 businesses.

- TID 6 was established to accommodate a combination of new commercial and industrial development. TID 6 generates revenue to pay for major City infrastructure that was installed along County Road M. This capital improvement opened a large parcel for future development for light industrial and commercial development along USH 14 and County Road M.
- TID 7 was established with the intention of creating light and heavy industrial development that may make use of the rail or the improved roadway that creates a short connection to USH 14. TID 7 and TID 6 share the same capital improvement project that improved County Road M to carry heavy traffic and provides new water and sewer capacity designed for large industry. This TID will dissolve in 2023, after collecting a final year of increment to help fund affordable housing projects in the City.
- TID 8 was created to expand the ability to provide long term health care to residents, create jobs and add property value to the community. This district is isolated to the Heights at the Evansville Manor project and was completed with the aid of TIF funding.
- TID 9 is a subset of TID 6 as a mixed-use district to create housing, commercial and light industrial development.

All future TID creations will be carefully considered and are not automatic. The City must consider the “but-for” standard of “without TIF funding the project would not be feasible,” as well as meeting the needs of the community. Prior to consideration, the growth associated with TIF funding should also meet the goals of this comprehensive plan.

#### **General Procedure for Establishing a Tax Increment Finance District (TID)**

The City defines the geography of a TID. It may range in size from a single block to the entire Downtown.

1. Tax assessments for the district are frozen at their current value.
2. The City, through its tax-increment finance authority, can pay for land acquisition, installation of capital improvements in the district (e.g. streets, lighting, landscaping, etc.) or developer agreements to make it more desirable to developers.
3. When development occurs, the improved value of the district increases. While the TIF district is in effect, the additional tax revenues go to pay for the debt used to finance improvements in the TID.

More information about establishing a TID is available in Wis. Stats. Ch. 66.1105(5)(g).

### **Marketing**

The City uses its website at [www.ci.evansville.wi.gov](http://www.ci.evansville.wi.gov) as a marketing tool by providing information about community services, programs, organizations and business. In 2016 the Community Development Director oversaw a full update to the site's aesthetic, usability and content. Important contacts and information about the City are now easily accessible to the general public. Further updates are getting underway to increase the depth of information and improve navigation and accessibility, with a special focus on fostering economic development in the City. This type of information is a valuable resource for marketing to professionals seeking development locations. As web marketing materials are continuously updated, it will be easier for coordinated marketing materials to be periodically developed in print format.

### **Capital Improvements Program (CIP)**

Through its CIP, the City is able to responsibly plan for future improvements that may generate additional development in Evansville. Additional information about the Capital Improvements Plan is provided in the Utilities and Community Facilities Element.

### **Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)**

The Revolving Loan Fund is provided by the City and maintained by the Evansville Economic Development Committee. The fund is intended to provide low-cost business loans that require repayment. It is designed to facilitate business development projects within the City of Evansville that create investment and employment

opportunities, including projects seeking to establish a new operation or expand an existing business in the Evansville area. The application and loan requirements should be updated and modernized to meet the needs of current and upcoming businesses. This fund sat stagnant for many years until the Community Development Department began to advertise its existence to the local business community. Two loans have been issued with one of them repaid, and the second one partially forgiven in response to COVID-19.

### **Building Facade Improvement Grant (BIG)**

The Building Improvement Grant is a matching grant available from the City and maintained by the Economic Development Committee to assist property owners and lessees in making exterior renovations, including entrances, facades, and signs. The program was initiated in the early 2000s with 8 downtown storefronts having since taken advantage of the opportunity since 2014. The fund has collectively made significant improvements to Evansville's Main Street shopping atmosphere and overall attractiveness to pedestrian traffic. This program should continue to be promoted and opportunities to expand it should be investigated, with a particular eye on current cost of construction and an investigation of specific building-related challenges faced by downtown businesses today.

### **Evansville Economic Development Committee and Subcommittees**

The City of Evansville Economic Development Committee is the lead agency in the City to assist business and industry in locating in the area. Confidential assistance is available for businesses and industries seeking information on site locations, financing, utility rates, taxes, labor availability and wage rates, housing and other resources available to business and industry in the Evansville area. An outcome of the 2008 City Economic Development Plan was creation of the Community Development Director to coordinate and enhance economic development, providing businesses with "one-stop" communication for planning and economic development. In June of 2015, the Economic Development Committee approved the creation of an ad hoc subcommittee for entrepreneurship. This subcommittee will assess ways and tools needed to help entrepreneurs be successful. The subcommittee performed an analysis by interviewing local businesses and entrepreneurs, which was catalyst for the establishment of a new business offering co-working and event space on Main Street. This business also utilized the available Façade Improvement Grant described above.

### **Evansville Tourism Commission**

In 2008 the Common Council approved implementation of a 7% room tax. All revenues, by law, are dedicated to tourism and marketing. The Evansville Tourism Commission identifies tourism opportunities and administers the annual expenditures of tourism dollars. Among the Commission's projects are full color printed tri-fold brochures that are distributed throughout the region at sites such as highway rest areas and other highly-traveled spots.

### **Evansville Redevelopment Authority**

In 2004, the City created the Evansville Redevelopment Authority to administer the downtown tax increment district. The Authority already has awarded grants and forgivable loans to redevelop properties and retain businesses in and around downtown Evansville. The Authority welcomes proposals from private investors for public participation in private redevelopment projects within or near the downtown tax incremental district. The Authority is particularly interested in assisting private redevelopment projects that include a substantial condominium or apartment housing component to increase population density in and around downtown Evansville.

## **B. Community Organizations and Resources**

### **Evansville Chamber of Commerce and Tourism**

The mission of the Chamber of Commerce is to provide support to local commerce and industry and to assist in the growth, development and recruitment of business enterprises. The Chamber of Commerce provides programs and events that not only support their members as business owners, but also benefits the Evansville community as a whole. The Chamber has collaborated with the City's Community Development Department to create a database of available commercial properties to aid in business recruitment, retention and expansion. For many years the

Chamber of Commerce maintained a storefront presence on Main Street with limited hours, and recently opted to shift to a more virtual model as a result of COVID-19 business trends. <https://evansvillechamber.org>

### **Evansville Community Partnership**

The Evansville Community Partnership is a not-for-profit community group with a mission of involving all community members. They serve as a catalyst and participate in creating a unique, thriving, and prosperous community. The group works together and supports one another by planning and setting goals, solving problems, resolving conflicts, pursuing opportunities, and promoting our community to citizens and the outside world. Some projects include hosting fun family events and beautification projects. [www.ecp-wi.org](http://www.ecp-wi.org)

### **WPPI Energy**

As a member-owner of WPPI Energy, Evansville Water and Light and its customers are eligible for a number of energy programs and incentives, such as Focus on Energy which provides numerous programs to improve energy and water efficiency assistance to both commercial and residential properties. This includes new construction design assistance, energy saving product installations and energy assessments.

### **Local Financial Institutions**

A number of local, full-service financial institutions serve the City and are active lenders with experience in development refinancing.

## **C. Regional, State, and Federal Tools and Resources**

### **Madison Region Economic Partnership (MadREP)**

MadREP is an economic development partnership that serves Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Rock, and Sauk Counties. MadREP markets the region for new businesses and assist municipalities in economic development, such as promoting shovel-ready industrial sites. <https://madisonregion.org>

### **UW-Madison Small Business Development Center**

The Wisconsin School of Business at UW-Madison offers classes, training, and other resources to help those looking to refine and bolster their business ideas during the start-up phase. <https://sbdc.wisc.edu/>

### **Rock County Planning and Development Agency**

The Rock County Planning and Development Agency provides economic development consultative services for public and private sector clients. These services include, but are not limited to: property acquisition and development; infrastructure development and financing; community advertising and marketing; general community/economic development planning assistance; infrastructure and workforce program design and implementation; and liaison-related duties for the county, region and state. The Agency also serves as the county's primary data collection and dissemination clearinghouse. In addition to these activities, the Agency is the central contact for the following countywide economic, tourism and workforce development related initiatives: Rock County Development Alliance ([www.RockCountyAlliance.com](http://www.RockCountyAlliance.com)); Rock County 5.0 ([www.RockCounty5.com](http://www.RockCounty5.com)), Rock County Tourism ([www.RockCounty.org](http://www.RockCounty.org)), and Inspire Rock County ([www.InspireRockCounty.org](http://www.InspireRockCounty.org)).

### **Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB)**

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's (WEDC) Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program allows all Wisconsin cities, villages and towns to support industrial development through the sale of tax-exempt bonds. The proceeds from the bond sale are loaned to businesses to finance capital investment projects at, primarily, manufacturing facilities. Even though IRBs are municipal bonds, they are not backed by the general obligation tax revenue of the municipality. The company or business that will use the facilities provides the interest and principal payments on the loan. For more information on the Industrial Revenue Bond Program, see the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation website at: <http://inwisconsin.com/>.

## Brownfield Redevelopment

Redevelopment efforts can sometimes encounter the challenge of potentially contaminated properties, which are commonly referred to as brownfield sites. Brownfield sites vary in size, location, age, and past use. The term "brownfield" was first used to distinguish developed land from unused suburban and rural land, referred to as "greenfield" sites. A brownfield site can be a former corner gas station or an empty manufacturing plant. These sites pose a number of problems for communities, including:

- Neighborhood deterioration and community blight
- Potential harm to human health and the environment
- Reduced tax revenue and economic growth
- Attraction for vandalism, open dumping and other illegal activity

The WDNR Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System on the Web is available at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Brownfields>. This database tracks identified sites from first reporting through closure or no further action. Records are kept in perpetuity regardless of whether or not contamination was actually found, the size of the incidence, and whether or not the site has been cleaned.

Numerous programs have been created to encourage brownfield redevelopment including grants, loans, and tax incentives. Evansville will encourage residents and landowners to pursue the clean up and redevelopment of any contaminated or brownfield site. Likewise, to minimize future environmental impacts, the City will encourage environmentally friendly business development that is properly permitted and regulated to protect the City's natural environment.

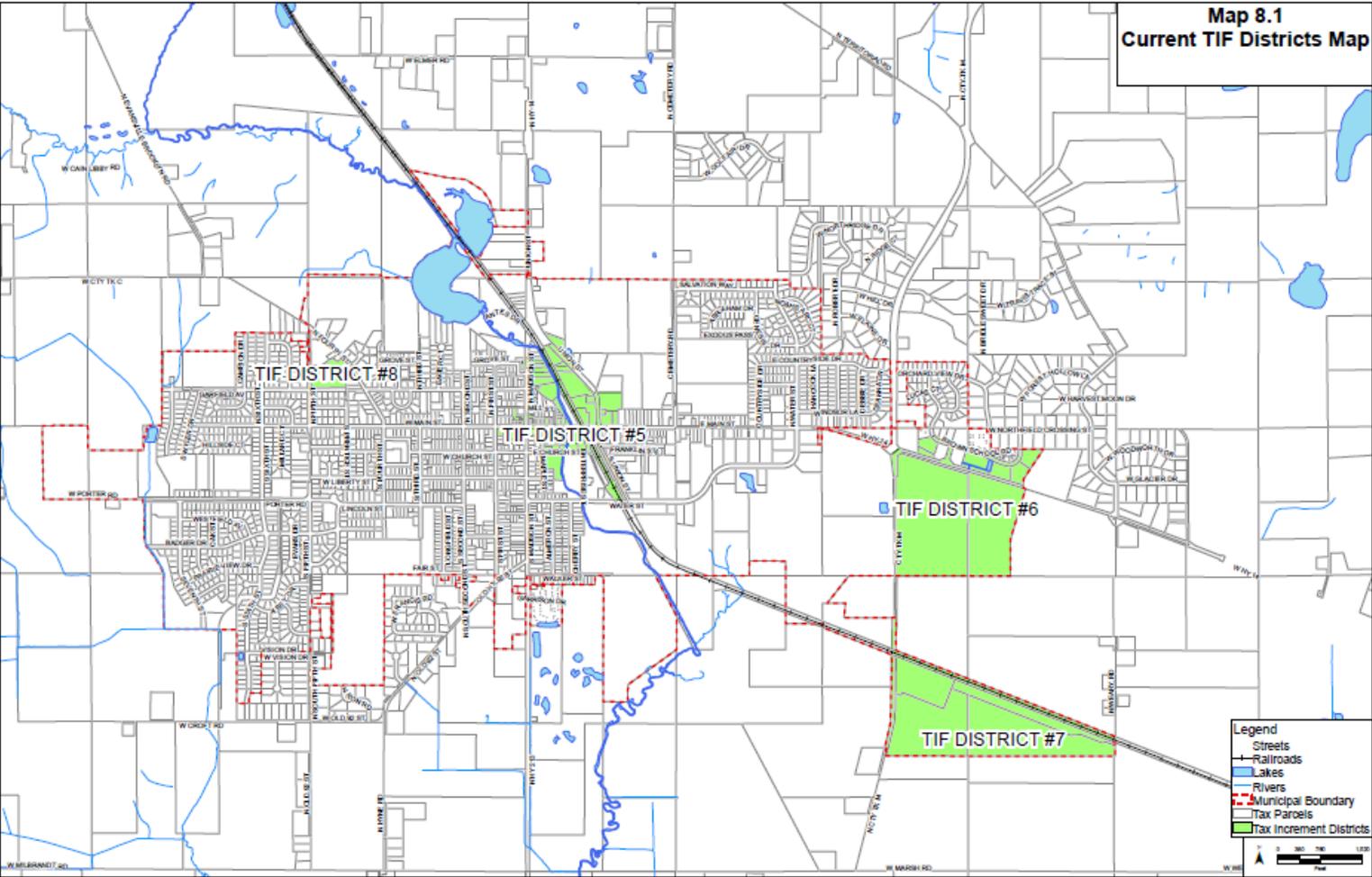
## Additional State Agencies/Programs

- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation – <http://inwisconsin.com/>: This department is the state's primary agency for delivery of integrated services to businesses.
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation – [www.dot.state.wi.us](http://www.dot.state.wi.us): The Office of Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Programs encourages firms owned by disadvantaged individuals to participate in all federal and state transportation facility contracts.
- WisDOT Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) – This program is designed to attract and retain businesses in Wisconsin through road, rail, harbor, and airport projects.
- WisDOT Freight Railroad Infrastructure Improvement Program (FRIIP) and Freight Rail Preservation Program (FRPP) – These programs provide assistance in preserving or enhancing freight rail infrastructure.
- Department of Workforce Development – [www.dwd.state.wi.us](http://www.dwd.state.wi.us): This department builds and strengthens Wisconsin's workforce by providing job services, training and employment assistance, and helping employers find necessary workers.
- Wisconsin Small Business Development Centers – <http://www.wisconsinbdc.org/about>: These centers help ensure the state's economic health and stability. They offer formative business education, counseling, and technology training.

## Federal Agencies/Programs

- US Department of Agriculture Rural Development Administration – [www.rd.usda.gov](http://www.rd.usda.gov)
- US Small Business Administration – [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov): provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run and grow their businesses.
- US Department of Commerce – [www.commerce.gov](http://www.commerce.gov)
- US Department of Transportation – [www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov)

**IX. Map 8.1: Current TIF Districts Map**





## X. Economic Development Goals and Objectives

These economic development goals and objectives serve as a way to put the vision statement into action, through a series of to dos. Below are Goals and objectives for the Economic Development Chapter:

Economic Development Goal 1: Retain and Expand Existing Businesses in Evansville		
Supporting Objectives	Measurable Benchmark or Outcome	Priority
1. Visit existing local businesses to understand opportunities and challenges they face.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing, regular site visits by City staff and Chamber</li> </ul>	Top
2. Redevelop and use the City of Evansville website as an economic marketing tool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase page hits</li> <li>Update information quarterly</li> </ul>	High
3. Coordinate with other local rural communities and local, county and state organizations to expand regional economic development opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Sustainable Energy chapter of plan along with Edgerton/Milton</li> </ul>	High
4. Redevelop Building Improvement Grant (BIG) and Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal of implementation by end of 2023</li> </ul>	High
5. Implement user-facing online permitting and payment system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Underway; goal of implementation by end of 2022</li> </ul>	High
6. Continue to monitor ordinances to streamline approval process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing City Staff commitment</li> </ul>	Medium

Economic Development Goal 2: Attract New Businesses to Evansville		
Supporting Objectives	Measurable Benchmark or Outcome	Priority
1. Strategically offer TIF incentives to businesses that would otherwise have difficulty obtaining alternative funding sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create an internal strategy for existing districts</li> <li>Identify potential incentives</li> </ul>	Top
2. Identify existing underutilized commercial and industrial spaces in order to expand tax base without demand for major infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, engage with, and provide incentives for building owners</li> </ul>	Top
3. Improve offerings for business assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a welcome packet/guide aimed toward businesses, with information about zoning approvals, permitting process, and site development.</li> <li>May be developed along with City website overhaul</li> <li>coordinate among City staff, committees, and other stakeholders how to manage bandwidth to be responsive to incoming requests.</li> </ul>	High

## Economic Development Goal 2: Attract New Businesses to Evansville

Supporting Objectives	Measurable Benchmark or Outcome	Priority
4. Attract new businesses through advertising and regional marketing programs. (e.g. LOIS, Gold Shovel Site Verification, brochures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use available properties list to feed to larger networks</li> <li>• Utilize Gold Shovel Site Verification and other similar outreach programs</li> </ul>	High
5. Determine suitable land sites for new and redeveloped commercial and industrial space for new businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain available properties list and update website monthly</li> </ul>	High
6. Prepare tailored pitches and incentive packages for the desired industries identified in this chapter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify local workforce skillsets that may be attractive to new industries</li> <li>• Identify and reach out to retail/service businesses whose services are currently lacking in Evansville.</li> <li>• Develop appropriate marketing materials</li> </ul>	Medium

## Economic Development Goal 3: Support the local workforce

Supporting Objectives	Measurable Benchmark or Outcome	Priority
1. Seek opportunities to partner with trade schools, the middle school, high school, businesses and organizations to ensure workers have the skills needed to succeed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to foster a relationship with the Evansville Community School District.</li> </ul>	Top
2. Investigate alternate commuting options for those traveling to/from Madison or Janesville, esp. in collaboration with other entities (e.g. WisDOT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with regional partners when funding or programming becomes available</li> </ul>	Medium
3. Increase the supply of affordable housing options for existing and incoming residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Housing Chapter for related goals and objectives.</li> </ul>	Medium

**Economic Development Goal 4:  
Continue to maintain and improve the City's quality of life**

Supporting Objectives	Measurable Benchmark or Outcome	Priority
<b>1. Improve parking and wayfinding signage to direct traffic towards existing amenities.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interim outcome: mark and sign municipal sidewalk routes</li> <li>• Long term outcome: rebranding campaign to update signage system (Potential tourism budget item for Fall 2023)</li> </ul>	<b>Top</b>
<b>2. Continue to support and collaborate with the Evansville Tourism Commission.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing marketing and event planning.</li> <li>• Explore how tourism and Evansville's historic character can provide opportunities or compliment potential entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>	High
<b>3. Continue support for historic preservation in Evansville's four historic districts.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop grant program for businesses within the City's historic districts</li> </ul>	High
<b>4. Implement the adopted Park and Outdoor Recreation Plan 2020-2025.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park Board implements action items from Plan.</li> </ul>	Medium
<b>5. Maintain building inspection and property maintenance guidelines.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to provide active enforcement of code violations</li> <li>• City to organize response of violations between Public Works, Police, and Community Development</li> <li>• Develop plain language information regarding common violations</li> </ul>	Medium
<b>6. Maintain and promote multimodal transportation infrastructure to accommodate both business and residential use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install multiuse path along Water Street</li> <li>• Safe railroad crossings</li> <li>• Mark route and become an official designated Ice Age Trail Community</li> <li>• See Transportation Chapter for additional goals and objectives</li> </ul>	Medium

**Economic Development Goal 5:  
Create a supportive environment for entrepreneurship**

Supporting Objectives	Measurable Benchmark or Outcome	Priority
1. Provide opportunities for incubating new businesses in Evansville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify common barriers and support needs of start-up businesses</li> <li>• Partner with Janesville Innovation Center to identify potential businesses looking for space to expand</li> <li>• Consider establishing a physical space for businesses to temporarily run</li> </ul>	<b>Top</b>
2. Work with Chamber of Commerce to promote networking opportunities and outreach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue promotion of After 5 networking events</li> <li>• Partner regularly with Chamber on Lunch and Learn events</li> <li>• Develop business-to-business mentoring opportunities</li> </ul>	High
3. Identify infrastructure challenges experienced by entrepreneurs. (e.g. broadband, wireless service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, track, and maintain database of level of service and fees with existing telecommunication providers</li> </ul>	High
4. Coordinate with educational and community institutions to provide continuing educational opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing; in partnership with Chamber, ECSD, and other stakeholders</li> </ul>	Medium
5. Continue to support home-based occupations, marketing expanding ordinance language if needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing City Staff commitment</li> </ul>	Medium

Economic Development Goal 6: Emphasize improvements within City’s economic development corridors		
Supporting Objectives	Measurable Benchmark or Outcome	Priority
1. Market and promote 11 acre City-owned site along Union Pacific Railway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sell site to appropriate user</li> <li>Increase interest in developable rail sites near Evansville</li> <li>Re-open rail corridor between Evansville and Oregon</li> </ul>	Top
2. Rehabilitate and redevelop City-owned 155 E. Main site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remediate site with a WI DNR Brownfield Grant</li> <li>Develop a master plan for site</li> <li>Sell to appropriate user</li> </ul>	High
3. North Union Street/Highway 14 Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to implement suggestions in the Allen Creek and North Union Street Redevelopment Master Plan</li> </ul>	Medium
4. East Side -- Highway 14 Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Master Plan</li> </ul>	High
5. West Side – County C Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Master Plan</li> <li>Investigate new opportunities for neighborhood commercial development</li> </ul>	Medium
6. Water Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve infrastructure along street, including sidewalks or multiuse path, curbing, and in improved stormwater conveyance</li> </ul>	Medium