

INDUSTRIAL/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Key Issues in Industrial/Economic Development

- Need for Niche Markets (pages 5 and 12)
- Need for Energy Alternatives (pages 8 – 9)
- Lack of Diversification in Agriculture (pages 10 – 12)

Countywide Goals

- Increase the diversification of business and industry.
- Ensure that energy services will be able to sustain the County for many years to come.
- Build up and diversify the agricultural economy.

Introduction

Industrial and economic development can be considered one of the most important areas relating to the vitality of a community or county. These types of development can best be defined as those actions and activities that increase the number of dollars that flow into the community.

Many subtle but different components make up economic development. One of the main themes often heard at community meetings was diversification and how that can be applied to both current and future businesses and industries throughout Nobles County. A second theme was to increase the number of jobs, as well as increase the pay at those jobs. Nobles County currently boasts a low unemployment rate, however many residents at community meetings openly questioned why most of the available jobs are not high-tech or high paying. The third area discussed was the ability to preserve current industry and business throughout Nobles County, as well as the ability to create new businesses and industry. Niche businesses and markets should continue to be developed as well as higher wage jobs, which in turn can have positive effects not only on industrial and economic development, but also the current out-migration of the County's younger age citizens. High tech jobs require specialized skills and in typically smaller labor markets, such as Nobles County, various amounts of in-migration may need to occur in order to fill these specialized positions. Due to currently low unemployment rates, employees sought by any new business would likely have to be pulled from their current employer, as well as neighboring counties.

Issues Summary

The farm industry is currently experiencing a declining economy and this dilemma raised concerns at local meetings. Residents pointed out current agricultural trends such as farm consolidations, agricultural pollution (nitrogen leaching, manure storage), and a need for diversification in the agriculture sector, as issues that need to be addressed. Farm operations continue to grow larger as medium sized farm operations are pushed out of the business. These bulk commodity, medium sized operations, do not have the scale of economy to

compete with the larger operations. Small farms and hobby farms are able to stay in operation because of supplemented income. This additional source of revenue is usually from another job located off the farm and/or government payments. However, government assistance is a major contributing factor to both the large and small scale farming operations being able to stay in business during recent years.

Residents also noticed a disconnect between food production and consumption. Farmers within the County use land, labor, capital, and equipment to produce an inexpensive grain. This grain will be used as feed for livestock and as other intermediate type foods. The disconnect occurs when the inexpensive, locally produced grain, leaves the area and is processed (has value added to it) and returns to the County in the form of meat being sold at the local grocery store or as ethanol being sold at the local gas station. The idea behind this issue was that if more emphasis was placed on adding value to the farm products produced within the County through locally established cooperatives, jobs would be created, the County's economy would be expanded, and farmers could increase their income by establishing new local markets.

Residents also reported that they believe more operators are entering into different types of large scale and corporate farming operations. Many expressed negative feelings with the agriculture trend going from locally owned to non-locally owned. Interest was expressed in attempting to bring control of the coops back into the control of the local farmer. Some pointed out concern over governmental and environmental regulations increasing for small agricultural and organic products. The County should encourage additional and unique types of economic development for both the rural areas and the larger cities. These could be in the form of primary food production, i.e. truck farm vegetables or direct market meat.

Many residents expressed concern that the larger communities of the County are receiving a larger portion of the benefits from economic expansion. They also stated that small locally owned businesses in smaller communities were having an increasingly difficult time competing with larger business in larger communities. These small businesses, residents felt, are not able to offer comparable benefits and wages to their employees that are offered by the larger competition. Therefore, they are losing business to these larger operations if they try to pay their employees a competitive wage because they then have to raise prices on products they sell. Due to the negative effects incurred by smaller cities relating to these circumstances, residents stated that they would like to see efforts made by the County to encourage residents living within smaller cities to do their shopping locally.

Residents expressed the need for more emphasis placed on the establishment of many smaller to mid-size new companies and business instead of attempting to bring in one large company employing a large number of people. Large plants are often subject to corporate whims, which creates a certain kind of risk for the entire area. They cited the Campbell's Soup Company closing its doors and the negative effect that it had on the region as an example. These concerns led to residents questioning the availability of potable water supplies. In times of business creation and expansion demands, many felt the low water supplies indicated a reason to not only be cautious of the types of business and industry

sought by the County, but also a reason to protect the available water sources within the County.

By attempting to increase overall business and industry diversification, the County must consider all issues. Placement, size and type of business or industry are all pieces of a large puzzle. Commercial and retail services will likely continue to consolidate in Worthington as the business sector will have to compete more and more with Sioux Falls and E-commerce. Nobles County will be limited as to what businesses and industries it can support as water demands and labor force availability will also play a large role in determining all possibilities.

Industrial and Economic Development Strengths

Strong work ethics possessed by the residents of the County, as well as the geographic location of the County, were identified as strengths to build on. Both Prairie Expo and the construction of the new jail can bring many positive changes. Prairie Expo could have the potential to enhance economic development in the area and increase attraction to tourism throughout the County and the region as a whole. The new jail will bring a better working environment than that of the older facility.

In many communities, residents reported benefits in economic development that resulted through the construction of developments in Worthington. Many said that they felt smaller communities should find ways to continue to utilize developments in Worthington in order to provide better circumstances within their own communities. Smaller communities serve as a reservoir of affordable housing for the area as well as an attractive climate for raising a family.

The employment opportunities were reported as a strength throughout the County, especially the blue-collar type jobs. The area is seen as having a strong opportunity for increased business growth. Many felt that there is strong economic development organization throughout the County and that there is much diversity within the industrial sector. However, this diversity could always be built on and improved. In addition, residents commented on the strong base within the agricultural sector.

Many noted the activity of the Worthington Regional Economic Development Corporation (WREDC) as a major benefit to the County as is the future development of wind energy. Wind development has the potential to provide an abundant amount of economic opportunities in the future. The development of local coops controlling and leading the development of future constructions was also reiterated as a potential benefit to the County. Community owned projects should be viewed as a potential strength and avenues could be investigated to further their developments.

Industrial and Economic Development Weaknesses

The current national economy is strong, yet there are individual areas that require attention and need improvement. The lack of affordable housing throughout the County was the

single greatest weakness identified at the Economic Development Issue meeting. In addition, conflicting goals between Agri-Alley and residential land use was viewed as a problem.

Presently, the area has a low unemployment rate. While this is a strength, many have expressed concern in the fact that many of the available jobs are low wage level, blue-collar type positions. The area has a shortage of high paying, high-tech full time jobs. The County and its residents would greatly benefit from an increase in office type (service) jobs, as well as more high quality technology related jobs. These types of jobs are often desired to keep people in the area while limiting use of the current water resources.

The Future of Industrial and Economic Development

The promotion of tourism through Prairie Expo, Pioneer Village, and other County events and facilities, as well as economic diversification, were all seen as the future direction of economic development. By increasing technology use and finding niche businesses, the Nobles County economy can be strengthened and provide a steady supply of positions with higher wages. The promotion of industries with good paying jobs and benefits will increase the quality of life by not only enticing the college graduates that the area produces to remain in the area, but to also attract those from outside of the area.

Ideas to meet these challenges have been many and creative. Some of these ideas include:

1. Cooperative purchasing in order to alleviate problems resulting from a declining tax base,
2. Encouraging partnerships and collaborative efforts in promoting amenities such as parks,
3. Working with farmers to showcase community supported agriculture coops and organic foods through education

Forming cooperatives within the livestock chain can increase the amount of value added processing done within the County. These cooperatives are businesses comprised of farmers coming together to market their product and receive the benefits of having the product receive further processing into a more valuable commodity.

Many felt that the businesses within the County need to focus less on competition and more on working together in order to find appropriate niches. Communities need to work together to create an economic climate that enhances the entire County. Early planning should be made concerning the marketing and services of small town businesses so that they are not forced to close. Financing will remain an important factor in keeping these businesses in place.

Technology is a word often mentioned in relation to enticing higher wage industries to move into the area. Nobles County is in an excellent position to take advantage of potential renewable energy sources such as wind, biomass, and ethanol. These could be marketed as green energy to business that would be interested in and willing to use clean energy within

the scope of products they sell. In addition, the area is in a position to utilize a booming economy with the transportation infrastructure that it presently has and maintains. These major highways, the rail-line, the airport in Worthington, as well as transit, are vital in obtaining and maintaining medium sized businesses and industries requiring adequate transportation.

Industrial and Business Development

Agriculture and its many related activities is a major component of the industrial and economic processes within Nobles County today. The employment sections covered in this plan encompass all private sector employees as well as state, county and municipal government employees who are insured under the Reemployment Insurance Act. The closing of Campbell's Soup Company in late 1997 is the most attributable cause to the considerable drop in employment figures in Nobles County for late 1997 and early 1998 (Table 14). Employment declines were in the Transportation and Public Utilities sector, which declined by 24 employees (5%) and the Wholesale Trade sector, which declined by 113 employees (13%). The largest growth in Nobles County occurred in the Manufacturing sector which increased by 768 employees (39%) between 1989 and 1997. Strong increases were also found in the Retail Trade, Services, and Government sector during this period.

If current trends continue, many younger Nobles County residents will leave the area seeking higher education and new and better types of employment. The labor force will likely continue to decline in the next ten to twenty years. However, this will not eliminate all of Nobles County's chances for industrial and economic growth. With the appropriate planning and assistance, rural areas will be able to adapt to economic change and will have the opportunity to establish themselves as independent and uniquely diverse areas. Several sectors that require improvement include education and training, tourism, agricultural diversification, underutilized assets, infrastructure investments, renewable energy sources, and telecommunications. With the proper planning and treatment, all rural areas can be helped by economic development and be allowed to flourish.

In the recent past, Nobles County experienced a loss with the closing of Campbell's Soup Company. This event, coupled with low farm commodity prices, has spurred many in the County to seek diversification for all of the County's new developments, as well as in some existing businesses. As far as new development, Awara Doro, Inc. purchased the Campbell's plant and should be in operation sometime in 2001. This company will process spent hens using 80 full-time employees and they intend to increase employment to 275 employees within a year.

Development of niche markets can include a variety of facets from high-tech industries to value-added production. Diversification should continue to focus on existing companies in order to find new products or markets, and to a lesser extent, new industries being developed within the area.

Major Employers

Table 13 shows the main industries operating within Nobles County.

Table 13
Primary Industries
Nobles County
September 2000

Company	Product or Service	Number of Full-Time Employees
Swift	Pork Processing	1,700
Worthington School District	Education (K-12)	500*
Kraft Foods	Production	400
Worthington Regional Hospital	Health Care	195**
Bedford Industries	Packaging Manufacturer	160
Highland Manufacturing	Manufactured Homes	155
Minnesota West Community (College)	Education	61
Intervet	Animal Health Vaccines	50
Newport Labs	Animal Health Vaccines	45

* Includes full-time and part-time employees

** Full-time equivalent

Source: Maxfield Research Inc.

According to information provided from Maxfield Research Inc., the average hourly wage at Swift, Bedford Industries, Highland Manufacturing, Intervet, and Newport Labs is \$11.00 per hour, which would be just under \$23,000 per year. Production type employment accounts for 80 percent of the jobs offered at these businesses as the remaining jobs are mainly higher paid managerial and administrative type positions. In addition, all of these companies are not expecting any significant growth in the near future except for Highland Industries. Highland Industries has started work on a \$2.7 million, 47,500-square foot addition to its Worthington facility. The company expects the expansion to allow for the creation of 50 new jobs.

Employment Data

If trends continue, the County can expect to experience a decline in the overall labor force as people in the age groups of 24 to 44 continue to leave the County. However, it is projected that the residents in the age groups of 45 to 64 and 65 and over, will continue to increase. This continuation of the declining labor force in conjunction with both the overall population decrease and increasing elderly population, will no doubt have profound impacts on the overall stability of the County. These impacts include a lack of housing for the elderly, labor shortages, decreasing tax bases, and lower school enrollments.

By recognizing this trend, Nobles County has the opportunity to boost slumping sectors of the business economy. By assisting rural areas to develop and adapt to economic change, they will have a chance to develop the kinds of business and support the industries that will benefit the entire County. To enhance this opportunity, certain aspects must be dealt with and improved, including education and training, tourism, agricultural diversification, underutilized assets, infrastructure investments, renewable energy sources, and telecommunications.

Table 14 illustrates covered employment over an eight-year period from 1989 to 1997 and is listed below. Each yearly data set represents the annual average.

Table 14
Covered Employment by Industry
Nobles County
1989 to 1997
(Annual Averages)

	Change						
	1989	1993	1997	1989-1993		1989-1997	
	<u>1989</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
Ag, Forestry, Fishing Mining	84	117	ND	33	39%	ND	ND
Construction	161	193	253	32	20%	92	57%
Manufacturing	1,949	2,618	2,717	669	34%	768	39%
TCPU*	465	395	441	(70)	-15%	(24)	-5%
Wholesale Trade	900	892	787	(8)	-1%	(113)	-13%
Retail Trade	1,863	1,981	2,082	118	6%	219	12%
FIRE**	292	360	344	68	23%	52	18%
Services	1,150	1,251	1,392	101	9%	242	21%
Government	1,559	1,754	1,800	195	13%	241	15%
All Industries	8,423	9,561	9,816	1,138	14%	1,393	17%

* Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities

** Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

ND No Data available

Source: Minnesota Department of Economic Security, Southwest Regional Development Commission

Tourism

Some areas in southwest Minnesota, especially those located near lakes or on lakeshores, are seeing new development. Many of these areas are beginning to lose their “vacation area only” image and are beginning to attract new “year-round” arrivals from the neighboring large communities, various suburbs, as well as places outside of the state. Pheasant hunting is an example of a historic tourism use within Nobles County. A map showing prospects for pheasant hunting during the 2000 year is found in the Map Section (Map #25).

As shown in the Demographics section, Nobles County’s population is beginning to reverse its declining trend. By further investing in the future, Nobles County can add new

developments, both industrial and commercial, that will give the County better balance and reduce the amount of out-migration. It can also begin attracting visitors from outside of the region, as economic potential does exist within southwestern Minnesota and Nobles County. These areas, which certainly include the tourism and recreation industries, should continue to be built upon.

Prairie Expo

The newly developed Prairie Expo is the latest addition to the tourism industry within Nobles County and southwest Minnesota. Prairie Expo opened its doors during the Fall of 2000 and is located north of the City of Worthington along Interstate 90 and U.S. Highway 59. Prairie Expo expects to attract 400,000 annual visitors. Its exhibit hall contains three dimensional, interactive displays depicting the importance of the prairie to life in southwestern Minnesota. The large, signature building, which includes the exhibit hall, is the centerpiece of the 40-acre exposition complex being developed to showcase the culture, history, and agricultural economy of the prairie. The exhibits include information, photographs, and artifacts from the area. Visitors are informed of numerous area attractions and are directed to communities where they can enjoy festivals, events or activities. The 40 acres on the front of the property have been planted with native prairie grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees that can be explored by the meandering walking paths that extend 3,000 feet.

Future plans for Prairie Expo include building additions to the exhibit hall and themed development of the north 50 acres. A farmers'/crafters' market, an amphitheater, an animal barn and additional display space will be added to the exhibit hall. The commercial development has been zoned to include hospitality business, retail centers, and light industry.

The Infrastructure and County Facilities Section of this plan further describes the museum, Pioneer Village, the Art Center, Parks, the Historical Society, and Pioneer Village.

Renewable Energy

Scientific reports stating carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels are likely altering the global climate increase the need for renewable energy sources. Discussions as to how far the extent of damage from these emissions continues as the Federal Government continually tightens its restrictions on overall emission standards. Nobles County should continue its efforts in transforming the County from a fossil fuel burning, carbon dioxide producing member of the State of Minnesota, to a County that relies more heavily on clean, renewable energy. This way, energy sources such as wind power can become an export industry for Nobles County.

Nobles County should continue its involvement in the Southwest Minnesota Energy Task Force. This task force was created after the initial success of the Ridge County Task Force which was made up of the counties located along the Buffalo Ridge. The Ridge Counties Task Force focused on Wind Power Issues. The new Energy Task Force has a much

broader focus so that it could include all nine counties in the southwest Region and is focusing on electric deregulation and all sustainable or alternative energy sources. This broad spectrum was chosen to allow for flexibility in setting goals and objectives for the group. The current set-up allows for each County in the Region to have a vote on what issues the Task Force advocates.

A strategy currently being developed in Nobles County is the use of renewable energy generation through wind power production. The Nobles County Planning and Zoning Commission recently approved four conditional use permits to Northern Alternative Energy (NAE) in order to build wind turbines. NAE will be erecting two 660-kilowatt wind turbines in Section three and two more in Section two of Larkin Township, near Wilmont. The Planning Commission placed five conditions on the permits:

- Turbines must be 850 feet from the nearest neighboring residence
- Permits must be obtained from the township for the 15 foot wide access road to each turbine
- Turbines must be sited at least five rotor lengths apart
- They must be 250 feet from neighboring property lines
- They must be 250 feet from rights-of-way

Source: The Daily Globe

Increasing the use of wind power production will help diversify the economy of Nobles County. This industry has the potential to create jobs, increase the tax base, and provide income for local landowners. The direct effects of wind power generation are seen through the spending of wages and salaries received through the local energy-producing industry, the easement payment made to landowners, property taxes assessed on wind generating sites, and revenue from the production of electricity. The increase of economic development with wind energy through locally owned cooperatives (who distribute the newly generated electricity) will increase the public's overall benefit. All of these positive features will be a direct result of the subsequent wind development.

However, negative aspects can occur as well. Generally, large wind turbines are not aesthetically pleasing to most residents who have to live near them. They can also have negative impacts on the County's wildlife populations. While avian monitoring studies at the existing Buffalo Ridge wind farms have not found significant numbers of birds killed by turbines, they have found a surprising number of migrating bats that have been killed by them. Impacts to wildlife and native plant communities can be reduced by careful attention to micro-siting issues such as:

- Near native prairie
- Between two wetlands
- Near bird flight lines.

Agriculture

Nobles County faces the challenge of attempting to diversify its overall employment industries while trying to maintain a high amount of excellent crop production. The County has retained its ability to produce very high crop yields over the years and remains in the top 15 most productive counties in the state in terms of bushels produced per acre. The 1997 Census of Agriculture says that Nobles County had 350,661 acres of harvested cropland. Of that, 166,327 acres were planted to corn and 172,116 acres were planted to soybeans.

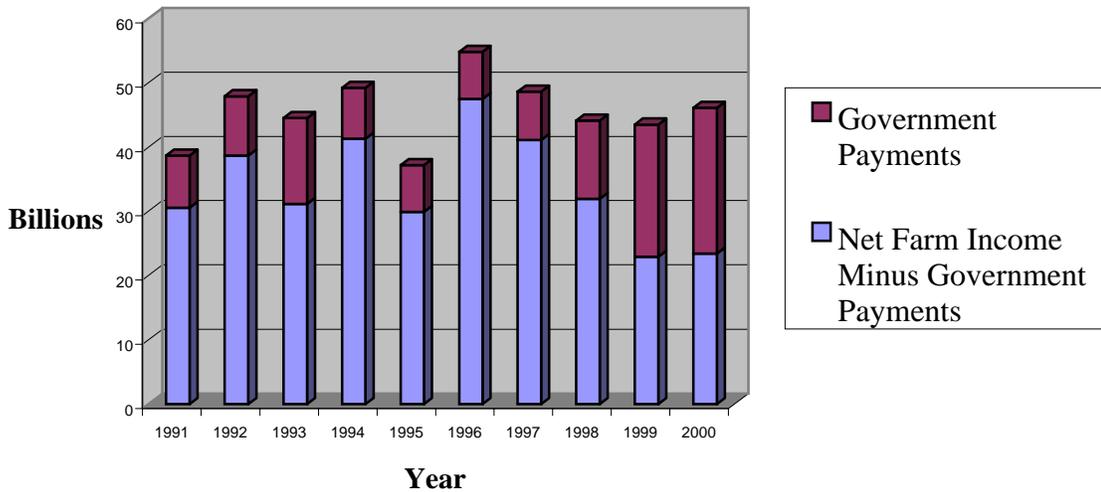
Presently, Americans spend 8 percent of their income on food and since this is not likely to change in the future, area farmers must learn how to identify the demands of the consumer and determine if they can meet these demands. This may range from raising different kinds of crops to joining with other area farmers to collectively process and market their commodities. Due to low market prices for the past few years, net farm income has remained relatively stable due to government payments. These payments continue to become a growing portion of net farm income for most corn and soybean farmers. The income realized by farmers, minus the government payments, continues to decline. As Table 15 indicates, the percent of income from federal farm programs has risen from 21 percent in 1991 to 49 percent (projected) in 2000. The end of the farm program payments will have a serious impact on area farmers if the market prices remain low.

Due to Nobles County's prominent dependence on the agricultural industry in its current form, diversification efforts will be challenging. Continued production from farming will continue to rise while the employment levels that the agriculture industry supports will continue to fall. As technology grows, the use for human input declines. Farm sizes continue to increase as the required number of people to farm those larger farms decrease. Many people farming today report an outside income other than farming, and many of those same people report the other occupation as their main profession. Economic professionals forecast increased employment levels in every industry except for the mining and agriculture industries.

Table 15
Net Farm Income
1991 - 2000

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Net Farm Income										
Minus Government Payments	30.5	38.7	31.1	41.3	29.9	47.5	41.1	31.9	22.9	23.4
Government Payments	8.2	9.2	13.4	7.9	7.3	7.3	7.5	12.2	20.6	22.7

**Chart 6
Net Farm Income
1991-2000**



Source: Agricultural Outlook 2000, USDA Economic Research Service

By diversifying the County’s overall economy, the negative impact upon relying on a single industry will be reduced. The County can encourage industry that will provide high paying jobs to a qualified workforce. Diversification in the agricultural sector should also be considered. Research and education should be used to identify niches in all potential markets as well as seeking opportunities to increase value added production industries (without placing unrealistic long term demand on existing water supplies). All will benefit the County and lead to diversification.

Livestock

The 1997 Census of Agriculture shows that Minnesota ranks high compared to other states in the nation in terms of livestock produced. In terms of value of cattle and calves sold and also value of hogs and pigs sold, Minnesota ranked 12th and 3rd respectively.

In 1997, Nobles County ranked 42nd out of all counties in the U.S. in terms of total hogs and pigs inventoried with 224,050. That was an increase of 22,253 over the 201,797 in 1992. However, in 1992, the 201,797 pigs inventoried in Nobles was enough to rank the County 35th out of all counties.

In 1997, Nobles County ranked 49th out of all counties within the U.S. in terms of the value of hogs and pigs sold with a total valuation of \$46,565,000. This was higher than the \$34,485,000 the County held in 1992 but during the 1992 year, the County was ranked 37 out of all counties.

Livestock production and processing can bring negative aspects to an area. Feedlots may bring with them offensive odors as well as problems with manure storing and application

methods (a feedlot inventory map is found in the Map Section, Map #26). The meatpacking industry continues to see low wages, physically demanding work, sometimes-risky work environments, and overall poor working conditions. However, the livestock industry within Nobles County has had noticeable effects on both the quality of life in the area as well as the agricultural economy. The processing of pork, beef, and poultry within the County, not only aids the local economy by providing essential products, but it creates employment opportunities and helps to stabilize fluctuating population levels.

County residents negatively view current public policy coming from the legislature. They feel it is too urban-based and that doesn't fully understand plant and animal agriculture. This was viewed as a major threat to all producers in the area. Many throughout the County perceive a problem with over-regulation of feedlot operations. Nobles County has historically had stricter manure management and set back regulations than surrounding counties and some view this as unhealthy for the rural economy. A lack of animal agriculture education in both the agricultural community as well as the urban sectors has the potential to negatively affect the area's economy through the loss of agriculturally related businesses. In addition, there is potential danger in damaging real estate and water supplies through improperly handled manure.

Future of Industrial and Economic Development

Diversification is often the key term mentioned in conversations covering recent large business closings or arduous economic times. Developing high-tech industries using value-added production is usually stated as a key goal in diversifying the local economy. However, diversification should not necessarily be focused on bringing in new labor intensive or high-tech industries. While new business and industry is extremely beneficial, working with all industries already doing business within the County is equally important. Diversification for these industries can include finding new niches in the market and helping them to produce new products. Goals should be set in order to assist in adding new infrastructure to increase overall production. When working to diversify existing industry, the County should continue to monitor water requirements and availability.

Telecommunications is an excellent way for the County to diversify its economy. Use of the Internet is rapidly becoming an extremely important factor in the global market. New businesses are created everyday exclusively using the Internet to sell their products. These "e-tailers" are not only able to potentially utilize every user of the internet as a potential customer, they are able to limit advertising costs and save money on development due to the fact that they can eliminate middle men. This allows them not to be forced to charge retail prices. Until certain government regulations are passed or moratoriums are lifted, e-tailers are even able to avoid charging tax on products that they sell. At the same time, the uses of e-tail trade will increase the need for a good reliable transportation network and delivery system to deliver the products. Nobles County does possess an advantage in establishing business as it has direct access to Interstate 90, it is located in between Interstate 29 and Interstate 35 and it has access to the Worthington Regional Airport and the two railroads, the Minnesota Southern Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad. In terms of Interstate access alone, Nobles County has the potential for an e-tailor sound trucking industry.

In light of these listed advantages of Internet to Nobles County, it should be stated that it is in the best interest of residents to learn how to use the Internet and increase access to the Internet. Increased use and access will help to lure and retain business already in the habit of utilizing this technology, and that will continue to in the future.

Future planning should involve development of the most up to date communications infrastructure. The addition of fiber-optic cables or other infrastructure investments that help speed connections may be a great benefit to businesses that use, or plan to use the Internet. Satellites, interactive television and cellular phones are other avenues of future development in which the County should explore and prioritize.

GOAL 1: Increase the diversification of business and industry.

(related goals/objectives: Agriculture 1; Parks and Recreation 1, Historic and Cultural Facilities 1)

Objective: Stable employment in business and industry that provide full-time positions and higher wages.

Policies

1. Expand economic development in the Agriculture sector.
2. Continue to protect prime agricultural land for farming.
 - a. Increase activities or developments that favor tourism within the County but not at the expense of Agriculture in prime agriculture areas.
3. Increase appreciation and familiarity of the cultural resources in the County.
4. Encourage cooperative climate with cities and business in the County to work as a whole.

Strategies

1. Further the development of agricultural industries to diversify in their production.
2. Support tourism activities which highlight the cultural resources in the County.

GOAL 2: To increase overall employment within the County.

Objective: Encourage the addition or expansion of both new and existing business and industries.

Policies

1. Encourage economic development in all available areas of the County.

2. Provide new zoning for future economic development sites while taking into account existing adjacent land uses and preserving prime agricultural and recreational lands.

Strategies

1. Continue to support all agencies such as the WREDC which focuses on the promotion of economic development within Nobles County.
2. Encourage company competitiveness by supporting and encouraging all relevant job-training activities.
3. Attract desirable manufacturing enterprises and strengthen existing Nobles County industry and business while considering all issues such as available workforce and limited water supplies.
4. Offer and market goods and services produced within the County, thereby encouraging local shopping.
5. Identify state and federal grants and low interest loan programs for existing business expansion.

GOAL 3: Ensure that energy services will be able to sustain the County for many years to come.

(related goals/objectives: Infrastructure 1)

Objective: Support the further development of energy alternatives.

Policies

1. Support the increase in investments of advanced technology for the residents and businesses within the County.
2. Keep abreast of energy development alternatives, and issues and impacts by continuing to work with the Southwest Minnesota Energy Task Force.

Strategies

1. Encourage the residents and businesses in all of Nobles County to utilize advanced technology to augment their own interests and concerns.
2. Participate in the Regional Energy Task Force.
3. Update the County Development Code to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents as energy development matures and impacts County residents.

GOAL 4: Build up and diversify the agricultural economy.

(related goals/objectives: Agriculture 1)

Objective: To work towards achieving sustainability of the locally owned and operated farm and the profitability that is to be had through the production of high valued specialty crops, local market supplies and livestock production opportunities.

Policies

1. Protect areas designated as highly valued farmland.
2. Provide alternatives in development strategies that allow highly valued farmland to remain in agricultural production.
3. Encourage the development of various types of value added crops such as:
 - High Oil Corn
 - Non-Bioengineered Crops
 - Organic Crops
 - Popcorn
 - White Corn
 - Wheat for Pasta
 - Pulp Trees
 - Edible Beans

Strategies

1. Create and expand value added processing within Nobles County while continuing to account for all water quantity issues. Aid farmers in developing and marketing value added crops by forming Regional Associations or alliances that provide marketing and support services to minimize risks and aid all farmers in taking advantage of new opportunities.
2. Develop a zoning code revision in order to reflect agricultural preservation areas that limit conflicts where business and industry developments could occur.