

**MRRPC**

Providing Planning and Economic Development  
Services to Improve the Region's Environment,  
Economy and Quality of Life

Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission  
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La Crosse, WI 54601

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## MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018

Providing Planning and Economic Development Services to  
Improve the Region's Environment, Economy and Quality of Life

54th  
Anniversary  
1964-2018

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### Coulee Region Business Center Benefits from \$45,000 Federal Economic Development Administration-EDA Grant

A unique partnership comprised of the Coulee Region Business Center, Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, La Crosse Area Development Corporation, La Crosse Industrial Park Corporation, City of La Crosse, UW-L Small Business Development Center and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission coalesced to develop and fund a study on the future of the 30 year-old Coulee Region Business Center, the second longest operating business incubator in the state. A \$45,000 technical assistance grant award from the US Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration was matched with \$45,000 from the CRBC, LIPCO and the City to fund this feasibility study for the Center. The feasibility study will research the demand for a fabrication lab, a second stage food processing, packaging and distribution operation, training facilities for people needing workforce reentry assistance as well as a site search for expansion since the Center is most always at or near full capacity. The MRRPC staff assisted in writing and organizing meetings on this successful grant award.

### RLF Loan Approved for Driftless Brewing Company of Soldiers Grove

The CMV Fund administered by the MRRPC recently closed on a loan to the Driftless Brewing Company, a craft brewery in Soldiers Grove. This loan sourced from the Federal Economic Development Administration totaled \$100,000 and leveraged an additional \$820,000 in bank, SBA 504, WEDC and owner equity financing. It is expected that DBC will create at least 4 new full time jobs. This craft brewery has tremendous community support and will provide another popular venue to attract tourism to the region. Since inception the four RLFs the MRRPC administers have made 81 business loans totaling over \$4.8 million creating or retaining over 700 jobs and leveraging over \$46 million in private financing. For more information on how to apply for these loan funds go to our web site at [www.mrrpc.com](http://www.mrrpc.com).

### Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission Plan Nearing Completion

In 2017 the Wisconsin—Mississippi River Parkway Commission that oversees the promotional development of the Great River Road contracted with the MRRPC to update the Mississippi River Parkway Commission's Corridor Management Plan. The Great River



*In 2012 the Wisconsin Section of the Great River Road was named the most scenic drive in the U.S. in a Huffington Post poll, beating out the Big Sur Coastal drive in California and the Hana Highway in Hawaii.*

Road—A Federally Designated National Scenic Byway flanks the Mississippi River as it winds its way from Lake Itasca, Minnesota to Venice, Louisiana in the Gulf of Mexico. This southerly traverse includes 250 miles on Wisconsin's western border. Here the GRR connects 33 river towns nestled between the river and bluffs. As part of the planning process MRRPC staff and MRPC Commissioners inventoried and rated 132 public facilities in eight counties. This inventory work found that the public facilities were in good condition and for the most part well maintained. From this inventory and other assessment methods four Management Plan goals have also been developed as part of the planning process, these are:

#### Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission Goals

- Goal 1. Develop sustainable policies, programs, and practices in areas critical to the long-term success of the Wisconsin Great River Road National Scenic Byway.
- Goal 2. Develop and implement education programs that increase knowledge of the Wisconsin Great River Road among students, residents, business owners, and elected officials.

- Goal 3. Cultivate regional collaboration and promotion that maximizes the economic and preservation benefits of the Wisconsin Great River Road for byway communities.
- Goal 4. Preserve and expand the resources that define the visitor experience of the Wisconsin Great River Road and for which it was designated a National Scenic Byway.

Action items to guide the Parkway Commission to implement these goals have also been developed that include exploring an Executive Director position to assist in the daily operations and development of uniform signage to better inform travelers and residents of its numerous venues that also benefits communities and businesses far inland from the Mississippi River Valley.

### Scenic Mississippi River Transit - SMRT Bus Service Adds La Crosse to Tomah Route

In October 2017, based on the findings of a public transit feasibility study completed by La Crosse County, La Crosse Area Planning Committee, and the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission the SMRT Bus expanded service to Monroe County. This pilot



In the fall of 2017 the SMRT Bus started running two round trips a day from La Crosse to Tomah. This is in addition to the 7 round trips a day from Viroqua to La Crosse and 3 round trips a day from Prairie du Chien to La Crosse.

route was initially funded locally, but in 2018 Federal rural transit funds channeled through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation funds were awarded for this expanded service providing two round trips per day, one in the morning and one in the evening that serve Tomah, Sparta, West Salem and La Crosse. A grant to fund an additional bus for the SMRT System has recently been approved by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation which will help establish a mid-day route for the Tomah-La Crosse service.

The original SMRT bus service began in December 2012 with routes serving La Crosse, Viroqua and Prairie du Chien and some communities in between. Ridership continually increased until 2017 when it declined by 6%. Some of this reduction may be attributed to Organic Valley moving some of its workers (SMRT Bus riders) from La Farge to its new site in Cashton. Now in 2018 ridership has rebounded. The first quarter of 2018 saw an 11% increase in ridership over 2017. Ridership surveys continue to show that riders are very satisfied with the service. Over 97% of survey respondents said they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the service. The SMRT Bus success led to it being recognized by Wisconsin Rural Partners as one of Wisconsin's Top Rural Development Initiatives in 2017. The SMRT bus reduces commuter traffic, and the demand for expensive

parking spaces in downtowns, at hospitals, clinics and colleges. Funding from businesses, local governments, the fare box and a federal transit program provide the funding needed to keep the SMRT bus running. The MRRPC assists in marketing and raising funds from the private and public sectors to match a U.S. Department of Transportation Grant to cover operations. MRRPC staff also regularly evaluates routes and schedules in order to provide the best utilization of the service to keep the SMRT bus service operational for years to come.

### City of La Crosse and City of Arcadia Applying for \$ Millions in Federal EDA Funding to Reduce Economic Losses From Future Flood Events

Severe rain storms, flooding and mud slides during the period of June 19th through the 23rd of 2017 caused extreme economic hardship to the cities of La



Ashley Furniture Flooding in the City of Arcadia in June 2017.

Crosse and Arcadia. The deluge of rain and storm water runoff exceeded the capacity of storm pipes, lift stations, pumps and booster stations in La Crosse causing damages to roads and other critical infrastructure and disruption of commerce. Like wise the City of Arcadia experienced the same catastrophe plus a levy breach causing floodwaters to inundate Ashley Furniture with its 3,000 employees and part of the downtown.

To help deal with these problems city officials, MRRPC staff and a representative from the U.S. Department of Commerce- Economic Development Administration met to discuss mitigation projects to prevent such extreme economic losses from happening again. After a series of proposals were discussed the following projects were decided on to be the best fit for two grants that are now being prepared with MRRPC staff assistance.

The City of La Crosse will be applying for a \$3.0 million federal EDA grant to upsize the wet well, increase pumping capacity and storm water pipe size at the Taylor Street and George Street lift station. At the Moore Street and Rose Street lift station the City will be applying for grant funds to install an additional pump. The City will also be applying for grant funds for the Monitor Street and Lang Drive lift station that will be used to install a new lift station with greater capacity plus adding a secondary booster station.

The City of Arcadia will be applying for a \$5-10 million federal EDA grant for an internal drainage system involving a new main storm

city. Some of the projects that have been identified are: improve signage along major streets identifying facilities not located along those streets; construct a bike path/route connecting the Park Bowl to the existing bike path north of the city, and upgrade existing play structures.

*Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it. Alan Lakein*

### Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans for all Nine Counties to be Completed in 2018

The most recent Federal Transportation Bill "Fixing America's Surface Transport Act" (FAST Act) requires planning requirements for local governments to receive funding under the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program (s85.21), and 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Programs. Federal transit law requires that projects selected for funding under these programs be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. In 2006, 2008, and 2013 MRRPC staff assisted each of the region's nine counties to develop their Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans. Now these plans are required to be updated. The public planning process will involve representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and providers with public input received during the planning process. A regional public transportation coordination meeting will be facilitated by the MRRPC in July 2018 to gather input into the plans. The plans need to be completed by October 15, 2018. These plan updates allow the counties to maintain their eligibility for various transit funding programs that mostly serve the low income, handicapped, and elderly populations. The plans will focus on better service to the disadvantaged, sustainable service levels, improving efficiency through technology, innovation, coordination and improved marketing of the transportation services available. Specific actions describing how various goals will be implemented will be included in each county plan.

### 2017 MRRPC Audit.

Mr. Michael Temp, CPA, Tostrud and Temp, S.C. reported the findings of the 2017 Audit at the April 11, 2018, Commission meeting. Mr. Temp stated that the MRPC was given an unqualified audit opinion, meaning they found that the MRRPC followed generally accepted accounting principles in the preparation of its financial statements and that the financial statements can be relied upon to provide an accurate picture of the Commission's finances. The Governmental Fund Statement showed revenues of \$395,376 and operating expenses of \$380,236. Assets totaled \$331,240 with liabilities of \$21,203 resulting in a fund balance of \$310,037 on December 31, 2017. The business revolving loan funds audit reports that since inception \$4,870,090 has been loaned to businesses and \$431,394 is presently owed to the respective revolving loan funds.

Region's Tourism Spending			
Jurisdiction	2016 Tourism-Visitor Business Sales \$	2017 Tourism-Visitor Business Sales \$	Percent Change
Buffalo	19,500,000	20,200,000	3.59
Crawford	62,600,000	64,000,000	2.24
Jackson	54,200,000	57,900,000	6.83
La Crosse	405,700,000	426,500,000	5.13
Monroe	121,800,000	126,600,000	3.94
Pepin	11,100,000	11,900,000	7.21
Pierce	49,900,000	53,400,000	7.02
Trempealeau	50,600,000	52,000,000	2.77
Vernon	57,100,000	58,100,000	1.75
Region	832,500,000	870,600,000	4.58
Wisconsin	19,967,700,000	20,607,400,000	3.2

Source: Wisconsin Department of Tourism. Visitor Business Sales is defined as revenue from recreation, lodging, restaurants, attractions and visitor expenditures traced to food wholesalers, farmers, utilities, marketing, publishing etc., plus ripple effect of tourism employee expenditures

### Regional Tourism Spending Increases 5% in 2017.

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism visitor expenditure data table above shows that direct visitor expenditures in the region totaled \$870.6 million in 2017 a 5% increase over 2016. The MRRPC's emphasis on planning and improving recreational opportunities helps the region's tourism industry and improves the quality of life for its citizens.

### MRRPC Commissioners

- Buffalo County**  
John Schlesselman, Del Twidt, Mary Anne McMillan Urell
- Crawford County**  
Gerald Krachey, Ron Leys, Greg Russell
- Jackson County**  
Ron Carney, Todd Stittleburg, Brad Chown
- La Crosse County**  
Vicki Burke (Secretary/Treasurer), James Ehram, Shelly Miller
- Monroe County**  
Sharon Folcey, James Kuhn (Chairman), Cedric Schnitzler
- Pepin County**  
James Kraft, Bruce Peterson, Gerald Bauer
- Pierce County**  
Richard Purdy, James Ross, William Schroeder
- Trempealeau County**  
Margaret Baecker (Vice Chairman), Phillip Borreson, Ernest Vold
- Vernon County**  
Herb Cornell, Nancy Jaekel, Jo Ann Nickelatti

### Village of Ontario Economic Development Plan Completed

The Village of Ontario requested MRRPC assistance in preparing an Economic Development Plan. The MRRPC worked with the Village's Economic Development Committee over the last eighteen months and assisted with creating their Plan. As with most small rural communities, the Village has vacant storefronts, public infrastructure needs, and is looking for ways to attract more people (residents and tourists) to their community. As part of the plan process, the Economic Development Committee facilitated public input through public outreach meetings and surveys and as a result developed economic development plan goals with prioritized "Action Items". Examples of the highest priority action items include:

- Establish a Farmer's Market in the Village.
- Promote intergenerational activities in the Village.
- Continue to maintain and update the Village website that serves as a portal for tourism information and includes appropriate resource information for existing and new business owners considering locating in the Village.
- Identify and pursue funding for a streetscape concept that can create a unique visual identity for the Village.
- Explore and promote additional amenities that would serve the needs of residents and tourists.

The Village Economic Development Committee continues to meet monthly and is working on many of the Economic Development Plan's recommendations and action items.

### Crawford County Hazard Mitigation Plan Nearing Completion

Staff is assisting Crawford County with the update to their multi-hazard mitigation plan. These plans maintain the county and other participating local governments' eligibility for Federal and State Hazard Mitigation Grant programs.

The plan is expected to be completed by the end of August 2018. These plans provide a listing of hazard mitigation projects that are designed to reduce damages to buildings, economic losses and threats to health and public safety from future disasters. The plans cover 19 natural hazards such as tornadoes, flooding, blizzards, and extreme heat and three manmade hazards involving train derailments, river traffic cargo and pandemic flu. When the Plan is completed and approved by the County, Wisconsin Emergency Management and FEMA the county will be eligible for federal and state hazard mitigation grant funding that can help pay for the projects identified in their plan. Some projects identified are: investigate the costs and benefits of installing automated gauges on the Kickapoo River; develop a flood warning and evacu-



Flooding in City of Prairie du Chien

ation plan for Mississippi River floodplain property owners in the City of Prairie du Chien and the towns of Prairie du Chien, Bridgeport, and Eastman; update the existing list of buildings that can be used as shelters during disasters like extreme heat and cold events; undertake erosion control and road improvements at the City's reservoir, and install safe rooms in trailer parks.

### Trempealeau County Hazard Mitigation Plan Nearing Completion

The Trempealeau County Hazard Mitigation Plan will address 21 hazards from blizzards, high winds tornadoes, flooding to train derailments. The plan provides information on each of the hazards, i.e. how often they occur, how much damage they have caused and how likely each is to occur again and the amount of damage that will occur. Flooding is by far the hazard the county is the most vulnerable to. There are over 600 parcels that have a structure on them that is located in the 100-year flood plain. The plan will also provide a list of mitigation projects. These projects developed by each local government will prevent or lessen the loss of life or structures in the event of a hazard occurring. Some of the projects identified are: purchase backup generator for municipal buildings, install larger culverts, conduct a voluntary buyout of homes and businesses located in the 100-year floodplain, purchase electronic moveable road signs for warning of flash flooding or road closures, undertake bank stabilization on roads to prevent landslides, develop a list of shelters that can be used to house residents in the event of flooding, tornadoes extreme heat or cold events. Multi-hazard mitigation plans maintain the county's and other participating local governments' eligibility for Federal and State Hazard Mitigation Grant programs.

### City of Viroqua Recreation Plan Nearing Completion

Creating and maintaining quality recreation opportunities contribute greatly to a community's quality of life. Community recreation opportunities also play an important role in attracting businesses and a high quality workforce. Recreation planning is an activity the MRRPC assists counties and communities with. By preparing and updating these plans local governments become eligible to apply for grants under the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Wisconsin Stewardship Grant Program. Land acquisition, easement purchases, boat landings, trails, bathroom facilities, handicap fishing piers, and public campground improvements are types of projects the MRRPC has helped plan for and fund through grant writing. Recently the MRRPC has been assisting the City of Viroqua in updating their outdoor recreation plan. The plan identifies existing outdoor recreation facilities and will also provide a list of recreation projects the city would like to undertake to improve outdoor recreation opportunities within the



Court Street Park– Viroqua

sewer lift station, upgrades to five other lift stations, and sewer drainage channels to protect Ashley Furniture's manufacturing operations and the City's downtown from flooding should a breach in a new levy that is currently being planned occur. The reason for the wide range in the costs is the Army Corps of Engineers has not yet determined the capacity requirements for the internal drainage system that will be needed for the levy. The City is waiting on this analysis from the Corp to determine exactly what public facility upgrades are needed to meet the requirement of the new levy that the Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Wisconsin will be funding.

### Trempealeau County Comprehensive Plans Nearing Completion

In 2016, the MRRPC contracted with the County to update comprehensive plans for the towns of Albion, Burnside, Caledonia, Chimney Rock, Dodge, Ettrick, Gale, Hale, Lincoln, Pigeon, Preston, Sumner, and Trempealeau. The Town plans were originally adopted in 2007-2008 and are required to be updated every 10 years. The planning process for updating the plans is nearly complete, as the Towns have conducted or scheduled public hearings for the final plan drafts. Once the comprehensive plan public hearings have been completed final plan modifications will be made and provided to Towns for final approval. It is anticipated all Town Plans will be completed by this Fall.

During the comprehensive plan update process, town plans for the most part have had similar goals of preserving agricultural land and the rural lifestyle. The towns have also recommended land use districts that manage the location and density of housing in the rural areas focusing most growth near existing cities/villages or existing rural developments. In an effort to manage the location and intensity of frac sand mining in the County, the Land Management Department developed a Non-metallic Mining Overlay District as an option for Towns to consider in the plan update process. Land designated in a non-metallic mining overlay district, non-metallic mining permits would be viewed favorably during the conditional use process provided all ordinance requirements are met. Requests for non-metallic mines outside such a district would be viewed unfavorably. A non-metallic mining overlay district would provide a much greater level of certainty for existing and future residents as they would know their investment in a home or property would be better protected from a non-metallic mine. Likewise, for a non-metallic mine developer they would know their non-metallic mining operation is located in an area favorable to non-metallic mining. During the comprehensive plan update process, the majority of Towns determined they do not want to be located in a Non-metallic Mining Overlay District proposed to address the expansion of frac sand mining in Trempealeau County.

### Buffalo County Zoning Ordinance Going to County Board for Adoption Consideration

Since 2015 the MRRPC staff has been working with Buffalo County to prepare a new zoning ordinance and zoning maps. Wisconsin

Statutes call for zoning ordinances to be consistent with a comprehensive plan. The County adopted their comprehensive plan in 2013 and updating the county's zoning ordinance was a key recommendation of the plan. During meetings with the county zoning committee and the towns it was decided to implement density based housing zoning districts that will meet state farmland preservation requirements, so eligible land owners can receive farmland preservation tax credits. With these provisions in mind 9 zoning districts were created. Five of the districts are agricultural based and are established to preserve farmland. The 9 zoning districts are: 1) ANR- 40 Agriculture/Natural Resource - 40 Acres; 2) ANR- 20 Agriculture/Natural Resource - 20 Acres; 3) ANR- 10 Agriculture/Natural Resource - 10 Acres; 4) ANR- 5 Agriculture/Natural Resource - 5 Acres; 5) ANRT-5 Agriculture/Natural Resource Transition - 5 Acres which is intended for lands transitioning from agriculture to a more higher density use; 6) R Residential created to establish and protect the essential characteristics of areas within which predominantly high density residential development not served by public sewer and water facilities should occur; 7) CONS Conservation which consists primarily of county, state, and federally owned lands established to protect and preserve the natural features, wetlands and waterways; 8) C Commercial which are locations for commercial establishments that are not industrial in nature; and 9) I Industrial which are uses which have heavy volumes of traffic, noise and potential need for rail access which could pose a nuisance in other districts.

The process to update the ordinance involved three steps. First the list of the above mentioned zoning districts was shared with the towns for them to prepare their town zoning map and submit it the County. While the towns were working on their zoning maps the county worked on the wording of the ordinance and then when they received the town zoning ordinance maps back they then developed the final text of the ordinance. A draft ordinance was then created with the new combined zoning text and maps. Five public input meetings on the first draft were held in January and February 2018 throughout the county. Comments from the public were received at these meetings. The part of the ordinance that has caused the most concern in the first meetings was a requirement for a cement floor in new poultry barns. Farmers expressed their opinion that this requirement drastically increased the cost of a new poultry barn and there is no documentation that there is any leaching from poultry barns that could get into aquifers. Comments from those meetings were compiled and modifications were made to the plan and a 2<sup>nd</sup> draft was completed. Two additional open house meetings were held on the revised draft ordinance and zoning maps. A final draft of the plan has now been completed based on comments received from the public meetings and the public hearing that was held on April 5<sup>th</sup>. An informational session regarding zoning ordinance revisions was also held on May 29<sup>th</sup>. The County Zoning Committee recommended to send the ordinance to the County board for adoption at their July 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

**REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS COMPARISON**

Table 1 on page 5 shows how 18 Wisconsin counties, 8 Minnesota counties, 3 Iowa counties, the states of Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin and the nation compare to each other using six competitiveness factors developed by the Harvard Business School's Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness.

Regions in this table are identified by the following abbreviations: **MR** - the nine county Mississippi River Region that are members of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, **W**—the seven counties of the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area designated by the State of Wisconsin, **L**— the six counties of the La Crosse Economic Area designated by Harvard's U.S. Cluster Mapping Project, **7**—the 11 counties that are part of the Seven Rivers Alliance, **MA**-The Madison Economic Area designated by Harvard's U.S. Cluster Mapping Project, **MLA**-Milwaukee Economic Area designated by Harvard's U.S. Cluster Mapping Project, and **MN**-Minneapolis Economic Area designated by Harvard's U.S. Cluster Mapping Project. Several counties belong to or are part of more than one region. For example, Jackson County is a member of the Mississippi River Region, is in the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area, is included in the La Crosse Economic Area and is also part of the 7 Rivers Region.

The following is an analysis of the six competitiveness factors applied against the counties in the Mississippi River Region, the state and nation. Each of the 18 counties and the five other regions listed can also use this table to conduct their own competitiveness comparative analysis.

**Regional Jobs Created.** When analyzing Table 1 from the perspective of the Mississippi River Region it shows that 7,667 jobs were created in the nine county region from 2010–2015. La Crosse County created the most jobs during this period with 4,288 jobs. Conversely Buffalo county had the lowest job growth with -1,002 jobs lost during this period. The mean number of jobs created per county was 852. The top three counties producing 86% of the 9,086 jobs created (before subtracting out the -1,002 job loss in Buffalo County and the 417 job loss in Jackson County) were La Crosse—4,288 jobs, Trempealeau—1,550 jobs and Monroe—1,236 jobs. The states of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa recorded job growth during this period of 182,836 jobs, 254,343 jobs, and 85,323 jobs respectively.

**Regional Annual Wage Growth.** When analyzing Table 1 from the perspective of the Mississippi River Region it shows that the regional annual wage growth of 3.31% from 2010-2015 was above the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa that recorded 2.76%, 2.62% and 2.81% respectively. Jackson County's 5.99% wage growth was the highest in the region. Conversely Pierce County recorded the lowest annual wage growth of 0.78%. The median wage growth rate for the region was 3.01% and the nine-county regional mean of each county wage rate percentage growth was 3.15%.

**Regional Business Growth.** When analyzing Table 1 from the perspective of the Mississippi River Region it shows the regional business growth rate or change in the number of business establishments declined by -0.32% from 2010-2015. This rate was below the state of Wisconsin's rate of -0.01% and Minnesota's and Iowa's rates that recorded 0.44% and 0.04% respectively. Jackson County experienced the highest business growth rate in the Mississippi River Region with growth of 1.10% in the number of business establishments. Conversely Crawford County recorded the lowest business growth rate of -2.17%. The median business growth rate for the region was 0.10% and the nine-county regional mean of each county's business growth rate percentage was -0.13%.

**Regional Prosperity.** When analyzing Table 1 from the perspective of the Mississippi River Region it shows that the Regional Prosperity or Gross Domestic Product Per Capita for the region was \$39,285. This was below the prosperity figures of the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa that recorded prosperity amounts of \$52,287 \$59,615 and \$56,313 respectively. La Crosse County experienced the highest prosperity amount in the Mississippi River Region with the amount of \$53,932. Conversely Pierce County recorded the lowest prosperity amount with \$25,216. The mean prosperity amount for the region was \$38,610.

**Regional Employment Growth Rate.** When analyzing Table 1 from the perspective of the Mississippi River Region it shows the regional employment growth rate of -5.86% from 2010-2015 was below the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa that recorded 1.53%, 2.07% and 1.33% respectively. Pierce County experienced the highest rate of employment growth in the Mississippi River Region with employment growth of 3.63%. Conversely Buffalo County recorded the lowest employment growth of -5.86%. The median employment growth rate for the region was 1.51% and the nine-county regional mean of each county employment growth rate percentage was 0.66%.

**Regional Patent Growth Rate.** When analyzing Table 1 from the perspective of the Mississippi River Region it shows that Trempealeau County had the highest patent growth rate with 24.57% from 2010-2015. Pepin County had the lowest patent growth rate during this period with a -100% decline in its patents from 2010 -2015. The states of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa had patent growth rates from 2010-2015 of 3.02%, 4.06% and 6.56% respectively. The median patent growth rate for the region was 2.9% and the nine-county regional mean of each county patent growth rate percentage was -17.53%. It should be noted that patent growth rates for the Mississippi River Region county's of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, and Monroe were not available.

*Good fortune is what happens when opportunity meets with planning. Thomas Alva Edison*

Table 1. Regional Economic Competitiveness Comparison

Wisconsin Counties	Jobs Created 2010-2015	Annual Wage Growth 2010-2015	Business Growth 2010-2015 Establishments	Prosperity 2015 GDP Per Capita	Employment Growth Rate 2010-2015	Patent Growth Rate 2010-2015
Buffalo (MR, W, 7, MN)	-1,002	3.31%	-0.63%	30,491	-5.86%	N/A
Crawford (MR, W, MA, 7)	480	1.70%	-2.17%	39,285	1.56%	N/A
Jackson (MR, W, L, 7)	-417	5.99%	1.10%	43,953	-1.37%	N/A
La Crosse (MR, W, L, 7)	4,288	2.29%	0.70%	53,932	1.46%	2.90%
Monroe (MR, W, L, 7)	1,236	3.91%	0.10%	45,575	1.68%	N/A
Pepin (MR, MN, 7)	130	4.60%	0.55%	31,814	1.51%	-100.00%
Pierce (MR, MN)	1,156	0.78%	0.53%	25,216	3.63%	4.32%
Trempealeau (MR, W, L, 7)	1,550	2.73%	-1.14%	47,132	2.64%	24.57%
Vernon (MR, W, L, 7)	246	3.01%	-0.22%	30,093	0.71%	-19.73%
Juneau (W, 7, MA)	433	2.21%	-0.32%	35,039	1.39%	N/A
St. Croix (MN)	5,029	3.24%	1.27%	36,008	3.83%	2.77%
Eau Claire (MN)	3,138	3.19%	0.49%	53,107	1.27%	6.58%
Dunn (MN)	1,121	3.86%	-0.22%	39,153	1.73%	N/A
Marathon	5,601	2.26%	-0.74%	54,415	1.83%	3.71%
Winnebago	-455	3.22%	-0.58%	55,201	-0.11%	-5.54%
Rock	5,479	3.28%	-0.10%	36,079	2.06%	4.72%
Dane (MA)	31,253	3.76%	0.96%	76,240	2.44%	3.91%
Milwaukee	8,585	2.48%	-0.46%	61,249	0.38%	6.98%
<b>Mississippi River Region (MR)</b>	7,667	3.31%	-0.32%	39,285	-5.86%	6.04%
<b>Western WI Workforce Dev Area (W)</b>	6,814	3.91%	0.09%	45,402	0.62%	10.38%
<b>La Crosse WI Economic Area (L)</b>	5,768	3.85%	0.23%	45,853	1.00%	13.63%
<b>7 Rivers Region (7)</b>	8,224	4.53%	-0.14%	42,673	0.33%	15.65%
<b>Madison Economic Area (MA)</b>	38,732	4.63%	0.33%	56,491	1.44%	3.65%
<b>Milwaukee Economic Area</b>	43,158	2.53%	-0.29%	56,160	0.79%	4.37%
<b>Minnesota Counties</b>						
Washington (MN)	10,474	2.58%	1.54%	34,325	3.00%	2.01%
Dakota (MN)	17,244	2.26%	1.00%	53,493	2.06%	2.35%
Goodhue (MN)	2,160	4.22%	-0.18%	48,936	2.16%	6.58%
Wabasha (MN)	-62	2.29%	-0.56%	24,426	-0.22%	14.87%
Winona (7, MN)	958	1.68%	-0.67%	41,136	0.88%	29.67%
Houston (7, L)	-51	3.87%	-1.13%	21,413	-0.25%	14.87%
Olmsted (MN)	17,669	6.10%	1.07%	61,977	4.27%	2.84%
Hennepin (MN)	98,195	1.44%	0.49%	106,938	2.38%	4.41%
<b>Minneapolis Economic Area (MN)</b>	197,846	2.31%	0.43%	59,552	1.53%	4.00%
<b>Iowa Counties</b>						
Allamakee (7)	152	3.13%	-0.59%	36,734	0.72%	N/A
Clayton	224	4.06%	-0.23%	40,486	0.87%	-7.79%
Winneshiek (7)	221	2.11%	-0.10%	48,508	0.45%	N/A
<b>States</b>						
Wisconsin	182,836	2.76%	-0.01%	52,287	1.53%	3.02%
Minnesota	254,343	2.62%	0.44%	59,615	2.07%	4.06%
Iowa	85,323	2.81%	0.04%	56,313	1.33%	6.56%

Source: U.S. Cluster Mapping (<http://clustermapping.us>). Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School. Copyright 2014 President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved. Research funded in part by the U.S. Department of Commerce—Economic Development Administration Data compiled by Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, May 2018.