

---

## CHAPTER 2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### SERVICE MISSION

Develop an economy that sustains a healthy and vibrant business and industrial community that promotes the entrepreneurial spirit, fosters sustainable growth, and increases employment opportunities.

There are six Economic Development goals:

1. Promote the creation, growth, and retention of large and small local businesses with long-term production capabilities and commitment to the community, with an emphasis on small business start-ups.
2. Promote neighborhood revitalization.
3. Prevent the loss of businesses and jobs to other cities within the metropolitan area.
4. Market the city and its geographical benefits aggressively to business and industry.
5. Diversify the city's economic base and create high-quality jobs for a well-trained work force.
6. Implement a metro-wide strategy to expand the available labor force to support existing and new jobs.



## RESULTS

Questions about the economic development targeted respondent financial well-being, thoughts about business conditions, and opportunities for well-paying professional jobs. The expectation was that the responses would provide some insight into all of the Economic Development goals.

Overall, 46 percent of the respondents felt that Des Moines' economy was good. An additional 42 percent were indifferent to the economy – feeling that it was neither good nor bad. These results indicate the perception of an economy that is satisfactory (Table 2-1).

**Table 2-1. Perceptions about Economy in Des Moines**

	Percent		Percent
Overall rating of economy		Financial situation—compared to a year ago	
Very Good	2	Better off now	13
Good	46	Worse off now	25
Neither good nor bad	42	About the same	62
Bad	9		
Very bad	<1	Financial situation—a year from now	
Cost of living—compared to yearly income		Better off	16
Very high	5	Worse off	16
High	39	About the same	68
Neither high nor low	49		
Low	7		
Very low	1		

When considering their yearly income, nearly half of those questioned (49%) felt the cost of living in Des Moines was neither high nor low. An additional 39 percent felt that the cost of living in Des Moines was too high compared to their yearly income (Table 2-1)

Most respondents felt that they were in about the same place financially as they were last year (62%) and that they'll be about the same next year as this year (68%). As Table 2-1 shows, 25 percent of the respondents indicated that they are financially worse off now compared to last year, and 16 percent noted that they would be worse off next year compared to this year.

Seventy-three percent of the respondents felt that business conditions would be about the same next year as they were this year (Table 2-2). Regarding job opportunities, the majority of respondents felt that there were some opportunities for well-paying jobs (55%); this is in comparison to five percent who responded that there are many job opportunities, and 40 percent who thought there are few well-paying job opportunities (Table 2-2).

**Table 2-2. Business Conditions and Jobs**

	Percent
Business conditions next year	
Good times	12
Bad times	15
Be about the same	73
Opportunities for well-paying professional jobs	
Many opportunities	5
Some opportunities	55
Few opportunities	40

**COMMENTS**

Sixty-one comments specific to economic development were received. The majority of those pertained to business and business development (26 comments). As Table 2-3 shows, there were a number of comments about promoting small businesses; only two of the comments urged Des Moines to promote big business ventures. Respondents also commented that the city should attract a variety of businesses, including businesses owned by minorities and women.

Jobs also were mentioned numerous times, with most of the comments asking first for more well-paying blue-collar jobs and then for work for the city’s youth. Respondents also encouraged Des Moines to promote a living wage for city residents. The

remainder of the comments stated that more and/or improved tax incentives should be developed to entice businesses to locate in Des Moines.

**Table 2-3. Economic Strategy Comment Categories**

	Number	Examples
Business	26	Recruit; solicit; provide incentives for small businesses; support; encourage specialty businesses; support entrepreneurs and businesses owned by minorities and women; attract big business/industry to Des Moines; promote and support neighborhood businesses
Jobs	18	More blue collar jobs; increase high-paying jobs; jobs for youth and teens; support/mandate living wage positions
Growth	7	Support; promote, improve with diverse businesses; collaborate with realtors and <i>Des Moines Register</i>
Incentives	5	Tie to business goals; limit the number of incentives; relax zoning