

**CITY OF EAU CLAIRE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY PRIORITIES
2014-2016**

POLICIES

- A. **Community Leadership:** Provide outcome focused leadership for effective collaborative economic development efforts in Eau Claire and the broader Chippewa Valley region.

Strategies

1. Develop outcome based performance measures for economic development functions and assistance programs.
2. Emphasize business development that increases the City's property tax base.
3. Collaborate with and leverage area economic development organizations to ensure open communication channels, clearly defined partner roles and responsibilities, and a complete incentive package so that business needs are addressed effectively.
4. Identify and address existing City policies that keep the city current with national economic development trends.
5. Identify gaps in regional access to funding and explore means of filling these gaps.
6. Implement funding initiatives to restore the long-term viability of the City's economic development funds.
7. Collaborate with community organizations to market Eau Claire as a unique and desirable economic development location, driving all prospects to a common platform, which advertises all entities, services, and incentives available.
8. Provide leadership for community strategies to improve the revenue and fiscal policy decisions of state and federal government affecting local economic development efforts.

- B. **Target Enterprises:** Focus economic development support on target enterprises identified through the Interagency Economic Development Memorandum of Understandingⁱ that attract an educated labor force to Eau Claire.

Strategies

1. Inventory Eau Claire's assets in natural resources, existing capital, labor skill set, and education and training opportunities.
2. Target and monitor industries that may be attracted to Eau Claire's assets.
3. Invest public sector funds in strategies and work with the private sector to grow target industries.
4. Target industries that provide higher wage jobs with benefits.

- C. **Entrepreneurs:** Set in motion the actions necessary to attract entrepreneurs to Eau Claire who are most likely to succeed at establishing new industries and adding diverse employment opportunities to the city.

Strategies

1. Expand the availability of state-of-the-art communication technologies throughout the city.
2. Support stronger links to early stage capital, mezzanine fundingⁱⁱ, and equity funds.
3. Promote and attract development of innovation- and knowledge-based technology clusters.

4. Facilitate initiatives to create a community culture that attracts and supports entrepreneurs.
5. Promote existing incubation centers and explore alternative incubator spaces that reflect start-ups in the area (food processing, hi-tech, services).
6. Encourage and support all entrepreneurs including, but not limited to, women, minorities, persons with disabilities, and veterans.
7. Facilitate easy access to resources in order to simplify the business start-up process.
8. Deepen collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire entrepreneurial program.
9. Advertise Eau Claire as a creative entrepreneurial community.

D. Site and Asset Readiness: Maintain an inventory of fully serviced land, ready for industrial, commercial, and residential development in locations throughout the city as an attraction to business recruitment, relocation and start-ups.

Strategies

1. Ensure excellent telecommunication, utility, and transportation infrastructure, including fiber optic and wireless access.
2. Sustain a quality image for business and industrial sites.
3. Empower the Redevelopment Authority to redevelop blighted properties.
4. Promote development of major traffic corridors, including County T, Clairemont Avenue, Cameron Street/Hwy 94 and Business 53/Hastings Way.
5. Enable regional transportation to Intermodal Facilityⁱⁱⁱ in Chippewa Falls and to the Twin Cities.
6. Accommodate technology-based development.
7. Reevaluate public transit and design a plan for improved effectiveness including a Transit Center.
8. Increase promotion of local assets including Airport and Intermodal facility.
9. Explore Foreign Trade Zones

E. Downtown Revitalization: Support the ongoing revitalization of the greater downtown to strengthen its status as a vibrant city center.

Strategies

1. Attract downtown employers, civic and cultural resources, high density housing and owner-occupied projects, mixed-use projects, recreational opportunities, and commercial services.
2. Encourage the adoption of the DECI/Barstow BID Master Plan into the City's Comprehensive Plan.
3. Support Downtown Eau Claire Incorporated (DECI) to serve as the lead agency to coordinate downtown economic development and marketing programs.
4. Support business improvement districts as a means of fostering private investment in the creation of unique and attractive areas.
5. Support the Redevelopment Authority to plan and implement downtown redevelopment projects.
6. Evaluate downtown parking needs and support parking ramps in place of surface lots where appropriate.
7. Review and evaluate downtown ordinances for signage, sidewalk, parking, and rooftop use.
8. Support increased wayfinding and signage.

9. Identify properties appropriate for façade enhancement and direct them to appropriate resources to make improvements.
10. Establish Downtown as a regional mixed-use activity center integrating civic and government uses, professional and corporate offices, health care, meeting and entertainment facilities, arts and culture, housing and specialty retail.

F. **Sustainable Development:** Protect and enhance the beauty of Eau Claire’s natural resources through the use of sustainable development practices that balance economic growth with the protection of the natural environment.

Strategies

1. Prevent and/or mitigate negative impacts of development to native ecosystems, including the preservation of nature in urban settings.
2. Promote compact development through infill, redevelopment, mixed use projects, and the use of existing infrastructure.
3. Ensure connectivity of diverse segments of the community through open space, expanded public transportation, and sufficient provision for walking and biking options.
4. Reevaluate housing and zoning policies to encourage more suburban housing within city limits.
5. Support Wisconsin’s Green Tier^{iv} and Travel Green^v programs and the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce’s Green Business Initiative^{vi}.

G. **Educated Workforce:** Foster development of the competitive workforce needed to meet the demands of a modern economy

Strategies

1. Support efforts to attract and retain local and regional post-secondary graduates and faculty.
2. Link employers and workforce development resources.
3. Support initiatives of the higher education facilities and programs in the region, such as CVTC and the Universities.
4. Continually evaluate employee demographics and changes in available workforce to match the workforce with the needs of the community.
5. Initiate closer collaboration between local DWD representatives, Schools and Economic Development to address workforce changes.

H. **Quality of Place:** Invest in the cultural, recreational, and leisure amenities in Eau Claire that encourage businesses and people to thrive.

Strategies

1. Promote investment in well-designed public spaces.
2. Ensure long term public use and access to riverfronts.
3. Collaborate with private and public organizations to promote cultural and recreational opportunities in Eau Claire.
4. Pursue innovative public-private partnerships and joint ventures, including community performance arts facilities, arenas and convention centers.
5. Leverage and market the All-America City designation in all economic development branding and promotion efforts.

I. **Recruitment, Retention, Incentives:** Retain existing businesses and attract new ones with appropriate benefits and incentives.

1. Continue retention calls through combination of in-person visits and electronic surveys.
 - i. Inventory of businesses that want to expand.
 - ii. What are their needs and what is prohibiting them from expanding.
 - iii. Facilitate and encourage local supplier sourcing.
2. Support programs that provide technical resources to businesses
3. Audit current permitting policies and timelines and suggest improvements.
4. Continue to monitor incentives to ensure that we are competitive in recruiting new and maintaining existing businesses.
5. Promptly and extensively respond to Requests for Information (RFIs).
6. Promote easy access to financial assistance and business programs.
7. Provide an annual report of business retention calls from Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation and City of Eau Claire staff.

ⁱ **Interagency Economic Development Memorandum of Understanding:** Agreement between the City of Eau Claire, Xcel Energy, Gateway Industrial Corporation, and Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation on how the organizations would work together.

ⁱⁱ **Mezzanine funding:** A hybrid of debt and equity financing that is typically used to finance the expansion of existing companies. Mezzanine financing is basically debt capital that gives the lender the rights to convert to an ownership or equity interest in the company if the loan is not paid back in time and in full. It is generally subordinated to debt provided by senior lenders such as banks and venture capital companies.
(<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/mezzaninefinancing.asp>)

ⁱⁱⁱ **Intermodal Facility:** A facility located in Chippewa Falls that offers truck to train shipment capabilities, giving area businesses the ability to ship and receive goods from the West Coast without going through a major transit center such as Minneapolis or Chicago.

^{iv} **Green Tier** is a program for businesses and cities in Wisconsin. Eau Claire has several businesses in the program, such as HTI and PhillipsMedisize. (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/GreenTier/>)

^v **Travel Green:** In 2006, the Department of Tourism initiated Travel Green Wisconsin to promote smart, environmentally friendly business practices.
(<http://www.travelwisconsin.com/experience-fun/travel-green-wisconsin>)

^{vi} **Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce Green Business Initiative:** In 2010, the Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce launched a Green Sustainable Initiative for Chamber member businesses to be identified, by the Chamber, as a Green Business.
(http://www.eauclairechamber.org/members/green_business_initiative.aspx)