



Chapter four

Economic Vitality

Introduction

4.1 Economic Development

Crystal Lake is a mature City with a strong business community, stable residential population, excellent school system and numerous recreation amenities. Maintaining a strong economic development process is critical in maintaining a strong community. Economic Development is a multi-tiered policy to maintaining a sustainable tax base and a sufficient number of service and goods providers. The City conducts economic development activities in three ways; Retention, Attraction, and Promotion.

- **Retention** focuses on customer service and assistance to existing businesses. Retention is extremely important to maintaining retail and service providers in the City.
- **Attraction** is the pro-active process of contacting retailers, service providers, office and manufacturing businesses and providing site information for vacant or unoccupied properties. The attraction process allows staff to target expanding businesses and provide information about the advantages of locating in Crystal Lake.
- **Promotion** of the City through economic development events as well as other events draws residents and visitors to shopping destinations helping get people to the businesses

Effective economic development is a dynamic process that requires constant attention. Retention, attraction and promotion activities require multiple steps to achieve the objectives and policies. Economic development strategies must be combined with land use, housing, transportation, historic preservation and environmental decisions. All of these elements need to be balanced to maintain the City's high quality of life.

The City continues to build upon and diversify its current economic base by working cooperatively with proposed and existing businesses through the development review process. The City should acknowledge and appreciate the power of choice that is afforded to the business sector and recognize the efforts that are being made by the City to attract and support high quality commercial developments in key business sectors.

4.2 Economic Characteristics

The City has a population of 40,743 people, approximately 22,300 of these residents are in the workforce. The American Community Survey 3-year estimates list that the average commute time to work was 32 minutes with 83% of commuters driving alone. Crystal Lake's daytime population is 46,783. The daytime population is calculated by how many people are employed within the City. This daytime population is slightly higher than the regular resident population meaning that although some residents must commute outside the City to find work; many others are coming in to work. A healthy daytime population helps support the retail, restaurant and service establishments in the City. The City's largest employers are manufacturing plants, offices and the school districts.

Key Objectives

Crystal Lake has identified key long-term objectives to promote economic vitality. These key objectives are:

- 4.3 Revitalize and enhance key commercial areas
- 4.4 Attract and retain business
- 4.5 Attract tourism, meetings and events
- 4.6 Grow the City's tax base
- 4.7 Increase grant revenues
- 4.8 Increase the number of jobs

Each of these long-term objectives is supported by specific actions and defined success indicators detailed below. The effective implementation of these key strategies will help support economic vitality throughout the Crystal Lake community

Element Goals, Actions and Indicators

4.3 Revitalize and Enhance Key Commercial Areas



Former Crystal Lake Home Furnishings store in the Virginia Street Corridor



Same property after the streetscape project improvements. Increased pedestrian safety with wider sidewalks, decorative walkways, and enhanced lighting.

Goal:

Establish funding sources and work with property owners to assist with and encourage the redevelopment of commercial areas.

Major streetscape improvements have been completed for the Virginia Street Corridor as part of that TIF District. Redevelopment projects along the Route 14 corridor are an important goal. In addition, the City is in the process of planning a Route 14 Corridor Enhancement Program with aesthetic design elements including way finding signage. Improvement to the aesthetics and pedestrian environment of commercial corridors improves their visibility and increases redevelopment and retail sales traffic.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
4.3a	Redevelopment of Crystal Court Shopping Center.	Completion of the site redevelopment.
4.3b	Redevelopment of Route 14 parcels at the gateway to Three Oaks Recreation Area.	Number of new occupancy permits for existing businesses. Number of permits for redevelopment of the properties.
4.3c	Virginia Street Corridor Façade Enhancement Program.	Adoption of the program by the City.
4.3d	Route 14 Corridor Enhancements.	The completion of the Virginia Street Corridor Streetscape Project. The completion of the Route 14 gateway project.
4.3e	Pedestrian Access Plan for commercial corridors.	The completion of the plan.

Element Goals, Actions and Indicators

4.4 Attract and Retain Businesses



Jameson's Charhouse interior dining room

Goal:

Establish marketing efforts to attract and retain businesses throughout the City.

Established economic development programs attract private sector investment and job creation. These include increased marketing efforts focused on the City's strongest growth sectors. New marketing materials and additional outside resources have increased staff effectiveness. The continuation of these programs to reach out to existing businesses and attract new businesses continues to be an effective way to maintain Crystal Lake's economic stability.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
4.4a	Continue to solicit businesses in the City's strongest growth sectors.	The number of education, manufacturing/distribution, "green" and retail businesses contacted, started and/or relocated.
4.4b	Develop specific green business recruitment and expansion strategies.	The completion of a Green Business Strategic Plan.
4.4c	Increase marketing efforts at ICSC trade shows.	The number of ICSC trade shows attended. The number of new contacts made.
4.4d	Continue to solicit the retail businesses which are most likely to succeed in various retail nodes in Crystal Lake.	The number of retail businesses – grocery, restaurants, coffee/juice shops, apparel, electronics, comparison goods – contacted, started and/or relocated.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
4.4e	Continue to collaborate with the Downtown Crystal Lake/Main Street Program to develop area-specific marketing strategies	The number of events held. The number of merchants involved with marketing of the events.
4.4f	Continue to collaborate with the Economic Development Commission and other stakeholders on the development and refinement of economic development strategies, policies and activities.	Number of Economic Development activities held, policies developed and/ or refined and strategies implemented.
4.4g	Create a “Small Business Assistance Center” for direct services to small businesses and referrals to other resources.	The creation of a Small Business Assistance Center. Small Business assistance information available on the City’s website.
4.4h	Research Business Improvement Districts.	Compilation of Business Improvement District information. Creation of a Business Improvement District.
4.4i	Maintain I Shop Crystal Lake activities.	Maintenance and expansion of I Shop CL Program. Maintenance and expansion of the I Shop Rewards program.

Element Goals, Actions and Indicators

4.5 Attract Tourism, Meetings and Events



Three Oaks Recreation Area

Goal:

Promote events, businesses and recreational opportunities through a variety of marketing efforts to attract new events and tourists.

Crystal Lake has always been known as a recreational community. Our historic downtown, the exceptional park system, train and roadway access, and the many things to do and see in Crystal Lake has made us a destination for visitors near and far. With the opening of Three Oaks Recreation Area adding to the destination that is Crystal Lake, there are more opportunities for attracting additional tourism to our community. There are redevelopment opportunities around Three Oaks Recreation Area where hotels and destination uses can be constructed.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
4.5a	Continue to work with the McHenry Convention and Visitors Bureau to expand marketing efforts.	The number of marketing events planned each year.
4.5b	Develop downloadable tourism brochures for the City’s website. Provide sample travel itineraries for day, weekend, and week-long tourists and inventories of sites of interest, dining, shopping, etc.	The creation of the brochures.
4.5c	Encourage people doing business with Crystal Lake to patronize local hotels, restaurants, stores and parks.	Annual hotel tax dollars paid.
4.5d	Develop event programming for the Three Oaks Recreation Area.	Employment of an event coordinator for Three Oaks Recreation Area (TORA) The publication of annual events at TORA.

Element Goals, Actions and Indicators

4.6 Grow the City’s Tax Base



Recent new business openings around the City.



Goal:

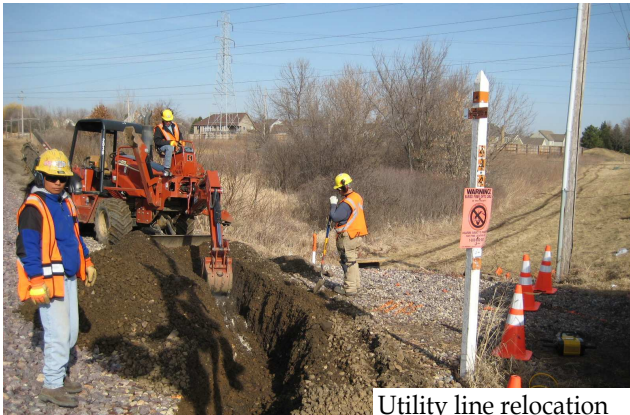
Establish economic development practices that recruit new businesses and retain existing businesses and allow for the ease to redevelop vacant centers.

Growth of the retail sector leads to the growth of Crystal Lake’s sales tax revenue. With the current housing slump and national economic slowdown, tax revenues have declined, especially with consumer spending habits being more conservative. Key retail sites in the commercial corridors and in the Northwest area represent the best opportunity to create new sales tax for the City. As the economy improves coupled with the opening of Three Oaks Recreation Area, a stronger demand for residential and commercial development will occur in the area. Best practices and thought of long term impacts will require intelligent and steady stewardship to strike the optimum balance between residential development, job creation, recreation and sustainable development. Although development is preferable sooner rather than later, good judgment is required to ensure the greatest long-term benefit to the people of Crystal Lake.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
4.6a	Attract major recreational or green retailers and businesses to the Three Oaks Recreation Area.	Redevelopment of the Crystal Court Shopping Center. The number of new occupancies for buildings in this area.
4.6b	Promote Crystal Lake as a center of business activity and economic growth both locally and regionally.	Staff attendance at ICSC events. The number of marketing materials out to various businesses to attract them to locate in the City. The number of email blasts sent out.
4.6c	Advanced marketing of the available properties within the City’s TIF Districts to relieve the potential of these areas.	The listing of the TIF Districts and incentives on the website. The number of properties that utilize City incentives.
4.6d	Land use decisions that allow for density of residential and commercial development in the vicinity of the railroad station locations that foster new smart growth.	The number of higher density residential projects or mixed-use developments near the new Pingree Road Station.

Element Goals, Actions and Indicators

4.7 Increase Grant Revenues



Utility line relocation



Location for future community art – based on grant funding.

Goal:

Continue to seek grant funding sources and make appropriate applications.

Grant revenues can be a significant source of funding, especially for capital project and certain community-based activities. With the passage of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) in February 2009, Crystal Lake has both applied for and received significant dollars to improve infrastructure.

It is important that as efforts to procure grant funding are increased, these efforts are directed toward funding strategic priorities. Grants funds for community projects will be the most sought after.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
4.5a	Work to acquire more grant funding.	The number of training courses for grant writing attended annually. The number of grant applications submitted. The number of grants received.
4.5b	Prioritize and focus grant seeking efforts on strategic initiatives.	Staff reviews grant funding opportunities to match them with upcoming projects.
4.5c	Monitor and apply for federal and state funding.	The number of grants received.

Element Goals, Actions and Indicators

4.8 Increase the Number of Jobs



Construction of Three Oaks Recreation Area Lake building



Annual sidewalk repair program

Goal:

Reduce barriers and create incentives for the development of projects which will increase the number of construction related jobs.

Increasing the number of jobs in Crystal Lake will depend on a number of interconnected strategies, including: business attraction and retention; attracting tourism, meetings and events; increasing job training for Crystal Lake residents; and expanding business operations. The same initiatives that will grow the local economy and the tax base will increase the number of jobs in Crystal Lake.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
4.8a	Focus economic development efforts on growth sectors including green-collar, bio- tech and health sciences, retail and food production and distribution.	The number of new occupancies for “green” technology, bio-technology, health sciences, and food production and distribution businesses.
4.8b	Maintain our local business outreach program to help Crystal Lake-based businesses and contractors become better informed about doing business with the City, including a workshop for local businesses.	The number of RFPs and RFQs posted on the City’s website. The attendance of a staff liaison at Chamber functions. The establishment of a local business workshop.
4.8c	Increase support for vocational job training programs.	Additional resources could be allocated for vocational job training programs each year.
4.8d	Business incubator for entrepreneurial start-ups.	Establishment of an incubator program.