

Economic Development Policy Analysis

For the Cities of Long Prairie, Little Falls, Walker, Brainerd, and Wadena

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Region Five Photos at <http://s1184.photobucket.com/home/mnregionfive>

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Introduction

The following document analyzes Long Prairie, Little Falls, Walker, Brainerd, and Wadena city policies relating to Land Use. This document is one piece of a larger analysis that addresses the five cities' policies regarding topics of land use, transportation, housing, economic development, parks, trails, open space, and recreation, water and natural resources, intergovernmental coordination, and healthcare. To ensure clarity, each topic is analyzed separately in its own document. Research and analysis was undertaken to provide the Region Five Development Consortium with a clearer understanding of how current policies relate and differ from each other across the cities. The following analysis will be helpful for workgroups to develop regional policies and recommendations, which will be adopted by the full consortium to guide the future growth and development of Region Five in a sustainable manner.

Methodology

The following policies were taken from the most recent comprehensive plans from the cities of Long Prairie, Little Falls, Walker, Brainerd, and Wadena. This document addresses the similarities, differences, and potential conflicts between city policies regarding land use. Due to the uniqueness of each plan, not all cities addressed similar issues around the topic at hand. For this reason, policies were only included if at least two of the five cities addressed the issue. Additionally, each city's policies are written at a different level of specificity making it difficult to compare/contrast a detailed policy with a vague policy. For the purpose of this analysis, policies were considered similar to each other even when they differ on the level of detail.

For this analysis, sub-topics were created to guide the reader throughout the document. For example, this document contains sub-topics of economic diversification, tax base, jobs and employment and so forth. Under each sub-topic, similarities, differences, and conflicts between city policies on an issue were analyzed and grouped into categories. Categories are listed as follows: Very Similar, Similar, Somewhat Similar, Unique/Potentially Conflicting, and Unique. Policies in the Very Similar category are ones that relate to each other at a clear level of specificity; policies under the Similar category are ones that relate in vision but not in detail; policies under the Somewhat Similar category relate to each other more similarly than uniquely; policies under Unique/Potentially Conflicting category are in potential disagreement with other policies pertaining to the same issue; and policies that are considered unique have some relationship to the issue at hand but are not similar to each other. Due to policies relating to more than one sub-topic, it is possible that the same policy will be included across sub-topics and categories. It is also possible that not all categories were used in this document, depending on how city policies relate to each other.

To make it clear to understand, each policy has been assigned a color that corresponds with a city. The county color code can be seen in the footer of each page. Additionally, text that is

bolded and highlighted signifies the relationship between policies under a category. Furthermore, a sources list is included below in this methodology section to provide readers with links to each city's most updated comprehensive plan.

Sources

1) Long Prairie 1999 Comprehensive Plan:

<https://r5dcscrp.basecamphq.com/projects/7032816/file/100569548/Long%20Prairie%20Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf>

2) Little Falls Comprehensive Plan 2006-2020

<https://r5dcscrp.basecamphq.com/projects/7032816/file/101701381/Little%20Falls%20Comp%20Plan0001.pdf>

3) Walker Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2010)

http://www.communitygrowth.com/asset/ldkjz5/Walker-Plan_Final_050310.pdf

4) Brainerd Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2004)

<http://www.ci.brainerd.mn.us/planning/docs/compplan.pdf>

5) City of Wadena Comprehensive Plan (adopted 1986)

<https://r5dcscrp.basecamphq.com/projects/7032816/file/101701382/Wadena%20Comp%20Plan.pdf>

It should be noted that the following policy analysis includes goals and strategies from the Northern Minnesota Tribal Economic Development Commission (NMTEDC) Strategic Plan. The plan was shared with the project by the NMTEDC. The Economic Development Policy Analysis and the Intergovernmental Coordination Policy Analysis are the only two to include these goals and policies. Policies from these documents have their own designation in the color code. These policies are included to assist the Region Five Development Consortium with an opportunity to view and understand the economic development goals of the three tribes, as they may relate to the policies outlined in the comprehensive plans of the five cities.

Findings

I. Economic Diversification

Long Prairie, Brainerd, and Wadena include very similar policies focusing on economic diversification. All three communities encourage/support/promote the diversification of the economic base, and both Long Prairie and Wadena specifically want to provide a wide range of goods and services to residents through this diversification. Long Prairie and Wadena include additional policies relating economic diversification as well. Long Prairie seeks to both market the City more aggressively to attract diverse industries and promote a collaborative effort among various governments and agencies to pursue a wide range of economic opportunities. On a similar note, Wadena aims to guide future growth in a way that provides a wide range of living, working, shopping, and recreational opportunities for residents.

II. Downtown

The downtown policies in the economic development policy analysis are categorized into four sub-topics: Economic Development Downtown, Improving Downtown Access and Use, Downtown Diversification, and Downtown Aesthetics. Wadena and the Tribal Plan do not include downtown policies relating to economic development.

The first sub-topic includes broad policies addressing each city's approach to economic development in the downtown district. All the policies are unique. Long Prairie includes a general policy seeking to maintain the downtown area/Highway 71 Business District as a center for commercial activity and social interaction. Little Falls incorporates two policies, the first discussing the use of tax increment financing and redevelopment plans to achieve goals for the downtown area and the second seeking to create a climate which promotes the establishment of more, higher skilled jobs downtown. Walker seeks to use its location as the government center to support economic opportunities downtown. Finally, Brainerd includes three unique policies which promote the creation of a Downtown Master Plan, the use of private, local, state, and federal funds to encourage redevelopment downtown, and the enforcement of downtown development guidelines.

Four policies relate to improving access to and use of the downtown area. Long Prairie and Walker include somewhat similar policies, with Long Prairie seeking to improve links to the downtown area to provide travelers with an opportunity to visit downtown businesses and Walker working to connect neighborhoods to the downtown business community. Somewhat similarly, Brainerd seeks to use the river and trails to improve access to the downtown district. Little Falls' policy is unique in that it seeks to make downtown more user-friendly, but does not elaborate.

Little Falls and Brainerd both encourage economic diversification downtown in order to improve its viability. Little Falls seeks to secure more diverse uses downtown, while Brainerd simply states that it will support economic viability and diversification in the Downtown Commercial District.

Finally, both Long Prairie and Little Falls seek to improve aesthetics in the downtown area. Long Prairie will support downtown landowners in the improvement of building conditions and general appearance while Little Falls seeks to use revolving funds to assist property owners in

making building and site improvements. (Though this policy does not specifically reference the downtown area, it was included in the Downtown Commerce portion of the plan and was, therefore, placed in the topic of Downtown.) Little Falls also wants to enhance the appearance of downtown using landscaping and decorative lighting.

III. Tourism

Long Prairie, Walker, and the Tribal Plan include unique policies addressing tourism. Long Prairie wants to work with the Chamber of Commerce to develop themes of interest to potential visitors while also promoting points of interest in the Long Prairie area. The city seeks to work with the Long Prairie Tourism & Visitors Bureau to develop a promotional package, advertise places of interest with signage, and find a stable method of funding for the Tourism & Visitors Bureau. Walker seeks to enhance the public realm in a way that provides a memorable experience for visitors and the tribal plan recommends marketing the Northern Tribes to cultural and eco-tourists.

IV. Existing Business Development and Expansion

Long Prairie and Walker include unique policies relating to the development and expansion of existing businesses. Long Prairie aims to use incentive plans judiciously to encourage existing business expansion, endorse efforts by both the public and private sector to develop incentives for existing business expansion, and support efforts to retain existing businesses while recruiting new ones. These policies also mention attracting new businesses and are repeated in the following topic (see VIA). Walker wants to find ways for local businesses to complement and support each other in a competitive, regional market.

V. Attracting/Expanding New Businesses

Long Prairie and Brainerd include somewhat similar policies addressing the need to attract and support new businesses. Both policies mention developing incentives or incentive plans to attract and support new businesses, but differ in terminology. Long Prairie seeks to use incentive plans judiciously and endorse efforts the efforts of the public and private sector in the development of these incentive plans. Brainerd's policy is slightly broader, actively promoting development and redevelopment efforts within the community, including financial incentives, with the goal of attracting new businesses. Somewhat similar to these policies, Long Prairie wants to retain existing businesses while recruiting new ones and market the City more aggressively to attract diverse industry. Long Prairie includes a unique policy, seeking to explore the development of agricultural facilities to improve the agricultural economy in the area. Brainerd also includes a unique policy stating that land use within Brainerd should enhance the community's ability to attract businesses. The Tribal Plan includes an overarching goal of developing and operating new businesses and three supporting strategies to achieve this goal: recommending specific business ventures relating to housing and building construction (specifically structural insulated panels), determining cost-effective and revenue creating alternatives to check cashing and cash advance services, and identifying new markets for Native products.

Long Prairie and Brainerd include very similar policies seeking to create a favorable business climate to develop a strong economic base. Somewhat similarly, Little Falls wants to promote conditions which could lead to attracting high tech businesses. Walker and Little Falls include additional unique policies relating to the business climate. Walker wants to enhance the original character that makes it economic destination in the region, while Little Falls wants to create a climate which could attract higher skilled jobs downtown. An example outlined in this policy is the expansion of professional office space to attract jobs.

VI. Tax Base

Long Prairie, Little Falls, Walker, and Brainerd include similar policies addressing the expansion of the tax base within the city. All of the policies reference expanding the tax base through industrial or commercial development or emphasizing tax base expansion in economic development efforts.

VII. Jobs and Employment

Long Prairie, Walker, Brainerd, and Wadena include similar policies focusing specifically on the creation of jobs in the city. Many of these policies mention the expansion of the tax base as well, and are, therefore, repeated from the above topic (see IVA1). All of the policies seek to create job opportunities through business development or economic diversification. Similar to these policies, Little Falls includes three policies focusing on attracting higher skilled, professional jobs, specifically to increase the average family income. Also similar to the previous policies, Brainerd will promote development and redevelopment efforts emphasizing the attraction of jobs which provide a livable wage to the city. In a separate sub-topic, Long Prairie includes two unique policies which seek to maintain an ample, quality labor force through the use of existing and new resources and availability of housing.

VIII. Economic Infrastructure

Long Prairie and Walker include similar policies relating to economic infrastructure. Both communities seek to utilize (or maximize) the use of existing building sites and infrastructure in development efforts. Uniquely, Long Prairie recognizes the need to expand existing infrastructure to continue development and is the only plan to include a policy seeking to ensure that all residents have access to telecommunications infrastructure.

IX. Intergovernmental Coordination

Long Prairie, Brainerd, and the Tribal Plan include somewhat similar policies encouraging coordination with local, state, and federal governments and agencies. Long Prairie encourages and on-going cooperative effort among the City, Todd County, Long Prairie Township, other cities, state agencies in pursuing a wide range of economic opportunities. Additionally, Long Prairie mentions endorsing efforts by the “public sector” in developing meaningful economic

incentives for new and existing business expansion. Brainerd mentions encouraging quality commercial and industrial development through support and cooperation of the City Council (other agencies are mentioned in this policy, but are categorized in a different sub-topic). The policies included in the Tribal Plan are slightly broader, stating that a focus of the Northern Minnesota Tribal Economic Development Commission is to develop cooperative economic development efforts on behalf of the three Tribal Nations Investors and to act as a liaison to state, regional, national, and international organizations. Brainerd includes a unique policy focusing on the use of federal, state, local, and other financial resources to fund redevelopment downtown.

Long Prairie, Little Falls, and Brainerd include somewhat similar policies relating to coordination with the Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA). Long Prairie seeks to promote an ongoing cooperative effort among the EDA and HRA, as well as other government and nongovernment agencies. Little Falls' policy focuses more on the utilization of the Revolving Funds, specifically the EDA and HRA, to serve as a catalyst for redevelopment. Brainerd includes two policies, encouraging quality commercial and industrial development in cooperation with the EDA and other agencies and also strengthening and maintaining a diverse retail base through cooperation with the EDA and HRA.

X. Coordination with Other Agencies

Long Prairie and Brainerd include unique policies encouraging coordination with the local Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism & Visitors Bureau. Long Prairie promotes an ongoing cooperative effort with the Chamber of Commerce as well as other agencies. Additionally, the City of Long Prairie will endorse efforts by the Chamber of Commerce to develop themes of interest for potential visitors, work with the Tourism & Visitors Bureau to develop a promotional package, and find a stable method of funding for the Tourism & Visitors Bureau. Brainerd seeks to promote quality commercial and industrial development in the city and maintain and strengthen a diverse retail base through cooperation with business organizations (as well as other agencies).

Policy Analysis

I. Economic Diversification

A. Economic Diversification

1. Very Similar

- a) **Encourage expanded retail commercial services and industrial development to provide a full range of goods and services to the community**, provide employment opportunities to area residents, and increase the City's tax base

- b) **Support the development of a strong, diversified, and growing economic base** and create a favorable climate for economic development and ongoing business activities
- c) **To promote economic diversification which will provide for continued employment opportunities and reasonable access to a broad range of goods and services for community residents**

2. Similar to Above (IA1)

- a) **Market the City more aggressively to attract and expand diversified industries**
- b) **Promote an on-going cooperative effort** among the City, EDA, HRA, Long Prairie Enterprises, Chamber of Commerce, Todd County, Long Prairie Township, area cities, state agencies, local builders, business owners, and residents **to pursue a wide range of economic development opportunities**
- c) **To guide future growth in Wadena in such a manner as to create a full range of living, working, shopping, recreational and cultural opportunities for all residents**

II. Downtown

A. Economic Development Downtown

1. Unique

- a) **Maintain the Long Prairie Downtown/Highway 71 Business District as the center of commercial activity and social interaction.** Improve the links between the downtown area and Highway 71 to give travelers further opportunities to visit the downtown businesses
- b) **Continue use of tax increment financing and use of redevelopment plans to achieve the desired goal and policies for downtown**
- c) **Create a climate which could lead to the establishment of more, higher skilled jobs (e.g. professional offices which could attract such jobs) downtown**
- d) **Build on Walker's position as a government center to support economic opportunities within the downtown**

- e) **Complete the work underway with business owners, property owners and other stakeholders to implement the Downtown Master Plan for the Downtown Redevelopment District**
- f) **In addition to private investment, encourage the use of federal, state, local, and other financial resources to promote reinvestment and the rehabilitation of Downtown**
- g) **Formulate and enforce city ordinances to ensure development in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan, including downtown development guidelines, and general commercial development requirements**

B. Improving Access to Downtown

1. Somewhat Similar

- a) Maintain the Long Prairie Downtown/Highway 71 Business District as the center of commercial activity and social interaction. **Improve the links between the downtown area and Highway 71 to give travelers further opportunities to visit the downtown businesses**
- b) **Work to connect Walker's neighborhoods to the downtown business community**

2. Somewhat Similar to Above (IIB1)

- a) **Re-focus development efforts to take advantage of the River and the regional Trails to improve** the character and **access to the Downtown area**

3. Unique

- a) **Continue to make downtown more user friendly**

C. Downtown Diversification

1. Somewhat Similar

- a) **Make downtown more viable, significant, and attractive by securing more diverse uses**, retaining its historic character, enhancing its connection to the Mississippi River, while continuing to use and protect this water resource
- b) **Support the economic viability and diversification of the Downtown Commercial District**

2. Unique

- a) **Retain and attract the appropriate mix of retail/service business activity and housing opportunities in Downtown**

D. Downtown Aesthetics

1. Somewhat Similar

- a) **Support downtown landowners to continue to improve building conditions, facades, and the general appearance of the downtown commercial area**
- b) **Assist property owners in making site and building improvements by using the revolving funds**

2. Similar to Above (IID1)

- a) **Enhance the image and function of downtown by extending decorative lighting, street signs and landscaping beyond the 2006 limits**

III. Tourism

A. Promoting Tourism

1. Unique

- a) **Endorse the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce to develop themes of interest for potential visitors to the Long Prairie area**
- b) **Promote points of interest within the Long Prairie area**
- c) **Cooperate with the Long Prairie Tourism & Visitors Bureau in the development of a promotional package**
- d) **Place advertising signage in high-profile areas which emphasize places of interest in the Long Prairie area**
- e) **Assist in the development and maintenance of a stable method of funding for the Long Prairie Tourism & Visitor's Bureau**
- f) **Enhance the public realm in a way that provides a memorable experience for visitors**
- g) **Develop, review, and recommend to the Commission a plan to market the Northern Tribes to eco-tourists and cultural tourists**

IV. Existing Business Development and Expansion

A. Development and Expansion of Existing Business/Industry

1. Unique

- a) **Utilize incentive plans judiciously** for the purpose of attracting new industrial, retail and service types of businesses to the community and **to encourage the expansion of existing businesses**
- b) **Endorse the efforts of the private and public sectors in the development of meaningful economic incentives for existing or new business expansion**
- c) **Continue to support efforts to retain existing businesses while recruiting additional ones**
- d) **Seek ways for local businesses to complement and support each other within a competitive, regional market**

V. Attracting/Expanding New Businesses

A. Attracting/Expanding New Businesses

1. Somewhat Similar

- a) **Utilize incentive plans judiciously for the purpose of attracting new industrial, retail and service types of businesses to the community** and to encourage the expansion of existing businesses
- b) **Endorse the efforts of the private and public sectors in the development of meaningful economic incentives for existing or new business expansion**
- c) **Actively promote development and redevelopment within the community, including financial incentives, with particular emphasis on attracting and supporting businesses** that provide livable-wage jobs

2. Somewhat Similar to Above (VA1)

- d) **Continue to support efforts to retain existing businesses while recruiting additional ones**
- e) **Market the City more aggressively to attract and expand diversified industries**

3. Unique

- a) **Explore the developments of other types of agricultural-related facilities in the area that would benefit the area's agricultural background and economy**
- b) **Continue to plan for land uses to support and enhance Brainerd's ability to attract quality development, by providing adequate quality areas for new business development**
- c) **Develop and Operate New Businesses**
 - i. **Develop, review, and recommend to the Commission, specific business ventures relating to housing and building construction, specifically SIP's (structural insulated panels)**
 - ii. **Review cash access companies serving the gaming industry including ATM, check cashing and cash advance services to determine the cost-effective and revenue creating alternatives**
 - iii. **Develop, review, and recommend to the Commission, specific opportunities relating to the developing Native products and identifying new markets for them**

B. Maintaining a Favorable Business Climate

1. Very Similar

- a) **Maintain a favorable climate for ongoing business activities and continue the development of a strong and balanced economic base**
- b) **Support the development of a strong, diversified, and growing economic base and create a favorable climate for economic development and ongoing business activities**

2. Somewhat Similar to Above (VB1)

- a) **Promote conditions and take action** which improve or lead to improvement of site and building conditions **which lead to attracting high tech business** and professional jobs

3. Unique

- a) **Enhance the original community character that makes Walker an economic destination in the region**

- b) **Create a climate which could lead to the establishment of more, higher skilled jobs (e.g. professional offices which could attract such jobs) downtown**

VI. Tax Base

A. Expanding City Tax Base

1. Similar

- a) **Encourage expanded retail commercial services and industrial development to provide a full range of goods and services to the community, provide employment opportunities to area residents, and increase the City's tax base**
- b) **Expand the value of the City's business and industrial tax base**
- c) **Look for innovative and cost-effective ways to grow jobs and tax base through business development**
- d) **Emphasize tax base expansion and job creation in economic development efforts by the city**

VII. Jobs and Employment

A. Attracting/Creating Jobs

1. Similar

- a) **Encourage expanded retail commercial services and industrial development to provide a full range of goods and services to the community, provide employment opportunities to area residents, and increase the City's tax base**
- b) **Look for innovative and cost-effective ways to grow jobs and tax base through business development**
- c) **Emphasize tax base expansion and job creation in economic development efforts by the city**
- d) **To promote economic diversification which will provide for continued employment opportunities and reasonable access to a broad range of goods and services for community residents**

2. Similar to Above (VIIA1)

- a) **Promote conditions conducive to attracting better jobs (more skilled/more technical and professional positions) with higher wages and achieve a significant increase in the average family income**
- b) **Create a climate which could lead to the establishment of more, higher skilled jobs (e.g. professional offices which could attract such jobs) downtown**
- c) **Promote conditions and take action** which improve or lead to improvement of site and building conditions **which lead to attracting high tech business and professional jobs**
- d) **Actively promote development and redevelopment within the community, including financial incentives, with particular emphasis on attracting and supporting businesses that provide livable-wage jobs**

B. Maintaining a Labor Force

1. Unique

- a) Cooperatively utilize the existing resources in the community and develop new resources for industrial and economic growth and **ensure a quality labor force**
- b) **Encourage the availability of housing to ensure an ample labor force**

VIII. Economic Infrastructure

A. Economic Infrastructure

1. Similar

- a) **Develop strategies to stimulate the redevelopment of under-utilized sites and the development of vacant land and buildings.** The former armory building is a site of immediate concern
- b) **Prioritize approaches to economic development that maximize the use of existing buildings and infrastructure**

2. Unique

- a) **Recognize the need to upgrade and expand existing city infrastructure to support and promote continued development**

- b) **Ensure that Long Prairie continues to have access to telecommunication infrastructure**

IX. Intergovernmental Coordination

A. Coordination Among Local, State, and Federal Governments/Agencies

1. Somewhat Similar

- a) **Promote an on-going cooperative effort among the City, EDA, HRA, Long Prairie Enterprises, Chamber of Commerce, Todd County, Long Prairie Township, area cities, state agencies,** local builders, business owners, and residents to pursue a wide range of economic development opportunities
- b) **Endorse the efforts of the private and public sectors in the development of meaningful economic incentives for existing or new business expansion**
- c) **Promote and encourage quality commercial and industrial development in the city through the support and cooperation of the City Council,** EDA, the Brainerd Lakes Development Corporation (BLADC), business organizations and community leaders
- d) **One of the key strategic focuses of the NMTDEC will be to develop cooperative economic development efforts and other mutually beneficial projects on behalf of the three Tribal Nations Investors**
- e) **One of the key roles the NMTEDC can play for its members is to act as a liason to the state, region, national, and international organizations**

2. Unique

- a) **In addition to private investment, encourage the use of federal, state, local, and other financial resources to promote reinvestment and the rehabilitation of Downtown**

B. Economic Development Authority and Housing and Redevelopment Authority

1. Somewhat Similar

- a) **Promote an on-going cooperative effort among the City, EDA, HRA,** Long Prairie Enterprises, Chamber of Commerce, Todd County, Long Prairie Township, area cities, state agencies, local builders, business owners, and residents **to pursue a wide range of economic development opportunities**

- b) **Continue to use leveraging and the Revolving Funds (Economic Development Authority, Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Downtown Special Service District, Historic Development Committee) to serve as a catalyst for rehabilitation of structures and for redevelopment**
- c) **Promote and encourage quality commercial and industrial development in the city through the support and cooperation of the** City Council, **EDA**, the Brainerd Lakes Development Corporation (BLADC), business organizations and community leaders
- d) **Strengthen and maintain a diverse retail base through the cooperation of the Brainerd Economic Development Authority, (EDA), Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)**, BLADC, business organizations and community leaders

X. Coordination with Other Agencies

A. Coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Agencies

1. Unique

- a) **Promote an on-going cooperative effort among the City, EDA, HRA, Long Prairie Enterprises, Chamber of Commerce, Todd County, Long Prairie Township, area cities, state agencies, local builders, business owners, and residents to pursue a wide range of economic development opportunities**
- b) **Endorse the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce to develop themes of interest for potential visitors to the Long Prairie area**
- c) **Cooperate with the Long Prairie Tourism & Visitors Bureau in the development of a promotional package**
- d) **Assist in the development and maintenance of a stable method of funding for the Long Prairie Tourism & Visitor's Bureau**
- e) **Promote and encourage quality commercial and industrial development in the city through the support and cooperation of the** City Council, **EDA**, the Brainerd Lakes Development Corporation (BLADC), **business organizations** and community leaders

- f) **Strengthen and maintain a diverse retail base through the cooperation of the Brainerd Economic Development Authority, (EDA), Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), BLADC, business organizations and community leaders**