



Village President Vilas Machmueller accepting the WEDA Biennial Economic Development Award (Organization Category) from Governor Jim Doyle

WEDA BIENNIAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARD

(ORGANIZATION CATEGORY)

NOMINATION OF THE VILLAGE OF WESTON, MARATHON COUNTY

NARRATIVE

The Village of Weston deserves recognition by WEDA for its commitment and contributions to the field of economic development. Weston is a model for how a local unit of government can transform itself to fulfill a vision - in this case the vision was economic development.

The commitment by the Village of Weston to economic development is evident throughout the organization. The commitment is strongest at the top. Vilas Machmueller has served as Village President since its incorporation in 1996 and as Town Chair for many years prior to the incorporation. It is Vilas' vision for the growth of Weston that fuels the organization's commitment to economic development. The Weston Village Board stands behind this vision and strongly supports the economic development focus of Weston's Village government. In selecting a Village Administrator, the Board chose Dean Zuleger, a former business lobbyist with tireless enthusiasm for economic development and the skills to be innovative in its application. One of the first things that Dean did upon starting as Village Administrator is overhaul Village government so that there was an emphasis on quality, efficiency and responsiveness. As a result, the Village of Weston is now one of the easiest local units of government to deal with if you are a business wanting to make something happen.

Over the past four years, the Village of Weston has become the shining star of economic development in North Central Wisconsin. Accomplishments over this period include:

- * Selling all lots in their 170 acre business park which was designed in 2000
- * Securing \$54 million of construction value within the business park
- * Developing a unique, easy to understand TIF grant matrix
- * Innovative use of Letters of Credit and TIF grants to provide incentives to business prospects while securing the interests of the Village of Weston
- * Minimizing development costs in the business park by providing sand and soil recovered from street projects to businesses for use in their site preparation
- * Recruiting and winning several medical facilities that will create over \$147 million in new value for the Village
- * Recruiting and winning three hotels totaling 209 rooms
- * Applying for and obtaining over \$3.3 million in state and federal transportation and utility grants
- * Redevelopment of vacant and dilapidated buildings, including filling of the empty County Market big box and saving the Village's only grocery store
- * Establishing a Business Advocacy Committee that serves as a liaison between the community and business.
- * Adding \$220 million to the Village's equalized value
- * Improving the Village's bond rating with Moody's from A3 to A1
- * Managing the Village's TIF districts to allow a phased withdrawal of land to minimize the impact on state aids to the school district that comes from the sudden flush of value when a TIF district is retired

BACKGROUND

In the early 1990's the Town of Weston was one of the largest urban Towns in Wisconsin. Faced with issues of managing urban development for the benefit of its residents and having few management tools as a Town, the community incorporated as a Village. One of the objectives in incorporating was to better manage the economic development of the community. Upon incorporation, the Village began looking at economic development in earnest.

The Village established a tax incremental financing district in 1998 along a corridor of the four-lane STH 29 that created both a Class A privately-owned commercial park and a 170 acre Village-owned business & technology park. In July of 2000, the Village completed plans for the business and technology park that incorporated a high-tech campus-style design to house approximately twenty-four business tenants. The park was built in 2001 with the aid of a \$605,000 WI Dot Transportation Economic Assistance grant. The \$3.6 million dollar park has been equipped with both single phase and three phase power, T1 / ADSL phone/data lines, and fiber optics. All roads have been oversized for truck traffic with 70 degree turning radii. The park will eventually house over 1200 employees.

In marketing the park, the Village adopted a grant matrix that was based on both increment value and jobs created. The grant matrix was reviewed by Deloitte Touche Fantus of Chicago and heralded "as a model" for small city economic development (cf. Andy Mace, Deloitte Touche Fantus). The model allows the Village to aid in business development without losing money on land. The Village also adopted a "two-meeting" Planning Commission philosophy for site plan and architectural review. Rather, than a lot of glitzy marketing the Village invests most its time in meeting with bankers and builders and reviews all prospective tenants pro forma financial statements.

The Village has been widely recognized for its economic development marketing efforts. The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) has recognized the Village of Weston for excellence in community marketing several times in the last five years. In 2000, the AEDC - predecessor to IEDC - awarded the Village of Weston with the "Best in Show" award in the mass appeal category and in 2001 the AEDC awarded the Village of Weston with an "Excellent" rating in the general purpose brochure category. The Western Wisconsin Ad Council awarded the Village of Weston with its "First Place Award" for best ad campaign for the Village's "Become One of Our Village People" campaign. The Village's Focus newsletter has been named the best newsletter by the WI Towns Association in 2000.

In addition, the Village of Weston was awarded the 2001 Business of the Year by the South Area Business Association of Wausau for its commitment to running their government like a business. This is the first time a government has received such an award in North Central Wisconsin.

On the commercial end, the Village recently recruited Ministry Health Care/Marshfield Clinic to build a \$100 million dollar hospital and over \$40 million of taxable medical clinics. The "Stone Ridge" area (at the corners of STH 29 and County Highway X) is expected to generate \$300 million of tax increment and over 2500 jobs in the next ten years. Accompanying development includes hotels, banks, corporate headquarters, restaurants, and retail. All construction will be Class A with restrictive covenants and declarations. This development, in conjunction with the business & technology park, should allow for TIF close out in 2014 or five years ahead of schedule.

Outside the TIF, the Village of Weston has grown \$33 million in the last two years and has residential expansion plans of over 500 homes at a value of over \$72 million in the next three years.

The Village of Weston is committed to using all tools at its disposal. Its WI Department of Commerce Revolving Loan Fund has spawned 3 out of the last 4 Marathon County Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year Award recipients. The fund has loaned out over \$750,000 to six companies. Four of these RLF recipients are/will be tenants of the business & technology park - creating somewhat of a financial incubator. The Village's Revolving Loan Fund is administered by the local Chamber of Commerce.

The Village has established a Community Development Authority to further aid in the financing of economic development and carrying out redevelopment projects.

The Village Administrator is an active member of WEDA - supported by the Village Board. The Village is also active in lobbying for legislation that supports economic development efforts.