

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING ELEMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Mower County is a certified EDA designated County. It is also a “Star County” within the Star City and Star County Program of the State of Minnesota. Toward economic betterment Countywide, the Mower County Board of Commissioners has for the past five years made annual appropriations to the Development Corporation of Austin (DCA) and other smaller city agencies within Mower County. These appropriations have totaled approximately \$50,000 annually and are expended in order that individual cities can develop and implement economic strategies that are responsive to localized conditions. Additionally, the County Board as part of its commitment to DCA, expects DCA to provide technical assistance and business funding help when appropriate, to industries of Mower County. Other than the role of support to cities and individual businesses, the Mower County Board of Commissioners sees its primary responsibility as focusing upon maintenance of prime agricultural land for long-term commercial agriculture, the heart of the County’s economy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Objectives

1. Continuation of long-term commercial agriculture.
2. Attraction of jobs and commercial/industrial tax base to Mower County and the retention and growth of existing businesses.
3. Coordination of economic development activities among all units of government through DCA and agencies representing the small cities of the County.

Policies

The following are the County’s policies for Economic Development:

1. To facilitate, whenever possible, the coordination of economic development activities.
2. To continue to support the DCA as the countywide economic development planning and implementation agency.
3. To protect prime agricultural land from inappropriate use.
4. To provide incentive opportunities to farmers to continue long-term commercial agriculture.
5. Support the development of a countywide economic development plan that addresses commercial, industrial and agribusiness for both the rural and urban areas of the County.
6. Explore the option of creating a countywide venture capital fund.

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7. Recognize the importance of an adequate housing supply in pursuing economic development activities.
 8. Work to ensure that Mower County continues to have access to state-of-the-art telecommunication infrastructure.
 9. Explore funding options to establish a high tech telecommunications infrastructure fund

HOUSING

Also directly tied to the County's economic health is housing. Housing development can be a means of economic development onto itself. In addition, the availability of adequate housing is essential to economic growth, as workers need places to live.

A housing assessment was recently completed for Mower County. That assessment provides detailed information and recommendations for future housing development. It provides projected housing needs for the County as a whole, as well as for four different study areas.

HOUSING PLAN

Although that document contains detailed recommendations for housing development, this Comprehensive Plan sets forth a broad framework within which to address housing issues in Mower County.

Objective

1. Encourage the development of a balance of housing types throughout the County to meet the needs of citizens of all age and income groups.

Policies

1. Utilize the information in the 2000 Comprehensive Assessment of Housing Needs for Mower County to develop policies and programs for the provision of adequate subsidized, affordable, market rate and senior housing in appropriate locations throughout the County.
2. Work closely with Federal, State, and local agencies and organizations that can help the County meet its housing goals.
3. Encourage public-private partnerships to expand affordable housing and housing rehabilitation opportunities in the County.
4. Provide information to residents on the "This Old House" and other housing programs.

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5. Develop and enforce the necessary codes to ensure the continued maintenance of the housing stock.
 6. Examine and assess current codes and policies for their potential to hinder the development of quality affordable housing and consider appropriate modifications if needed.
 7. Continue to support the activities of the Mower County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.