

# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

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## PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This comprehensive plan for the Town of Little Suamico was prepared to address continued development pressures and the steady increase in demand for services from residents and businesses during the next 20 years. The goal of the plan is efficiently accommodate the many needs of a growing community through efficient development strategies while establishing measures to preserve much of the town's remaining open spaces and natural features. The plan is to serve as a guide to ensure consistent decisions are being made in regards to environmental protection, farmland preservation, transportation expansion, housing development, location of public services, and sound economic development. The *Town of Little Suamico 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* is a legal document that provides the policy framework from which town officials will base their future land use decisions.

The cornerstone of this plan is the future land use map, referred to in this document as the General Plan Design (GPD), Map 3.1. The goals for each of the plan's individual elements are supported by a detailed list of objectives, policies, and programs to provide a roadmap for officials and residents to follow as they work to implement the town's comprehensive plan. This GPD map shall be used for reference and in conjunction with the Oconto County's zoning ordinances, Town of Little Suamico ordinances, and other planning materials such as the sanitary district operations plan to help guide decisions on where and how the Town of Little Suamico should be developed as well as preserved during this 20 year planning period.

### **State Planning Legislation**

The *Town of Little Suamico 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* was prepared to appropriately address the following required nine elements of a comprehensive plan as outlined in s. 66.1001, Wis. Stats.

1. Issues and Opportunities
2. Housing
3. Transportation
4. Utilities and Community Facilities
5. Agriculture, Natural, and Cultural Resources
6. Economic Development
7. Intergovernmental Cooperation
8. Land Use
9. Implementation

Comprehensive Planning legislation s. 66.1001, Wis. Stats. further states:

“Beginning on January 1, 2010, if a local governmental unit engages in any of the following actions, those actions shall be consistent with that local governmental unit's comprehensive plan:

- (a) Official mapping established or amended under s. 62.23 (6).
- (b) Local subdivision regulation under s. 236.45 or 236.46.
- (c) County zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 59.69.
- (d) City or village zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 62.23 (7).
- (e) Town zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 60.61 or 60.62.
- (f) Zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands under s. 59.692, 61.351 or 62.231.”

## **HOW TO USE THIS PLAN**

The *Town of Little Suamico 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* consists of eleven chapters presented in a two volume format along with an appendices. **Volume I: Town Plan** is comprised of Chapters 1 through 4. The content of these four chapters meet all the requirements outlined in s. 66.1001, Wis. Stats. The appendix to **Volume I** consists of planning materials generated during the preparation of the *Town of Little Suamico 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*. **Volume II: County Resources** contains Chapters 5 through 11, along with an appendix that details countywide background information and data.

**Volume I: Town Plan:** This volume describes how the Town of Little Suamico envisions itself developing during this 20 year planning period. It includes detailed background information and data, development strategies, land use projections, a General Plan Design (future land use map), and a plan implementation schedule.

**Chapter 1: Introduction** - contains an overview of the purpose of the plan; the planning legislation; plan development process; and the vision statement.

**Chapter 2: Inventory, Trends, and Forecasts** - extrapolates town specific background information and data compiled at the county level in chapters 5 through 11; identifies land use issues and conflicts; acknowledges continued land use trends; and projects future land use allocations for residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural needs.

**Chapter 3: Future Land Use Plan** - illustrates a desirable future land use plan through a General Plan Design; and defines the characteristics of the future land uses through a series of land use recommendations.

**Chapter 4: Implementation** - details a work plan to implement the development strategies (goals, objectives, policies, and programs) of the comprehensive plan with identified stakeholders and projected timetable for completion.

**Appendices: Town Plan** - contains town public participation materials; nominal group results; community survey results; intergovernmental cooperation workshop results; land use comparisons; and other relevant materials generated or gathered during the plan development process.

**Volume II: County Resources:** This volume contains countywide background information that served as a basis for the preparation of the town's development strategies and General Plan Design.

**Chapter 5: Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources** - provides a detailed description of the county's unique physical features.

**Chapter 6: Population and Housing** - presents countywide historic demographic information along with future population and housing projections.

**Chapter 7: Economic Development** - highlights labor force statistics; economic composition; and provides an analysis of existing and future economic conditions for the town and Oconto County.

**Chapter 8: Transportation** - describes the county's existing multi-modal transportation system.

**Chapter 9: Utilities and Community Facilities** - inventories all local and countywide utilities and facilities including schools and emergency services.

**Chapter 10: Intergovernmental Cooperation** - lists the results of three cluster level intergovernmental cooperation workshops as well as programs to facilitate joint planning and decision making processes with other government units.

**Chapter 11: Land Use Controls and Inventory** - provides a detailed inventory of existing land uses for each community and the county as a whole.

**Appendices: County Resources** - contains a countywide inventory of natural resources information; nominal group results; economic SWOT results; visioning survey results; a detailed list of available housing, economic development, and transportation financial and technical resources; 2007 countywide land use inventory; a glossary of definitions; and other relevant input and materials generated or gathered during the plan development process.

## PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Town of Little Suamico was one of sixteen communities to enter into an agreement with Oconto County to submit a multi-jurisdictional application to the Wisconsin Department of Administration in 2005 for grant funding to offset the cost of completing/or updating their comprehensive plans. The application was successful, and an award of \$263,000 was made to Oconto County in April 2006. The comprehensive planning grant required recipients to put forth a local match, which could be distributed over a three year period. Oconto County contracted with the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (BLRPC) to assist in the preparation of the local plans as well as the county's comprehensive plan.

The 36 month multi-jurisdictional planning process was divided into three separate planning phases:

**First Phase:** Inventorying countywide background information to be used for preparation of the county resource document.

- Countywide background data was collected, analyzed, and presented for review.
- The Oconto County Planning Advisory Committee (OCPAC) and communities within the three planning clusters review and provide input on the countywide background materials.
- Three (3) Open Houses were conducted, one in each of the county's three Planning Clusters (Southern, Central, and Northern). These Open Houses were held in May and June 2007 to allow the public to review countywide background materials, ask questions, and provide feedback.



- A draft of *Volume II: County Resources* was prepared to be used as reference during the completion of the local and county comprehensive plans.

**Second Phase:** Completion and adoption of the local comprehensive plans and *Volume II: County Resources*.

- The Town of Little Suamico Plan Commission held its initial planning meeting with BLRPC staff in August 2007.
- Public meetings were held on a monthly basis to review materials and facilitate a number of activities such as the mid-point open house on February 13, 2008 to gather additional input from residents and landowners.
- The town's vision statement was developed along with the land use goals, objectives, policies, and programs by using results from the various issue identification workshops and background data.
- A preliminary General Plan Design was prepared along with the recommended land use strategies to guide future development and conservation of the town over the next 20 years.
- The Oconto County Planning and Zoning Committee and OCPAC finalized *Volume II: County Resources* document. The resource document was distributed for the thirty-day review process and adopted by the Oconto County Board of Supervisors on August 21, 2008.
- The required thirty-day review of the town's plan was held during the month of July 2008 to allow citizens, landowners, neighboring communities, and other interested parties to review the completed draft of the *Town of Little Suamico 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*.
- Little Suamico's second open house was held on August 6, 2008 to allow the public to review the planning materials and provide input as to the contents of the draft plan.
- The required Public Hearing on the *Town of Little Suamico 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* was held on August 7, 2008, and the Plan Commission made recommendation for adoption of the plan following the public hearing. Any input received during the review, open house, and public hearing was considered and included in the town's comprehensive plan as appropriate.
- The *Town of Little Suamico 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* was completed on August 11, 2008 with its adoption as an ordinance by the Little Suamico Town Board.

**Third Phase:** Completion and adoption of the *Oconto County 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*.

- The Oconto County Planning and Zoning Committee and OCPAC utilized the background information and data gathered during the first planning phase, along with the adopted local comprehensive plans and county resource document completed during the second phase, to prepare the *Oconto County 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*.

## **Plan Amendment**

The first amendment of the Town of Little Suamico 20-Year Comprehensive Plan began in 2018 with assistance from Oconto County Planning. The updated Town of Little Suamico 20-Year Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2022. The focus of this amendment was to update the existing land use data, general plan design, land use recommendations, goals, policies, and implementation schedule.

## **Public Participation Process**

### **Public Participation Plan**

The key to drafting and adopting a comprehensive plan that fits the town's future planning needs is gathering input from residents and land owners at all stages of plan development. In accordance with s. 66.1001(4), Wis. Stats., the Town of Little Suamico approved "Procedures for Adoption or Amendment of the Town of Little Suamico Comprehensive Plan" at their Town of Little Suamico Town Board meeting on September 11, 2006 to maximize the opportunities to gain valuable public input while developing this very important planning document. A copy of the public participation plan is included as Appendix A of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

Open meetings were held monthly to review background data, finalize each plan element, and create the General Plan Design. In addition to these planning meetings, the following steps were used to gather additional input from the public.

### **Community Survey**

A community survey was conducted in January 2008 to solicit the feelings residents and landowners had toward existing town services and amenities and to gain their insight on what they thought the town would look like in the year 2025. 2,687 surveys were sent out to residents and land owners of the town and 283 were returned, a 10.5 percent return rate. The surveying process provided input utilized in the preparation of a vision statement; some background information for drafting the goals, objectives, policies, and programs; and a general consensus on where and what type of development the town would experience in the future. A summary of the community survey's key findings are highlighted below. The complete results of the community survey can be found in Appendix B of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

- Satisfied with residential and commercial development
- Important to preserve natural resources
- Locate commercial development primarily along corridor
- Would like attract a grocery store, restaurants, retail, and light industry
- Need more employment opportunities locally
- No need for new recreational facilities
- Fire protection is good to excellent
- Police protection adequate to poor
- No to incorporation
- Support regional court system
- Majority of age respondents 46-59 and have lived in the town 11-20 or over 30 years
- Live on an average residential lot size of 1.5 to 2.9 acres
- Place of employment is primarily in Brown County
- Majority of respondents had no children at home
- What features of the town do you like most :
  - Country setting, quiet, spacious lots
  - Close to Green Bay, businesses, recreational opportunities, wildlife
  - Being in the country away from big city trouble and problems
  - Rural area, clean air, quiet
  - Lower taxes

- Friendly, safe, and calm
- Oconto Falls School District
- What are the greatest challenges facing the town:
  - Well and septic overload-possible water shortage and contamination
  - Too many people not enough police or fire protection
  - Keeping it small town
  - Overgrowth, becoming another Village of Howard
  - Attracting the right business
  - Growth and how to not push out the farmer and small land owner
  - Roads and congestion
  - Services not meeting the needs for a growing community
  - Development in Sobieski
  - To meet all the needs of growth and pleasing the majority that live here
  - School growth
  - Sewer and water

## **Nominal Group Exercise**

On September 26, 2007, members of the Town of Little Suamico Plan Commission participated in a Nominal Group Exercise to identify those issues most important for the town to address during this 20 year planning period. To address those issues most important to the town, each member was given three votes and asked to vote and prioritize the issues. The following are the top 10 issues and concerns facing the town according to this issue identification process. All issues on the list were considered while drafting goals, objectives, policies, and programs for the town's comprehensive plan. A description of the nominal group process and the entire list of results can be found in Appendix C of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

- Grocery store
- Business incentives (TIF, etc.)
- More money for parks and recreation
- Governmental units working together
- Elderly housing
- Water and sewer system to accommodate growth
- Protect image of the town
- Municipal court system to enforce ordinances
- Professional buildings
- Health care facilities

As part of the plan amendment process that began in 2018, the town reviewed and discussed these prior nominal group results as well as county nominal group results. These results and the additional discussion assisted the town in the plan update process.

A complete list of the Nominal Group Exercise can be found in Appendix C of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

## **Intergovernmental Cooperation Workshop Results**

An Intergovernmental Cooperation Workshop was conducted on April 16, 2008 for communities

located in the southern region of Oconto County. Representatives from each of the communities within the planning cluster were invited to attend the workshop, along with neighboring municipalities, school districts, civic and recreational clubs, Oconto County staff, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and other entities and departments that have an interest in and/or direct impact on the implementation of the area's comprehensive plans.

The goal of the workshop was to gather input on any current land use issues or conflicts that need to be addressed during the development of the local comprehensive plans as well as the county's plan. Some examples of positive working relationships and current and future issues and conflicts are listed below. Those in attendance were also asked to provide potential resolutions to those land use problems. Examples of some of the resolutions discussed during the meeting are also listed below. A comprehensive list of positive working relationships, current or future land use issues and conflicts, and potential resolutions are attached as Appendix D of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

### **Positive Working Relationships**

- Shared services (emergency-mutual aid)
- Extra territorial planning area between Oconto Falls and Stiles
- Trans-county and town agreements for road maintenance and snow plow
- Agreements for joint sanitary with Little Suamico and Pensaukee and Oconto (future)
- Cluster meetings – good source of information-education
- Mar-Oco landfill – good working relationship with Marinette County
- County recently updated 911 system – has mutual aid with surrounding communities/ counties to help with disaster response
- Coordination between county and local zoning
- Economic Development: countywide and county funded OCEDC
- Mutual aid agreements on wildland fire suppression between WDNR and many town and village fire departments
- Support summer recreation programs

### **Existing or Potential Land Use Conflicts**

- Potential conflict of town ordinances with county ordinances
- Surrounding agricultural land (possibility of rezoning/annexation)
- Increased residential development can negatively impact important environmental features
- Increased recreational demands may lead to conflicts
- This region is extremely important environmentally and future development should be planned with that in mind
- Development of Hwy 141 corridor
- Keep water ways free (keep housing off water ways)
- Enforcement of ordinances and/or conditions in conditional use permits
- Initiatives/incentives for commercial to locate in town but yet, promote preservation of farmland – some type of incentive
- No central government building results in communication barrier. Residents seeking information on planning, information being given, information not properly communicated to town planning

## **Resolutions**

- Sharing of information between communities (e.g. meeting minutes)
- Informal get-togethers to share information between towns and county
- Information discussions between incorporated communities and towns re: extraterritorial planning areas
- Inter and Intra communication
- Shared planning
- Standardize ordinances – consistency with county – remove duplication and unnecessary items
- Sharing information on troubles between neighbors – local meetings
- Locate funding sources – to continue these meetings and planning processes
- Communities place own ordinances on a website so public can access
- Get town websites out to public – make people aware that they are out there – also promote county websites – utilize newspapers to promote
- Coordination between towns and county to find more efficient ways to implement and enforce ordinances – let county help as much as they can

As part of the plan amendment process that began in 2018, the town reviewed and discussed these prior intergovernmental cooperation workshop results. These results and the additional discussion assisted the town in the plan update process.

## **Open Houses**

Two “Open Houses” were held during the planning process. The first was held at the planning mid-point on February 13, 2008 at the Little Suamico Town Hall. Approximately 35 residents, landowners, and other interested parties attended the event. Several displays and informational pieces were available for review, including:

- A 2007 Land Use Map
- A draft General Plan Design
- A draft vision statement
- An overview of the town and county planning processes
- The 2004 town Air Photo
- A comprehensive planning summary
- A list of draft goals
- Planning vs. Zoning handout

Those in attendance were encouraged to attend future meetings and provide input as to the contents of the plan. They were offered the opportunity to provide written comments on the displays and the overall planning process.

The second open house was held on August 6, 2008 at the Little Suamico Town Hall. It was held at the conclusion of the planning process to allow the residents and other interested persons the opportunity to review the completed draft plan and give input as to its contents and scope.

As part of the plan amendment process, an open house was held to provide residents and any interested persons an opportunity to review the updated plan materials and give input as to its contents and scope. Plan update materials were also made available on the Oconto County website throughout the plan update project.

## VISION STATEMENT

The following is the town's 20-Year Vision Statement as prepared by members of the Plan Commission:

*“The Town of Little Suamico is a well-organized and highly functioning community in which varying land uses support one another. The highway corridor is vibrant and diverse, while smartly designed residential developments offer housing and recreational opportunities for all age groups and incomes. Through strategic partnerships and use of progressive planning methods, the town has been able to efficiently accommodate the continued population and business growth with little compromise to its country feel and valuable natural features. The town’s wise annual investment in utilities and services is a welcoming invitation to new businesses wanting to locate in Little Suamico and provide quality jobs and shopping opportunities for its residents.”*

