



# *Town of* **Oconto Falls**

## *Comprehensive Plan 2036*

*Adopted June 2016*



*Community Planning & Consulting, LLC*  
*Green Bay, Wisconsin*  
*[www.communityplanningandconsulting.com](http://www.communityplanningandconsulting.com)*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **Town of Oconto Falls - Board of Supervisors**

David Alsteen, Chairman  
Mike Kaczmarek, Supervisor  
Victor Peterson, Supervisor  
Jan Betts, Clerk  
Sue Konitzer, Treasurer

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**TOWN OF OCONTO FALLS, OCONTO COUNTY, WISCONSIN**

**AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE AMENDED  
TOWN OF OCONTO FALLS COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN.**

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Town of Oconto Falls, Oconto County

**SECTION I – TITLE AND PURPOSE**

The title of this ordinance is the Town of Oconto Falls Comprehensive Plan Ordinance. The purpose of this ordinance is for the Town of Oconto Falls, Oconto County, Wisconsin, to lawfully adopt an amended comprehensive plan as required under Chapter 66.1001(4)(c), Wis. stats.

**SECTION II – AUTHORITY**

The Town Board of the Town of Oconto Falls, Oconto County, Wisconsin, has authority under its village powers under s. 60.22, Wis. stats., to appoint a town plan commission under Chapters 60.62(4) and 62.23(1), Wis. stats., and under Chapter 66.1001(4), Wis. stats., to adopt this ordinance. The comprehensive plan of the Town of Oconto Falls must be in compliance with Chapter 66.1001(4)(c), Wis. stats., in order for the Town Board to adopt this ordinance.

**SECTION III – ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE**

This ordinance, adopted by a majority of the Town Board on a roll call vote with a quorum present and voting and proper notice having been given, provides for the adoption by the Town of Oconto Falls a comprehensive plan under Chapter 66.1001(4), Wis. stats.

**SECTION IV – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Town Board has adopted written procedures designed to foster public participation in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan as required by Chapter 66.1001(4)(a), Wis. stats.

**SECTION V – TOWN PLAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Plan Commission of the Town of Oconto Falls, by a majority vote of the entire commission, recorded in its official minutes, has adopted a resolution recommending to the Town Board the adoption of the Town of Oconto Falls 2036 Comprehensive Plan, which contains all of the elements specified in Chapter 66.1001(2), Wis. stats.

**SECTION VI – PUBLIC HEARING**

The Town of Oconto Falls has held at least one public hearing on this ordinance, with notice in compliance with the requirements of Chapter 66.1001(4)(d), Wis. stats.

**SECTION VII – ADOPTION OF TOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Town Board, by the enactment of this ordinance, formally adopts the document entitled Town of Oconto Falls 2036 Comprehensive Plan under Chapter 66.1001(4)(c), Wis. stats.

**SECTION VIII – SEVERABILITY**

If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this ordinance that can be given

effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this ordinance are severable.

#### SECTION IX – EFFECTIVE DATE

This ordinance is effective on publication or posting.

The Town Clerk shall properly post or publish this ordinance as required under Chapter 60.80, Wis. stats., and a copy of the ordinance and the comprehensive plan, shall be filed with at least all of the entities specified under Chapter 66.1001(4)(b), Wis. stats.

Adopted this 11<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2016.

Dave Alsteen  
Dave Alsteen, Chairman

4-11-16  
Date

Michael L. Kazmerik  
Mike Kazmerik, Supervisor

4-11-16  
Date

Vic Peterson  
Vic Peterson, Supervisor

4-11-16  
Date

Attest:

Jan E Betts  
Jan Betts, Clerk

4/11/16  
Date



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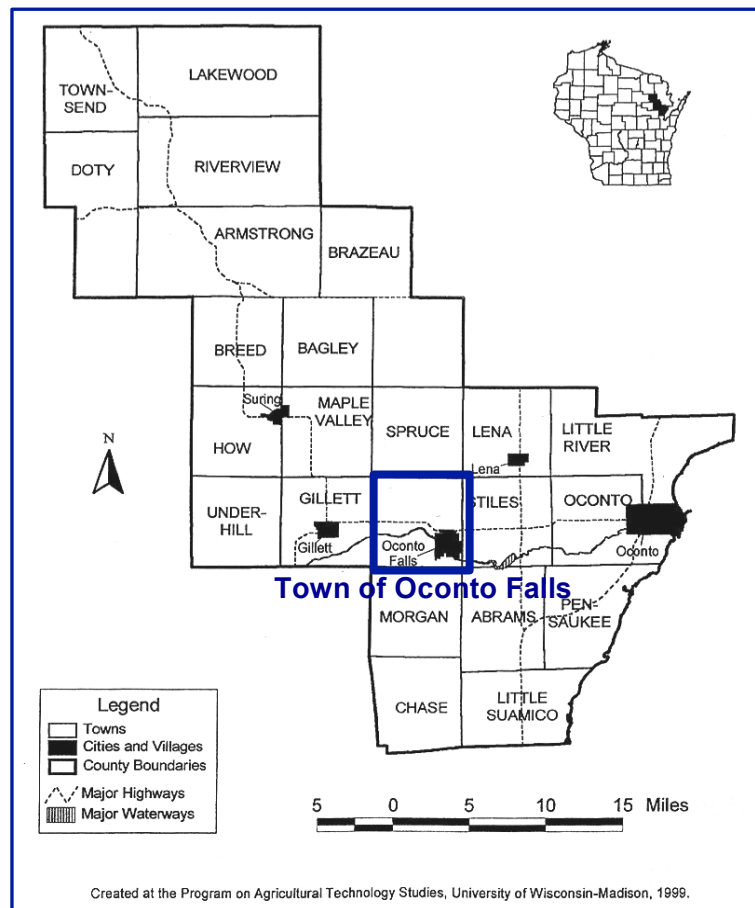
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## Introduction

The Town of Oconto Falls is a community of approximately 1,300 people located in south central Oconto County. Oconto Falls is an unspoiled rural paradise for residents seeking a relaxed living environment. The Town has a rich farming tradition and boasts approximately four miles of frontage along the Oconto River. Vast areas of woodlands, wetlands, and other natural areas are found in the community.

The Town of Oconto Falls is approximately 33 square miles in size and shares borders with the Town of Spruce to the north, Town of Gillett to the west, Town of Morgan to the south, and the Town of Stiles to the east. The City of Oconto Falls is located in the southeast corner of the Town. Easy access to USH 141 is provided via STH 22.



## The Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is a document used by local government to guide community development and preservation actions. It is comprised of data, graphics, maps, goals, objectives, and visions related to housing, transportation, economic development, and natural resources (among others), which guide public land use policy. In 1999, the State Legislature passed Act 9, Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law (Section 66.1001, Wis. Stats.). The law requires that every municipality in the state that administers zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, or an official map do so consistent with an approved and adopted comprehensive plan. Act 9 provides a framework for comprehensive planning. Under the law, a comprehensive plan must include nine elements (or chapters) describing existing conditions within the community and providing a direction for addressing current and future needs. These elements include:

## CHAPTER 1: ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

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- Issues & Opportunities – Background information on the community and detailed demographic data related to population, education, income, and employment, among others.
- Housing – Detailed assessment of the current housing stock and a plan to ensure that future housing will meet the needs of all residents.
- Transportation – A comprehensive description of the existing transportation network and a plan for providing multi-modal systems to meet future demand.
- Utilities & Community Facilities – An analysis of current facilities including water and sewer service, stormwater, electricity and natural gas, parks and recreation, healthcare, schools, Town Hall, and public safety (including police and fire stations), among others; and a plan to ensure that those facilities are adequate to meet future needs.
- Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources – A description of the community’s resource base and the efforts necessary to preserve that base in the long-term.
- Economic Development – Plans and programs to promote the stabilization, retention, diversification, and expansion of the economic base and quality employment opportunities.
- Land Use – A detailed description of current land uses and a future land use plan to guide development during the next twenty years.
- Intergovernmental Cooperation – A list of existing intergovernmental agreements and the identification of opportunities for future coordination and collaboration with adjoining municipalities.
- Implementation – A compilation of the programs and specific actions the local government will take to implement the comprehensive plan.

### Definitions

**Vision:** An overall statement related to the required plan chapters expressing the community’s expectations for the future. These statements provide a framework for decision-making.

**Goal:** A statement that describes a desired future condition. Goals typically address a single aspect of the vision.

**Objective:** A statement that describes a specific action or condition that is to be attained. Objectives include amending local ordinances, adopting new policies, seeking partnerships, and the like.

**Policy:** A course of action, or rule of conduct, used to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan.

In addition to the nine elements listed above, the Planning Law lists a series of fourteen *planning goals* to be achieved during the process of developing a local comprehensive plan. These goals included:

- Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructures and public services, and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial areas.
- Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
- Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces, and groundwater resources.
- Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.

- Encouragement of land uses, densities, and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental, and utility costs.
- Preservation of cultural, historic, and archeological sites.
- Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
- Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
- Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
- Providing adequate infrastructure and public services, and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
- Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional, and local levels.
- Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
- Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
- Providing an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety, and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

Although the Planning Law provides a framework for comprehensive planning, it does not impose a template. A comprehensive plan is not a technical manual. Unlike a zoning ordinance or subdivision ordinance, it is not a regulatory tool. At its core, a comprehensive plan is a guidance document reflecting and representing community visions and providing a road map for future growth and preservation. It must be crafted to meet the unique needs of a community. Its narrative, tables, graphics, and maps must encapsulate the values of the community within an easy to read and easy to understand document; one that informs stakeholders, provides direction to developers, and guides decision-making. By statute; however, municipalities that have adopted a zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, or official map must administer and enforce them consistent with an adopted comprehensive plan.

## **Community Engagement**

The Town of Oconto Falls Comprehensive Plan was developed with a variety of opportunities for the active participation of residents, landowners, business owners, and other stakeholders. A brief description of each element of the 2005 and 2016 public participation efforts is described below and on the following pages.

## **2005 Planning Process**

### **Kick-Off Meeting**

## CHAPTER 1: ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

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The Town of Oconto Falls Kick-off meeting was held on April 23, 2002 at the Oconto Falls Town Hall. At that meeting, OMNNI Associates (the Town's planning consultant) reviewed the planning program in detail, presented the draft Public Participation Plan and Adoption Procedures, and facilitated a discussion about Town values.

### Values Exercise

During the Kick-Off Meeting, participants were asked to describe what makes the Town of Oconto Falls a desirable place to live. The exercise resulted in the creation of a series of value statements used to guide the development and implementation of the comprehensive plan.

- We value the Town's quiet, peaceful, and clean environment.
- We value the Town as a wholesome place to live and rear children.
- We value our access to recreation opportunities (i.e. Oconto River, hunting, nearby parks in City of Oconto Falls and Gillett).
- We value our location – surrounding the City of Oconto Falls.
- We value our access to quality fire and ambulance service through the City of Oconto Falls.
- We value the Town's beauty – its rolling hills, woodlands, river frontage, and open, scenic vistas – free from development.
- We value the Town's wildlife habitat areas.
- We value our farms and rural businesses.

### Planning Committee Meetings

The Planning Committee met monthly to review draft chapters and maps, and to establish goals and priorities for plan implementation. Each of these meetings was duly posted and open to the public.



### Visioning Workshop

On June 25, 2002, the Planning Committee hosted a Visioning Workshop. At this meeting, participants engaged in a series of exercises focused on current conditions and the future of the Town.

### SWOT Exercise

A SWOT Exercise is a planning tool used to identify current conditions within a community. SWOT is an acronym for *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities*, and *threats*. The exercise was facilitated by Rob Burke, Community Educator for the Oconto County UW-Extension, in cooperation with OMNNI Associates, the Town's planning consultant.

- Strength - Something that makes a community stand out when compared to other communities. Something that makes you proud to call the community home. A strength may be a physical asset, a program, an environmental condition, or an impression or feeling (i.e., friendly community atmosphere).
- Weakness - Opposite of a strength. A problem that needs to be addressed.



- Opportunity - Something that can be done to improve the community.
- Threat - A threat may be internal or external. Something that may jeopardize the future success of a community.

### **Strengths**

- Oconto River - a source of scenic beauty and other recreational assets such as fishing, boating, canoeing, snowmobiling, skating, and wildlife habitat.
- Well-maintained homes and properties that are spread out throughout the Town.
- A number of undeveloped lakes, several of which provide scenic vistas, and one (Balcom Lake) providing public access.
- Abundance of wooded areas, hilly terrain, and natural habitat for plants and wildlife. Probably more now than in past because of less pasturing.
- Well maintained local roads and State Highways, several of which are designated as “scenic”. The roads provide opportunities for biking and inline skating, dog walking, and limited access to snowmobile trails.
- While close and having easy access to Green Bay and Shawano for employment, shopping, and entertainment, and to Oconto Falls for city services (libraries, fire protection, groceries, hospital and banks), too far away to become a “bedroom community”.
- Friendly (not “nosy”) people that you can count on to watch your home while away, help retrieve lost pets, and watch out for each other.
- Very good relationship with neighboring Town officials that respond positively when issues arise.
- Cooperation with the City of Oconto Falls on the joint fire department.
- Able to sustain several dairy farm businesses, plus other businesses that complement rural setting.
- Close proximity to some agricultural services.
- Good school district.
- Provides living opportunities for a variety of income levels - don't have to be rich.
- Some residents have long histories and deep roots in the area.
- Although development has increased, no part of the Township has been “spoiled” by development yet. We have no fast-food restaurants, no gas stations and few billboards.

### **Weaknesses**

- Abandoned, unsafe buildings.
- Unsafe wells, often in connection with unsafe buildings.
- Rapidly rising property taxes.
- The loss of good farmland due to development pattern.
- Lack of communication among realtors, sellers, buyers, county zoning, etc. regarding what residents should expect when moving into a rural area.
- Lack of enforcement of Land Use/Zoning requirements.
- County zoning policy is haphazard and not goal-oriented.
- Township can feel unwelcoming to newcomers.
- Some new homes set deeply from the road, cutting into farmland and inaccessible to services and homes that are being built behind homes on the same lots (County CC).
- Farm businesses are becoming less profitable.
- Lack of walking or biking trails and no location signs for boat landings or fishing areas.
- No social center for people to gather; nothing to bring us together.
- Poor relationship with City of Oconto Falls.

## CHAPTER 1: ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

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### Opportunities

- Tourism for canoeing on the river and outdoor recreation such as: bike and walking trails, sites for fishing and canoeing.
- Agricultural tourism such as horses stables/riding, game farms, and variety of sizes of dairy farms.
- Tourism and other businesses based on the increased traffic volume of those traveling to northern Oconto Co.
- Rural/Bed and Breakfasts.
- Development of a banquet hall.
- The preservation of personal property rights, balanced with existing owners desires and community needs.
- The preservation of wooded land, a beautiful river and river/lake frontage.
- Preservation of existing farms and their land base.
- Development of a mix of newer, older, affordable and luxury housing could be developed.

### Threats

- Annexation by the City of Oconto Falls of land most suited for development, which lowers Town's tax base.
- Losing the fact that we are a well-kept "Secret" (Nice place to live).
- Contamination of values and behavior by drugs, crime, and vandalism.
- Loss of farmland and increased taxes due to rural subdivisions.
- Poor placement of homes and subdivisions such that homes are built deep set from the road cutting up farmland and making it harder to crop.
- Homes built around perimeter of farmland (on the roadside) could pit a couple farmers against dozens of homeowners.
- Unsightly, spotty development.
- Allowing developers or homeowners to put in a road and then have the Township take over maintenance may prove to be very expensive long term. Should every new house get its own road?
- Depleting profits from farm businesses, resulting in the sell-off of land for development.
- Loss of agricultural services in the area for farm businesses.
- Limited public access to river frontage.
- Increased traffic, noise, pollution, etc., due to widening of county roads.
- Loss of wildlife and water quality due to increased traffic and development.
- Potential development of fast-food restaurants, gas stations and billboards.

### Visioning Exercise

During the Visioning Exercise, participants were given a series of phrases to complete about the future of the Town. For example, "In twenty years looking down from an airplane at the Town of Oconto Falls one would see..." OMNNI Associates used the responses to draft a vision statement for each of the nine required plan elements.

### Photo Assignment

During the summer of 2002, the Planning Committee was provided with several disposable cameras to photograph areas of the Town to illustrate desired housing types, available and

desired utilities and community facilities, transportation features, land uses, scenic areas and local economic development opportunities. The photos taken by the Planning Committee served as an important reference for understanding the Town vision and are incorporated throughout this plan.

### **Cognitive Mapping Meeting**

A cognitive map, or mental map, *is a map drawn by a person that geographically locates his or her memories, ideas, and thoughts of a particular place.* Since cognitive maps are based on an individual's preferences and opinions there are no right or wrong maps. Cognitive maps are used to delineate geographic areas of a community people like, dislike, frequently visit, feel are important, travel through regularly, feel safe, etc.

As part of the Map Workshop, the Planning Committee and other residents in attendance were provided two maps of the Town of Oconto Falls. On the first map, participants were asked to delineate important travel routes and aesthetically pleasing areas of the Town. The most attractive places were colored in one shade, less attractive another, not attractive in yet another color. On the second map, participants outlined those areas where they would like to see new commercial/industrial development, new residential development, new recreation areas and open space in the Town of Oconto Falls.

These maps were used in the development of the Future Land Use map to ensure that it accurately reflects community concerns and priorities for the future. The maps created as a result of this exercise are presented in the Appendix of this plan.

### **Map Workshop**

In 2004, the Planning Commission hosted an informational meeting to share with the public copies of the plan maps. At the meeting, OMNNI presented an overview of how the maps were developed and unveiled the draft future land use map. During this meeting, residents participated in a consensus mapping exercise whereby everyone in attendance received a map of the Town. On this map, they were asked to identify where they would like to see future commercial, industrial, and residential development. They were also asked to identify important natural resources that should be protected and areas of concern.

### **Project Webpage**

The planning program was profiled on an interactive web page hosted on the OMNNI Associates website. The page included meeting schedules, summaries of past meetings, draft maps and plan chapters, and general education materials about the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning law (Chapter 66.1001, Wis. Stats.). The site was updated regularly to ensure that the information was current and would effectively inform the public.

## CHAPTER 1: ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

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### Intergovernmental Meeting

As part of the planning program, the Plan Commission hosted an intergovernmental meeting with representatives from neighboring units of government, the school district, Oconto County, the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) to discuss the existing plans of these neighboring jurisdictions and agencies and identify potential conflicts that may exist with the proposed *Town of Oconto Falls Comprehensive Plan*. Participants were given the opportunity for mutual exchange of ideas and recommendations to address any conflicts. Based on the conversations and suggestions received at this meeting, the *Town of Oconto Falls Comprehensive Plan* includes recommendations to continue to resolve intergovernmental planning issues and conflicts over the 20-year planning period.

### 2016 Planning Process

#### Community Engagement Session

The Community Engagement Session was held **on October 21, 2015** at the Oconto Falls Town Hall. The purpose of the session was three-fold:

- To discuss statutory requirements related to comprehensive plans and the role of the plan in guiding land use decisions.
- To present updated demographic data related to population, income, employment, education, and housing, among others, that would be critical to decision-making during the development of the plan.
- To engage participants in a *visioning exercise* intended to identify the core visions and values of the community as they relate to the nine required plan elements.

#### Visioning Exercise

During the engagement session, participants completed an exercise intended to visualize Oconto Falls' ideal future. The assignment asked those in attendance to imagine it is the year 2036 and indicate, through a series of directed questions, what the Town looks like with respect to key land use elements. The visioning exercise focused on five general land use categories: housing, transportation, economic development, parks and recreation, and preservation. The results are presented below and on the following pages. The numbers in parentheses indicated multiple responses.

#### By 2036, housing in the Town of Oconto Falls includes...

- Housing where the kids come back and live with multi families [generations] in one home. (2)
- 80% single-family / 20% multi-family. (2)
- Subdivisions, 1- to 2-acre lots.
- 4- to 8-unit duplexes along city borders.



- Solar and wind energy systems.
- Minimum 1,000 sq. ft. floor area for single-family homes.
- 90% single-family / 10% multi-family.
- 25-30% use wood [for heating].
- Geothermal heating systems.
- Minimum 1,200 sq. ft. floor area for single-family homes.
- Self-contained energy.

By 2036, the transportation system in the Town of Oconto Falls includes...

- No blacktop roads, back to gravel (due to expense).
- Senior busing to city.
- Recharging stations for electric cars.
- Electric vehicles.
- Self-driving cars.
- Personal transporter, no roads.

By 2036, economic development in the Town of Oconto Falls includes...

- We don't need to do anything.
- Home-based work.
- Small businesses.
- Agricultural- oriented economic development.
- Small home-based businesses.
- More tech services needed.
- Internet.

By 2036, parks and recreational opportunities in the Town of Oconto Falls include...

- Farmland.
- Access to Oconto River and other private lakes. (2)
- No more building on open farmland.
- Parks and Rec for seniors.
- Creative thinking.
- Outdoor activities.

By 2036, the Town of Oconto Falls has successfully preserved...

- Maintain [community] as is, as much as possible.
- Agricultural land. (2)
- Forest land.
- Hunting.
- Community character.
- Few subdivisions.
- Preserve Oconto River.

## **CHAPTER 1: ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES**

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### **Plan Commission Meetings**

The Plan Commission met monthly between October 2015 and April 2016 to review and discuss draft plan chapters and maps.

### **Project Website**

Community Planning & Consulting, the Town's 2016 planning consultant, maintained a project webpage throughout the process of developing the Town of Oconto Falls 2036 Comprehensive Plan. The webpage hosted meeting summaries, draft plan chapters, project maps, and other information related to the planning process.

### **Public Hearing**

A public hearing, consistent with the requirements of Chapter 66.1001(4)(d), Wis. Stats., was held on May 12, 2016 at the Oconto Falls Town Hall to receive testimony in support of or opposition to the recommended draft of the 2036 Town of Oconto Falls Comprehensive Plan.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of the Community Profile chapter is to provide a description of the community utilizing demographic information. The data used to populate the tables in this chapter was collected from a variety of sources including the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Wisconsin Department of Administration, and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, among others. The bulk of the information presented was gathered during the development of the 2006 comprehensive planning process and is supplemented with newer data tabulated from the 2010 US Census and 2012-13 American Community Survey.

The demographic data included in this chapter was intended to inform residents and decision-makers as they embarked upon the process of developing the Town of Oconto Falls 2036 Comprehensive Plan. The information presented on the following pages is critical to forecasting needs related to development, housing, and community facilities, among others. Community demographics will play the preeminent role in determining the direction the comprehensive plan takes in preparing for the future of Oconto Falls. The purpose of the various profiles that follow is to identify trends and patterns that, when compared with neighboring municipalities, will allow decision-makers to better understand the planning context in the community. Additional demographic information will be presented in later plan chapters.

## **The Pros and Cons of Growth**

Some residents may view growth and development as necessary and beneficial while others see them as threats to the rural character of Oconto Falls. Finding a balance between the ‘preservationists’ and ‘pro-growth’ advocates is a crucial component of every planning process. A growing population can have both positive and negative effects upon a community. Benefits may include an expanded tax base, additional consumer spending at local businesses, employment opportunities related to new home construction, and additional students in local school districts (with resulting increases in state and federal funding). Potential challenges may consist of strains on the current housing supply, increased costs of services (i.e., increased taxes), harmful effects to the natural environment resulting from unplanned or misguided development, and the loss of agricultural lands, among others.

A declining population brings a different set of challenges. As a population decreases over time, existing services and facilities necessary may exceed need. Moreover, fewer residents and occupied housing units correspond with a declining tax base and diminished state funding for local schools. The problems associated with population contraction can be more challenging than those resulting from a high growth rate. A primary purpose of this planning effort is to develop a community-supported strategy for addressing the challenges present today and those that must be faced during the next two decades.

## **Decennial Census vs. American Community Survey**

The information presented under the year ‘2000’ columns in the population tables that appear throughout this chapter is drawn from the 2000 US Census, the last to utilize the long survey

## CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE

census format. Beginning in 2010, the US Census Bureau distributed an abbreviated survey instrument that resulted in the collection of much more limited demographic data. The 2010 Census has since been supplemented with additional information gathered through the annual American Community Survey (ACS).

The ACS is an ongoing statistical survey by the U.S. Census Bureau that is sent to approximately 250,000 addresses monthly. It regularly gathers information previously contained in the long form of the decennial census. The data listed under the '2012' or '2013' columns in this chapter's tables result from the most recent ACS survey for Wisconsin communities.

### Population Profile

#### Historic and Current Population

The population of the Town has grown by 41.3% during the past four decades, with 11% of that number since 2000 (see Table 2.1). On average, Oconto Falls has added approximately 74 people per decade.

Table 2.1: Population of Town of Oconto Falls and Oconto County, 1970-2013									
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	Change 1970-2013			
						Number	Percent	10-Year Average Number	10-Year Average Percent
T. Oconto Falls	895	1,033	1,014	1,139	1,265	370	41.3%	74	
Increase from previous	--	15.4%	-1.8%	12.3%	11.1%				8.3%
Oconto County	25,553	28,947	30,226	35,634	37,660	12,107	47.4%	2,421	
Increase from previous	--	13.3%	4.4%	17.9%	5.7%				9.5%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration; US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.

The average 1990-2010 growth rate for all towns in Oconto County is 29.8% (see Table 2.2). The Town of Oconto Falls fell slightly below the average at 24.8%. With a 2010 population of 1,265 people, Oconto Falls is the eight largest of Oconto County's 23 towns.

Table 2.2: Population of Oconto County Townships, 1990-2010					
Township	1990	2000	2010	Change Number 1990-2010	Change Percent, 1990-2010
T. Abrams	1,347	1,861	1,856	509	37.8%
T. Bagley	271	341	291	20	7.4%
T. Brazeau	1,169	1,436	1,284	115	42.4%
T. Breed	564	686	712	148	26.2%
T. Chase	1,375	2,270	3,005	1,630	118.5%
T. Doty	184	263	260	76	41.3%
T. Gillett	1,026	1,099	1,043	17	1.7%
T. How	564	579	516	-48	-8.5%
T. Lakewood	607	901	816	209	34.4%
T. Lena	790	771	727	-63	-8.0%



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T. Little River	1,003	1,076	1,094	91	9.1%
T. Little Suamico	2,637	4,164	4,799	2162	82.0%
T. Maple Valley	690	678	662	-28	-4.1%
T. Morgan	815	918	984	169	20.7%
T. Mountain	730	868	822	92	12.6%
T. Oconto	999	1,349	1,335	336	33.6%
<b>T. Oconto Falls</b>	<b>1,014</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>1,265</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>24.8%</b>
T. Pensaukee	979	1,252	1,381	402	41.1%
T. Riverview	483	848	725	242	50.1%
T. Spruce	776	897	835	59	7.6%
T. Stiles	1,243	1,515	1,489	246	20.0%
T. Townsend	715	997	979	264	36.9%
T. Underhill	668	869	882	214	32.0%
All Towns	21,379	26,817	27,762	6,381	29.8%
Average	930	1,166	1,207	277	29.8%
Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration; US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.					

### Population Projections

Table 2.3 projects the population of Oconto Falls and adjoining communities through 2035. As with the previous table, projections for surrounding communities are provided for the purposes of comparative analysis. According to information provided by the Wisconsin Department of Administration, which develops population projections based upon a formula that includes historic population, regional demographics trends and economic forecasts, the Town will maintain a steady growth rate during the next 20 years, reaching a population of 1,565 by 2035.

Table 2.3: Population Projections for Town of Oconto Falls and Select Communities, 2015-2035						
Municipality	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	Percent Change 2015-2035
T. Oconto Falls	1,275	1,370	1,460	1,535	1,565	22.7%
C. Oconto Falls	2,890	3,050	3,200	3,305	3,310	14.5%
T. Abrams	1,880	2,030	2,170	2,285	2,335	24.2%
T. Gillett	1,025	1,060	1,090	1,100	1,080	5.4%
T. Lena	715	735	750	755	740	3.5%
T. Maple Valley	660	695	720	735	730	10.6%
T. Morgan	995	1,065	1,140	1,195	1,215	22.1%
T. Spruce	835	875	910	930	925	10.8%
T. Stiles	1,495	1,590	1,680	1,745	1,760	17.7%
Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration.						

### Population Density

The Town of Oconto Falls covers approximately 36 square miles (23,040 acres) of land. With an estimated 2015 population of 1,275, Oconto Falls has a population density of roughly 35 people per square mile, with the majority of residents located in the southern half of the township and the highest concentrations located near the City of Oconto Falls. With a projected 2035 population of 1,565, the Town can anticipate a residential density approaching 45 people per square mile.

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### Population Characteristics

Of the 1,265 people living in the Town in 2010, 653 (51.6%) were male and 612 (48.4%) were female. Ninety-seven percent of respondents to the 2010 Census identified their race as white. Twenty-four residents identified themselves as of Hispanic origin. A detailed breakdown by race of Oconto Falls' 2010 population is presented below.

Stated Race	Number	Percent
White	1,231	97.3%
African American	7	0.6%
Asian	4	0.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	--
Other	11	0.9%
Identified by two or more	9	0.7%

Table 2.4: Population by Age in the Town of Oconto Falls, 2000-2013					
Age Group	2000		2010		Change in Pop. 2000-2010
	Number	Percent of Total Pop.	Number	Percent of Total Pop.	
Under 5 years	60	5.3%	60	4.7%	--
5 to 9 years	70	6.1%	85	6.7%	21.4%
10 to 14 years	85	7.5%	92	7.3%	1.4%
15 to 19 years	105	9.2%	66	5.2%	-37.1%
20 to 24 years	46	4.0%	49	3.9%	0.7%
25 to 34 years	130	11.4%	125	9.8%	-16.7%
35 to 44 years	208	18.3%	179	14.2%	-13.8%
45 to 54 years	179	15.7%	230	18.2%	28.5%
55 to 59 years	71	6.2%	93	7.4%	31.0%
60 to 64 years	57	5.0%	81	6.4%	42.1%
65 to 74 years	78	6.8%	133	10.5%	70.5%
75 to 84 years	42	3.7%	59	4.7%	40.5%
85 years and older	8	0.7%	13	1.0%	62.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,139</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,265</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>
Source: US Census Bureau.					

Table 2.4 compares the 2000 and 2010 population of Oconto Falls in various age categories. The largest increases occurred within the age '65 to 74' and age '85 and older' cohorts (70.5% and 62.5%, respectively). The most significant decrease occurred within the population aged '15 to 19', which declined by 37.1%. This is consistent with most national and state trends, particularly with respect to rural communities. As the 'baby boom generation' (those born between 1946 and 1964) reaches retirement age, communities around the country will have to address the needs of an aging population.

Figure 2.1 compares the change in the population of select age groups between the 2000 and 2010 censuses. Utilizing the same data presented in Table 2.4, the chart segregates the population into the following select set of age groups beneficial for community planning.

### Under 5

- Infants, toddlers, and Pre-school.
- Entirely dependent upon others.
- Community needs include healthcare and day care.

### 5 to 19

- School aged children and young adults.
- Residents dependent upon others for lodging, food, education, and most other needs.
- Community needs include schools, play apparatus and sports fields/courts, safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

### 20 to 24

- Post high school young adults; job and career training (college, trades, military, etc.).
- Somewhat dependent upon others for some needs.
- Community needs include affordable housing, part- and full-time employment opportunities, multi-modal transportation systems, entertainment, coffee shops, high-speed/broadband internet access.

### 24 to 44

- Established adults.
- Prime earning and spending years; traditional child-raising years.
- Community needs include diversity in housing choices, safety, healthcare, dining alternatives, diverse retail, childcare services, career opportunities, banking and insurance.

### 45 to 64

- Mature adults.
- Often “empty nesters”.
- Community needs are similar to the 24 to 44 group with less emphasis on programs, facilities, and services for youth.

### 65 to 84

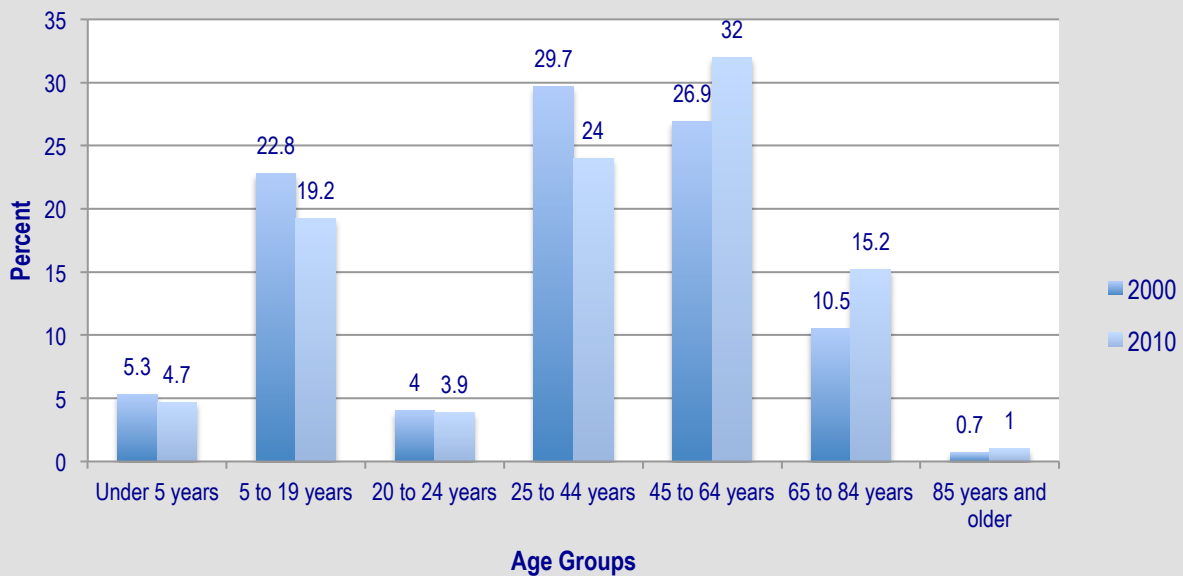
- Retirement-age.
- Decreased earning, sustained activity level.
- Community needs include healthcare, multi-modal transportation opportunities, recreation, senior housing options.

### 85 and older

- Post retirement.
- Decreased earning and activity level.
- Community needs similar to ‘65 to 84’ with greater emphasis on around the clock care.

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Figure 2.1: Select Age Groups as Percentage of Total Population, 2000-2010



## Housing Profile

### Households

A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements. For the past five decades state and national trends have shown a shift towards an increase in the number of households with corresponding decreases in the average number of persons per household. In 1965, the average American household was 3.7 persons in size. By 2014, it had fallen to 3.13. The main reasons for the decrease includes:

- A decline in birth rate.
- People waiting longer to get married.
- An increase in the average life span (resulting in more elderly people living either alone or with another family member).

A decline in the size of households is important since it means that additional housing units will be needed to support the population *even if the overall population remains the same*. While the population of the Town is projected to grow by 23.7% from its 2010 level, the projected number of households is anticipated to increase by 34.3% (see Table 2.5). Additional information related to housing in the Town of Oconto Falls can be found in *Chapter 3: Housing*.



**Table 2.5: Actual and Projected Households and Household Size in the Town of Oconto Falls and Oconto County, 2000-2035**

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	Change, 2010-2035
<b>T. Oconto Falls</b>							
Population	1,265	1,275	1,370	1,460	1,535	1,565	23.7%
Total Households	499	518	564	608	647	670	34.3%
Avg. Household Size	2.54	2.46	2.43	2.40	2.37	2.34	-0.8%
<b>Oconto County</b>							
Population	37,660	38,050	40,620	43,030	44,850	45,430	20.6%
Total Households	15,415	16,025	17,288	18,504	19,486	19,973	29.6%
Avg. Household Size	2.44	2.37	2.35	2.33	2.30	2.28	-0.7%
Source: US Census Bureau-Census; Wisconsin Department of Administration-Demographic Services Center.							

## Education Profile

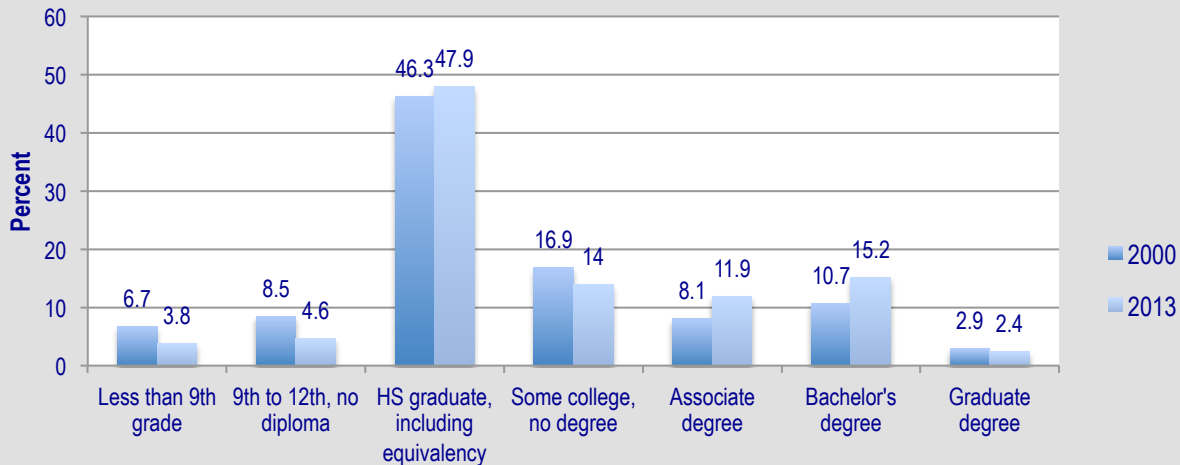
The level of educational attainment in a community serves as a good indicator of the quality of life. Generally, a high level of educational attainment reflects a skilled population with higher earnings potential. It also allows a community to more effectively compete for the most sought-after industries, including technology and healthcare, among others.

Each column in Figure 2.2 indicates the percentage of the community that has reached its highest level of educational attainment within a given category for the years 2000 and 2013. As the chart demonstrates, the Town of Oconto Falls is becoming a more highly educated community. For example, the 2010 educational attainment for 61.5% of the residents of Oconto Falls older than the age of 25 climaxed at a high school diploma (or its equivalency), whereas 84.8% achieved *at least* a high school diploma. By 2013, those numbers had changed to 56.3% and 91.6%, respectively. The percentage of residents with a college degree rose from 21.7% to 29.6% during between 2000 and 2013, while the number of residents without a high school diploma fell from 15.2% to 8.4%.

The list that follows Figure 2.2 compares the percentage of residents of the Town of Oconto Falls, adjoining municipalities, Oconto County, and the State of Wisconsin who achieved an Associate's Degree or higher as of the 2013 American Community Survey. Only the City of Oconto Falls and the Town of Abrams exceed the Town of Oconto Falls in number of residents with college degrees.

## CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE

**Figure 2.2: Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Population Age 25 Years and Older in the Town of Oconto Falls, 2000 and 2013**



### Level of Educational Attainment

Source: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey

### Percentage of Population Over Age 25 with Associate's Degree or Higher

▪ T. Oconto Falls	29.6%	▪ T. Morgan	21.9%
▪ C. Oconto Falls	33.7%	▪ T. Spruce	21.5%
▪ T. Abrams	30.4%	▪ T. Stiles	25.7%
▪ T. Gillett	12.9%	▪ Oconto County	24.3%
▪ T. Lena	20.2%	▪ State of Wisconsin	37.8%
▪ T. Maple Valley	18.0%		

Data from the federal government demonstrates the importance of a higher education degree for job seekers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2009 unemployment rate was more than twice as high for persons without a high school diploma than for persons with an Associate degree. That gap widens to three times in comparison to persons who hold a Bachelor's degree. The unemployment rate for persons with Master's, professional, and doctoral degrees was the lowest, at 2.4 percent.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that persons with a high school degree make, on average, \$626 weekly. In comparison, persons with an Associate degree make \$761, workers with a Bachelor's degree make \$1,025 and those with a Master's degree take in \$1,257 a week. According to these numbers, a person with an Associate degree is likely to earn nearly \$7,000 more per annum than someone with just a high school diploma, a person with a Bachelor's degree is likely to earn nearly \$14,000 more a year than someone with an Associate degree, and a worker who possesses a Master's degree is likely to earn nearly \$12,000 more annually than someone with just a Bachelor's degree.

## Economic Profile

This section of the chapter profiles the local economic environment by presenting data and examining factors related to income, poverty rate, and employment. Economic conditions have a direct impact on the supply, demand, and costs of housing, infrastructure, and other services within a community. The information presented below and on the following pages offers a general description of current economic indicators in the community. For a more comprehensive look at the Town of Oconto Falls' economy, please refer to *Chapter 7: Economic Development*.

### Income

The three most methods used by demographers and economists to assess local income are per capita, median household, and median family. *Per capita income* is the sum of annual income divided by the total number of residents, including children and other groups of individuals who do not actually earn income. *Median household income* is the middle point of household incomes reported in a community (households include families, married couple households, and individual households). *Median family income* is the middle income reported by families.

The US Census Bureau defines a family as a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together. The data presented below compares per capita, median household, and median family incomes in the Town of Oconto Falls in 2000 and 2013.

#### Median vs. Mean Income

Census data related to income is reported as a median figure. This represents the middle point of all incomes reported. It is not the same as a mean (or average) income. For example, if four people reported their income at \$30,000 and one person reported their income at \$100,000, the median income would be \$30,000. In the same scenario, the mean income would be \$44,000, which does not accurately depict where the majority (i.e. four people versus only one) reported their income.

	Per Capita	Median Household	Median Family
2000	\$17,654	\$49,531	\$53,304
2013	\$26,223	\$60,486	\$62,431
Change	48.5%	22.1%	17.1%

**Table 2.6: Income Comparison for Town of Oconto Falls, Select Communities, Oconto County, and State of Wisconsin, 2013**

Municipality	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income
T. Oconto Falls	\$26,223	\$60,486	\$62,431
C. Oconto Falls	\$24,222	\$36,406	\$60,263
T. Abrams	\$30,079	\$66,029	\$75,563
T. Gillett	\$24,039	\$50,380	\$53,625
T. Lena	\$24,204	\$54,297	\$57,500
T. Maple Valley	\$28,619	\$50,764	\$53,125
T. Morgan	\$26,703	\$58,667	\$77,083
T. Spruce	\$21,947	\$40,859	\$58,000

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T. Stiles	\$27,305	\$48,355	\$57,708
Oconto County	\$25,941	\$51,615	\$62,599
Wisconsin	\$27,448	\$51,467	\$65,618
Source: American Community Survey.			

According to the data presented in Table 2.6 the Town of Oconto Falls ranks 5<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, respectively, in terms of per capita, median household, and median family income among neighboring communities. It compares favorably with Oconto County and the State of Wisconsin.

### Poverty Status

Each year, the US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) sets poverty guidelines for the nation (see Table 2.7). The formula used to create the guidelines was originally developed in the early 1960s. It took the US Department of Agriculture's economy food plan for families of three or more persons and multiplied the costs by a factor of three. Different procedures were used to calculate thresholds for one and two-person households in order to allow for the relatively larger fixed costs that small family units face. Since its original creation, the HHS prepares annual poverty guidelines based upon the previous year and updated for price changes using the Consumer Price Index.<sup>1</sup>

In 2000, 4.1% of families and 6.5% of individuals failed to breach the poverty guideline as defined by HHS. By the 2013 American Community Survey, those numbers had fallen to 2.2% and 2.7%, respectively. By comparison, 9.7% of families and 12.5% of individuals in Oconto County had incomes falling below the 'poverty line.' A comparison of poverty levels in the Town of Oconto Falls in 2000 and 2013 appears below.

Table 2.7: Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia, 2014	
Persons in Family / Household	Poverty Guideline
1	\$11,670
2	\$15,730
3	\$19,790
4	\$23,850
5	\$27,910
6	\$31,970
7	\$36,030
8	\$40,090
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,060 for each additional person.	
Source: US Department of Health & Human Services, 2014.	

Category	2000	2013
All families	4.2%	5.6%
Families with related children under 18 years	4.1%	10.7%
Families with related children under 5 years	5.4%	30.0%
Married couple families	--	3.3%
Families with female householder, no husband	--	25.0%
All people	7.3%	6.7%
Under 18 years	7.1%	7.8%
18 years to 64 years	7.4%	5.9%
64 years and older	13.6%	8.9%

<sup>1</sup> Source: US Department of Health & Human Services, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.cfm>, 2014.

## Employment

The Town of Oconto Falls, like most rural communities, possesses a limited inventory of commercial and industrial businesses. Most residents in the work force tend to find employment outside of the Town, either elsewhere in Oconto County or in surrounding counties. As of the 2013 American Community Survey, there were 715 Town residents in the labor force. This represents 73.7% of the population age 16 years and older. Of those 715 individuals, 683 were employed. The 2013 unemployment rate in the Town was 3.3% (see Table 2.8 for detailed employment data).

### Definitions

**Labor Force:** The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons who are 16 years of age and older and who are willing and actively seeking work. Institutionalized populations are not included in the labor force.

**Unemployment:** The actual unemployment rate is calculated by dividing the sum of the Labor Force by the total number of unemployed. The unemployment rate does not count those not in the Labor Force (i.e., those not employed and not seeking employment).

**Table 2.8: Labor Force Comparison in the Town of Oconto Falls, 2000 and 2013**

Category	2000		2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 16 years and older	852	100%	970	100%
In labor force	661	77.6%	715	73.7%
Employed	643	75.5%	683	70.4%
Unemployed	18	2.1%	32	3.3%
Not in labor force	191	22.4%	255	26.3%

Source: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.

Table 2.9 presents employment by industry sector for Town residents in 2000 and 2013. As the table shows, the largest employers of residents by industry sector in 2013 were: Manufacturing (24.3%); Educational services, health care, and social assistance (22.0%); and, Retail Trade (11.3%). These three sectors employed nearly six of every ten working residents of the community.

**Table 2.9: Employment by Industry Sector in the Town of Oconto Falls, 2000 and 2013**

Sector	2000		2013		Change, 2000-2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining	71	11.0%	59	8.6%	-12	-16.9%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	28	4.4%	27	4.0%	-1	-3.6%
Construction	49	7.6%	34	5.0%	-15	-30.6%
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	100	15.6%	150	22.0%	50	50.0%
Finance, insurance, and real estate	44	6.8%	31	4.5%	-13	-29.6%
Information	8	1.2%	3	0.4%	-5	-62.5%
Manufacturing	134	20.8%	166	24.3%	32	23.9%
Other service, except public administration	31	4.8%	11	1.6%	20	-64.5%
Professional, scientific, and management	32	5.0%	35	5.1%	3	0.9%
Public administration	25	3.9%	13	1.9%	-12	-48.0%
Retail trade	59	9.2%	77	11.3%	18	30.5%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	45	7.0%	63	9.2%	18	40.0%
Wholesale trade	17	2.6%	14	2.0%	-3	-17.6%

Source: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.



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Table 2.10 compares the average annual wage by industry sector for Oconto County and the State of Wisconsin in 2013. As is typical for the northern part of the state, wages are lower in Oconto County than the statewide average; although, the cost of living is arguably lower as well. Table 2.11 lists the top ten employers in Oconto County as of 2013.

<b>Table 2.10: Average Annual Wage by Industry Sector in Oconto County and the State of Wisconsin, 2013</b>			
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>Oconto County</b>	<b>Oconto County as Percent of Wisconsin</b>
All industries	\$41,985	\$28,885	68.8%
Natural resources	\$33,047	\$24,130	73.0%
Construction	\$51,670	\$32,606	63.1%
Manufacturing	\$52,413	\$35,161	67.1%
Trade, transportation, & utilities	\$35,946	\$24,786	70.0%
Information	\$56,015	\$37,453	66.9%
Financial activities	\$58,493	\$30,656	52.4%
Professional & business services	\$49,451	\$25,923	52.4%
Education & health	\$43,781	\$31,952	73.0%
Leisure & other hospitality	\$15,221	\$10,511	69.1%
Other services	\$23,598	\$33,664	142.7%
Public administration	\$42,198	\$30,352	71.9%
Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Workforce Training, QCEW, June 2013.			

<b>Table 2.11: Ten Largest Employers by Total Employment in Oconto County, 2013</b>		
<b>Employer</b>	<b>Service or Product</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>
Saputo Cheese USA, Inc.	Cheese manufacturing	250-499
Community Memorial Hospital, Inc.	General medical and surgical hospitals	250-499
County of Oconto	Executive and legislative offices, combined	250-499
KCS International, Inc.	Boat building	100-249
Unlimited Services of Wisconsin, Inc.	Current-carrying wiring device manufacturing	100-249
CESA 8	Administration of education programs	100-249
Visions of NEW, LLC	Residential mental retardation facilities	100-249
Beyond Abilities, LLC	Residential mental retardation facilities	100-249
Gillett Public School	Elementary and secondary schools	100-249
Sharpe Care Nursing and Rehabilitation	Nursing care facilities	100-249
Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Workforce Training, QCEW, June 2013.		

## Summary

The Town of Oconto Falls is a growing rural community slowly recovering from the effects of the 2007-10 'Great Recession.' As of 2015, the Town has an estimated population of 1,272 persons, and is projected to reach 1,565 by 2035. Like most American communities, Oconto Falls is aging. The median age of its residents increased to 46.7 years in 2013 from 38.5 in 2000. The number of people aged 60 years and older increased by 55% between 2000 and 2013 and now represents nearly one-quarter of the total population. In addition, the bulk of the baby boom generation is rapidly approaching retirement age.

These factors, combined with an overall increase in the general population, will require that the Town reevaluate the strategies for providing housing, transportation, and services that worked in the past. The Town of Oconto Falls 2036 Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide the community with the tools it needs to adequately prepare for its future while preserving the cultural and natural resources valued by its residents.

## **CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE**

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## **Introduction**

Housing is more than a basic human necessity providing shelter from the elements. It is a prominent feature of the built environment and a driver of transportation patterns; a consumptive good and an investment for building financial security; a determinant of social interaction and achievement; and a symbol of familial connections and personal history. It varies for different individuals depending on age, income, marital and family status, and geographic location, among other variables.



A supply of high quality, well-designed housing is vital to a healthy and prosperous community. The styles, sizes, and types of available housing options create community character and establish a connection between residents and their neighborhoods. Housing in the Town of Oconto Falls, like most rural communities, is comprised almost entirely of single-family, site-built units. The community also has a relatively high percentage (17%) of mobile homes. This imbalance may prove challenging as the population ages.

In the process of updating the Town of Oconto Falls 2006 Comprehensive Plan, the quantity and quality of existing housing stock was reviewed and goals, objectives, and policies were developed to ensure that the Town is adequately prepared to address its housing needs during the coming decades.

## **Housing Vision**

*Through policies, programs, and local ordinances, the Town of Oconto Falls will strive to provide an adequate supply of affordable and well-maintained housing. The Town will consider a variety of options to expand housing choice to ensure that the residential living needs of its residents are met now and into the future.*

## **Current Supply**

As of the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) there were 623 housing units in the Town of Oconto Falls, comprised entirely of single-family units (517) or mobile homes (106). Of these, 479 were occupied while 144 were classified as vacant. Although it would benefit from greater housing diversity, it must be understood that the nearby City of Oconto Falls and its 422 two-family and multi-family units (as of the 2013 ACS) provides a viable local alternative to the Town's stock of single-family housing.

## CHAPTER 3: HOUSING

Table 3.1 compares housing units in the Town following the 2000 Census and 2013 ACS. According to the data, the Town lost two 2-unit and two 3-4 units during the 13 years between the two surveys while gaining and additional 108 1-unit structures and 31 mobile homes.

Table 3.1: Comparison of Housing Units in Town of Oconto Falls, 2000-2013						
Category	2000		2013		Change 2000-2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Units	488	100%	623	100%	135	27.7%
Occupied units	440	90.2%	479	76.9%		
Vacant units	48	9.8%	144	23.1%		
1-unit, detached	409	83.8%	514	82.5%	105	25.7%
1-unit, attached	0	--	3	0.5%	3	--
2 units	2	0.4%	0	--	-2	-100%
3 to 4 units	2	0.4%	0	--	-2	-100%
5 to 9 units	0	--	0	--	0	--
10 to 19 units	0	--	0	--	0	--
20 or more units	0	--	0	--	0	--
Mobile Home	75	15.4%	106	17.0%	31	41.3%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	--	--	0	--	0	--

Source: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.

### Occupancy

For a housing market to operate efficiently it must possess an adequate supply of available housing units for sale or rent. The supply must be sufficient to allow for the formation of new households by the existing population, to allow for immigration, and to provide opportunities for alternative housing resulting from a change in household size, status, or income. According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an overall available vacancy rate of 6.5% (1.5% for owner-occupied; 5.0% for the renter-occupied) is required to allow for adequate housing choice among consumers. Low vacancy rates indicate a shortage of available housing. High rates demonstrate an adequate supply, increased competition, and potentially lower housing prices and values.

Vacancy rates vary from one community to the next. The rate in Wisconsin as of the 2013 ACS was 1.9% for owner-occupied units and 5.5% for rentals. Within Oconto County, the rates were 3.0 and 2.7, respectively. The Town of Oconto Falls had a 2013 owner-occupied vacancy rate of 1.8% and a rental rate of 0.0%; the City was at 0.0% and 4.5%, respectively. If the Town and City are viewed as a single community, the data indicates an adequate supply of owner-occupied housing and a slight deficit of available rental units.

### Age and Quality

A good indicator of the quality of available housing in a community is the age of its housing stock. Table 3.2 lists the number of units and the corresponding percent of total housing stock by year built. Sixty-nine percent of existing units in the Town have been constructed since 1970

when modern building codes began to regulate new home construction. However, one-in-five units were constructed during or prior to World War II and the post-war improvements in building construction. While age alone does not indicate poor condition, it is assumed that older structures will require more frequent and expensive maintenance. The 134 structures built prior to 1950 may be candidates for rehabilitation or replacement during the next 20 years.

### Cost

Table 3.3 provides a comparison of median home values in the Town of Oconto Falls with those of adjoining communities, Oconto County, and the State of Wisconsin in 2000 and 2013. The median value of an owner-occupied home in Oconto Falls following the 2013 ACS was \$163,200, an increase of 70% from 2000.

The main reason for the tremendous increases in median home values in Oconto County (and elsewhere in the U.S.) was an overheated housing market. Were it not for the collapse of the housing bubble in 2007 it is likely that the value of owner-occupied homes would have been even higher. Prices stabilized around 2012 and have been slowly but steadily increasing since. Table 3.4 compares the number of owner-occupied units in the Town in 2000 and 2013 by value. The

**Table 3.2: Age of Housing Stock in Town of Oconto Falls, 2013**

Year Structure Built	Number of Units	Percent of Total Units
2010 or later	8	1.3%
2000 to 2009	168	27.0%
1990 to 1999	76	12.2%
1980 to 1989	85	13.6%
1970 to 1979	97	15.6%
1960 to 1969	34	5.5%
1950 to 1959	21	3.4%
1940 to 1949	26	4.2%
1939 or earlier	108	17.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: American Community Survey

**Table 3.3: Comparison of Median Value of Owner-Occupied Homes in Town of Oconto Falls and Select Municipalities, 2000-2012**

Municipality	2000	2013	Change, 2000-2012	
			Dollars	Percent
T. Oconto Falls	\$95,900	\$163,200	\$67,300	70.2%
C. Oconto Falls	\$77,600	\$103,200	\$25,600	33.0%
T. Abrams	\$114,800	\$168,800	\$54,000	47.0%
T. Gillett	\$77,000	\$142,300	\$65,300	84.8%
T. Lena	\$79,400	\$143,500	\$64,100	80.7%
T. Maple Valley	\$58,800	\$123,400	\$64,600	111.4%
T. Morgan	\$105,200	\$189,300	\$84,100	79.9%
T. Spruce	\$92,500	\$113,900	\$31,400	34.0%
T. Stiles	\$102,700	\$151,700	\$49,000	47.7%
Oconto County	\$89,900	\$147,700	\$57,800	64.3%
Wisconsin	\$112,200	\$167,100	\$54,900	48.9%

Source: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.

**Table 3.4: Comparison of Owner-Occupied Housing Units by Value in Town of Oconto Falls, 2000-2013**

Value	2000		2013		Change, 2000-2013	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than \$50,000	22	11.1%	27	6.3%	5	22.7%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	88	44.4%	37	8.7%	-51	-60.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	53	26.8%	96	22.5%	43	81.1%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	23	11.6%	125	29.3%	102	443.5%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	12	6.1%	86	20.1%	74	616.7%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	0	--	37	8.7%	37	--
\$500,000 to \$999,999	0	--	16	3.7%	16	--
\$1,000,000 or more	0	--	3	0.7%	3	--

Source: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey.



## CHAPTER 3: HOUSING

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data in the table demonstrates the increase in home values within each of eight census categories.

### Housing Affordability

Income is the primary factor, not price and availability, that determines housing affordability. Understanding housing affordability requires answering the question, “Does the cost of housing in the community match the ability of residents to pay for it?” The most commonly used affordability calculator was developed by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The HUD method compares current income to existing housing costs.

Under HUD guidelines, housing is considered affordable when it costs no more than 30% of total household income, on a monthly and annual basis. Residents should be able to live in safe and decent housing for less than one-third of their household income. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.<sup>1</sup>

#### Affordability

Beyond income and mortgage/rent costs, housing affordability also requires access to employment opportunities that provide a livable wage and a multi-modal transportation system that offers access to jobs, schools, healthcare, and other services. These issues are further discussed in *Chapter 4: Transportation*, *Chapter 5: Utilities & Community Facilities*, and *Chapter 7: Economic Development*.

As of 2013, 91 owner-occupied households in the Town of Oconto Falls (more than one out of every three) spent thirty-percent or more of monthly income on housing. In Brown County as a whole, 31.3% of households exceeded HUD’s recommended housing affordability threshold.

### Housing Plan

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the categories of housing and forms of residential development that will allow the Town of Oconto Falls to meet its future needs. The pages that follow include a broad discussion of housing issues in the community, descriptions of various residential living alternatives, policy options to achieve housing goals, and a list of programs that can aid in achieving those goals.

The Town has grown slowly but steadily since 1970, averaging a nearly ten percent growth rate during each of the past four decades. With a projected 2035 population of 1,565, average household size of 2.34 person, and a increasing number of residents aged 65 years and older, it will be important to develop and implement a plan to meet anticipated housing needs. The keys to achieving the community’s housing goals are diversity and flexibility. Diversity with respect to the variety, cost, location, and style of available housing alternatives and flexibility in the manner in which future residential development occurs. A range of choices will allow a young family to rent, purchase a starter home, move into a larger home as the family grows, move to a smaller home when the parents retire, and move to an assisted living facility when the needs

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from *Affordable Housing*, US Department of Housing and Urban Development website, 2015.

arises. Ideally, each of these transitions will occur within the Town of Oconto Falls; though, the nearby City of Oconto Falls will undoubtedly play a significant role in providing housing for the township's seniors.

### **Flexibility in Land Use Regulations**

Current development patterns may fail to provide adequate housing choice in part due to existing land use regulations. While local ordinances can achieve important development and planning goals, they may also prevent (or inhibit) the private sector from creating affordable housing alternatives targeting singles, young families, and seniors. The removal of certain zoning and regulatory barriers may eliminate the need for developers to procure variances and waivers through a lengthy (and costly) planning process. Such regulatory barriers may include: larger than necessary minimum lot size, setback, and single-family square footage requirements; expansive parking requirements; and, prohibitions on accessory dwelling units, among others.<sup>2</sup>

### **Large vs. Small Lots**

Like many rural communities, residential development in the Town has occurred on relatively large lots. These requirements have resulted from a desire to maintain "rural character" by prohibiting smaller lot sizes that are viewed as urban. However, large lot development can do more harm than good. Instead of protecting land, larger lots may waste it. Although large lot zoning reduces the number of homes that can be built, it also spreads out those homes in such a way that the remaining land is un-useable for farming, forestry, recreational trails, and other desired land uses.

Smaller lots sizes, even in areas not served by municipal sewer and water, provide an important element in a community's housing stock. They tend to keep housing costs down and may provide for greater efficiencies in the provision of necessary services (postal, garbage collection, school bus pickup, etc.).

If flexibility in housing options is to be a goal of the community, a mixture of lots sizes must be available for residential development. Allowing for a diversity of lot sizes will provide the Town with a pallet of available options to address future housing needs.

### **Housing for Seniors**

As presented in Chapter 2: Community Profile, Oconto Falls' senior population is projected to increase substantially during the next twenty years. According to the *2011 Profile of Americans by the Administration on Aging*, people reaching age 65 had an average life expectancy of an additional 18.8 years. The types of housing desired and required by an aging population differ from that of its younger cohorts. Housing specifically designed for seniors is currently in short supply in the Town.

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the text in this section was excerpted from *Affordable Housing and Smart Growth: Making the Connection*, Smart Growth Network and National Neighborhood Coalition, 2009.

## CHAPTER 3: HOUSING

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Clearly defining the need for senior housing in a community is not an easy task. This is largely due to the complexity of the marketplace. A majority of seniors in Wisconsin reside in their own homes or in mixed-family congregate housing (i.e. apartments with residents of all age ranges). The ability of a resident to remain at home is enhanced by organizations and services catering to people of retirement age. In addition, building designs for life (i.e. wider doorframes to accommodate wheelchair access, first floor bedrooms, etc.) can extend the ability of a resident to live independently in their own home. However, some seniors may not be able (or desire) to live in a private home and will seek alternative housing options.

Although the City of Oconto Falls may remain the destination of choice for many of the Town's aging residents, there exist senior-oriented housing options suitable for a rural community. Town options living that might be appropriate for seniors in the Town of Oconto Falls are:<sup>3</sup>

- *Age Restricted Retirement Communities (ARRC)*. The ARRC is a desirable alternative for those that do not require assisted living and nursing care. Aging residents can benefit from a relaxed environment with similarly aged neighbors while avoiding the conventional maintenance and upkeep requirements that come with home ownership. Communities benefit from attracting active adult developments because they reduce the impact on the transportation network and schools while increasing tax revenue. The options available to create ARRCs include establishing senior housing districts in the zoning ordinance, utilizing planned unit developments or overlay districts, and offering density bonuses to willing developers under subdivision regulations.
- *Elder Cottage Housing Opportunities (ECHO)*. An ECHO is a housing option wherein seniors occupy a second living unit (often referred to as a secondary suite or granny flat) or an apartment with a separate entrance on a single-family lot with another family member. Generally, they are permitted by a municipality in order to foster affordable housing or aid families with elderly parents who are unable to live completely alone. In most cases the owner of the home or the renting party must be a senior.



Courtesy Greenwood Homes and Granny Flats

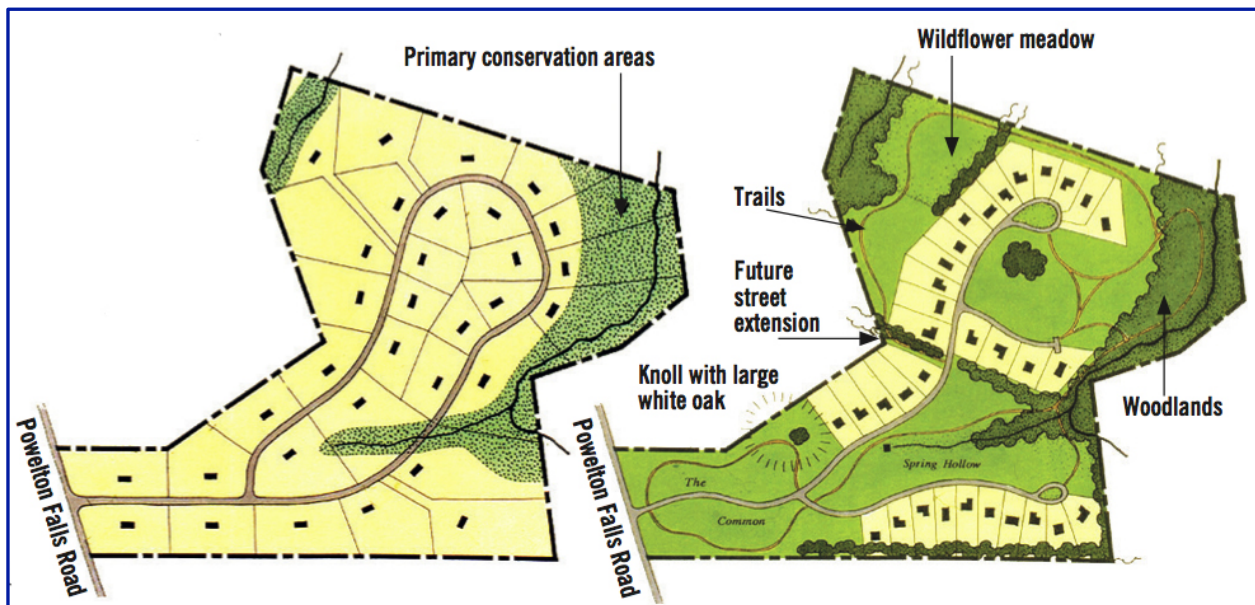
### Conservation Subdivisions

Residents view Oconto Falls as a special place to live. They do not want to see important natural features and valuable agricultural land lost in order to make way for residential development. However, the community realizes that additional homes will be necessary to meet the needs of a growing population. One method that provides the means to protect the natural environment while allowing for additional residential development is *conservation design* for subdivisions.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: *American Planning Association Magazine*, December 2006.

Conservation subdivisions provide developers with a marketable alternative to conventional subdivision design. They allow for profitable and desirable development while simultaneously preserving the important natural and cultural features present on a given piece of property (woodland, farmland, historic structures, etc.). In a conservation subdivision, homes are clustered together on smaller lots so that the remainder of the parcel may be permanently preserved as open space or agricultural land. Typically, 40% or more of the site is protected through a conservation easement or similar method. Open spaces are maintained via a homeowners association or similar mechanism. Trails, community gardens, and other amenities are often included in the design of conservation subdivisions.



The images above compare a conventional subdivision (left) with a conservation subdivision (right). Both include 32 residential lots. While the conventional subdivision adhered to a 2-acre minimum lot size, the conservation development had a minimum lot size of one acre. By reducing the size of the lots, the developers were able to provide the same number of parcels while permanently preserving (through a conservation easement) important natural and cultural resources. The open space system in the conservation subdivision is accessible to everyone who lives in the development. Within the conventional development, the entirety of the area is parceled off with just eight lots having direct access to the woods.

The Town of Oconto Falls adopted a subdivision ordinance in 2008. The ordinance was constructed upon the principles of conservation design for subdivisions.

### Affordable Housing

Although HUD defines affordability on a national scale, the department's criteria do not adequately account for cost of living in the calculations. Clearly, housing in Oconto Falls is less costly than in Chicago, New York, or San Francisco. Affordability in the Town will be achieved by allowing for a variety of housing types and styles, for sale or rent, at a range of costs.

The two land use tools that provide the means by which local government can expand upon the supply of affordable housing are the zoning and subdivision ordinances. Within the zoning ordinance, 'inclusionary' requirements can be enacted to ensure that a minimum percentage of



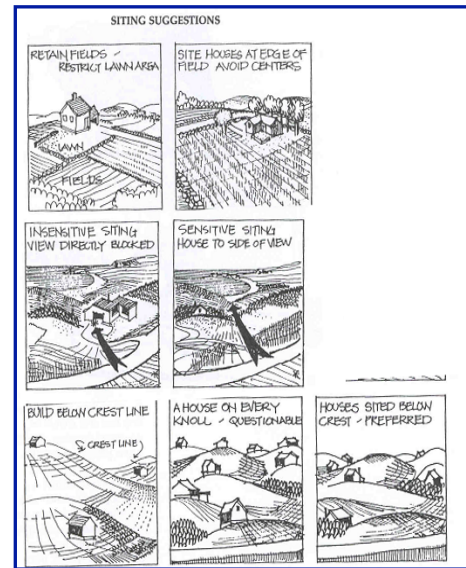
## CHAPTER 3: HOUSING

housing units within a given district meet affordability requirements. In the subdivision ordinance, density bonuses may be provided to developers who willingly include affordable units during the platting process. The standard of affordability is determined by the mean and median incomes of current and prospective residents within the community.

### Placement of Structures on Rural Parcels

Where a residence and its accessory structures are placed on a rural lot can have a significant impact on the character of the surrounding area. Properly locating homes on parcels can minimize the impact of new development on the natural environment and its rural setting. The best management practices listed below may provide opportunities to reduce the visual impact of development and maintain a rural, undeveloped character for the Town.

- When constructing homes in agricultural areas, residences should be located adjacent to tree lines and wooded field edges, if available. If not, homes should be located on the edge of the parcel, not in its center.
- Development on hilltops should be discouraged or prohibited since it disrupts the rural character of the surrounding area.
- Construction should not occur within woodlands and wildlife habitat or adjacent to wetlands and riparian corridors.
- Existing farm roads should be incorporated into the parcel and fencerows and tree lines should be preserved.
- Driveways should be as short as possible and follow contours and the lay of the land; disturbances for driveway construction should be kept to a minimum.
- Large, structurally sound trees should be left in tact (roads should be outside of the drip line).
- Onsite drainage patterns should remain intact.



Courtesy American Planning Association

### Housing Programs

The following pages describe the various federal and state housing programs that are available to aid the Town of Oconto Falls in implementing its housing plan.

## **Federal Programs and Revenue Sources**

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the federal agency primarily responsible for housing programs and community development. Though many of its programs are directed to larger cities and urban areas, the Town would qualify for some available funds. HUD provides money to non-entitlement communities (i.e., communities with populations fewer than 50,000) through grants. In the state of Wisconsin, the Department of Administration Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations (DHIR) is the agency responsible for the administration of this program. DHIR awards funds through a competitive proposal process.

### U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development

The U. S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development provides a variety of housing and community development programs for rural areas. Support is generally available to communities with populations of 10,000 or fewer. USDA-RD provides support for rental housing development, direct and guaranteed mortgage loans for homebuyers, and support for self-help and cooperative housing development.

### HOME Investment Partnerships Program

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) provides formula grants to states and localities that are often used in partnership with local nonprofit groups to fund a wide range of activities that builds, buys and/or rehabilitates affordable housing for rent or homeownership or provides direct rental assistance to low-income people.

Participating jurisdictions may choose among a broad range of eligible activities, such as: providing home purchase or rehabilitation financing assistance to eligible homeowners and new home buyers; building or rehabilitating housing for rent or ownership; or for "other reasonable and necessary expenses related to the development of non-luxury housing, including site acquisition or improvement, demolition of dilapidated housing to make way for HOME-assisted development, and payment of relocation expenses." The program's flexibility allows states and local governments to use HOME funds for grants, direct loans, loan guarantees or other forms of credit enhancement, or rental assistance.

## **State Programs and Revenue Sources**

### Wisconsin Department of Administration–Division of Housing and Intergovernmental Relations

Beyond the funds distributed through HUD, DHIR administers several state-funded programs that can potentially be used to finance housing improvements. Money available through the DHIR, because it is funded by general-purpose revenue, cannot be used to invest directly in housing development. However, funds can achieve the desired result by helping organizations



## **CHAPTER 3: HOUSING**

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develop the capacity to construct houses or by providing various types of financial assistance to homebuyers or renters through grants to local governments or nonprofit agencies.

### Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) is a quasi-governmental agency that finances housing development through the sale of bonds. Unlike the DHIR, it receives no direct state-tax support. As such, WHEDA can provide mortgage financing for first-time homebuyers and financing for multifamily housing as well. Specific programs evolve and change with the needs of the housing market.

### **Housing Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

The goals, objectives, and policies related to housing are presented in Chapter 10: Implementation.

### Introduction

The local transportation infrastructure supports the varied needs of residents, local businesses, visitors, and through-traffic. It provides the means by which people and materials flow to and through the community. This chapter summarizes the existing transportation system and provides a 20-year plan that will serve as a resource guide and implementation tool for maintaining an efficient transportation system within the Town of Oconto Falls. Multi-modal enhancements will provide increased mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, pedestrians, and bicyclists, among others. Finding solutions to current challenges, and planning to avoid future ones, is a primary goal of the Transportation Chapter of this plan.



### Transportation Vision

*The Town of Oconto Falls will maintain a safe and efficient transportation system primarily oriented around personal vehicles and agricultural machinery, but including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, senior/disabled transit, and offroad trails (among others), in areas appropriate for such multi-modal alternatives.*

### Current Transportation System

The Town's formal transportation network is comprised of state and county highways and town roads. These are supplemented by an informal system of private and farm roads, pedestrian routes (primarily paved and gravel road shoulders), and seasonal trails (snowmobiles, ATVs, etc.). Residents enjoy convenient access to State Highway (STH) 22 and STH 32. Personal vehicles provide the primary means of mobility.

The current transportation system is shown on the Transportation Network map appearing on page 4-4.

### Highways and Roads

As mentioned above, state and county highways and town roads dominate the local transportation network. Highways and roads are classified based on traffic volumes, land uses, road spacing, and system continuity. *Functional classification* is essentially the grouping of highways and streets into categories based on the type of service they provide. The four general functional classifications are freeways, arterials, collector roads and streets, and local roads and streets.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **TRANSPORTATION**

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#### Freeways

Freeways are fully controlled access highways that have no at-grade intersections or driveway connections. There are no freeways in the Town of Oconto Falls and none likely to be constructed during the next two decades. The nearest freeway is Interstate 41.

#### Arterials

Principal and minor arterials carry longer-distance traffic flows between activity centers. These facilities are the backbone of a highway system and are designed to provide a high amount of mobility with limited access. United State Highway (USH) 141, located approximately three miles east of the City of Oconto Falls, is an arterial. Although STH 22 and STH 32 provide services similar to an arterial, they are more accurately described as collectors.

#### Collectors

Collectors link local streets with the arterial street system. These facilities collect traffic in local areas, serve as local through routes, and directly serve abutting land uses. STH 22 and STH 32 are classified as collectors, along with the most widely used local county highways.

#### Locals

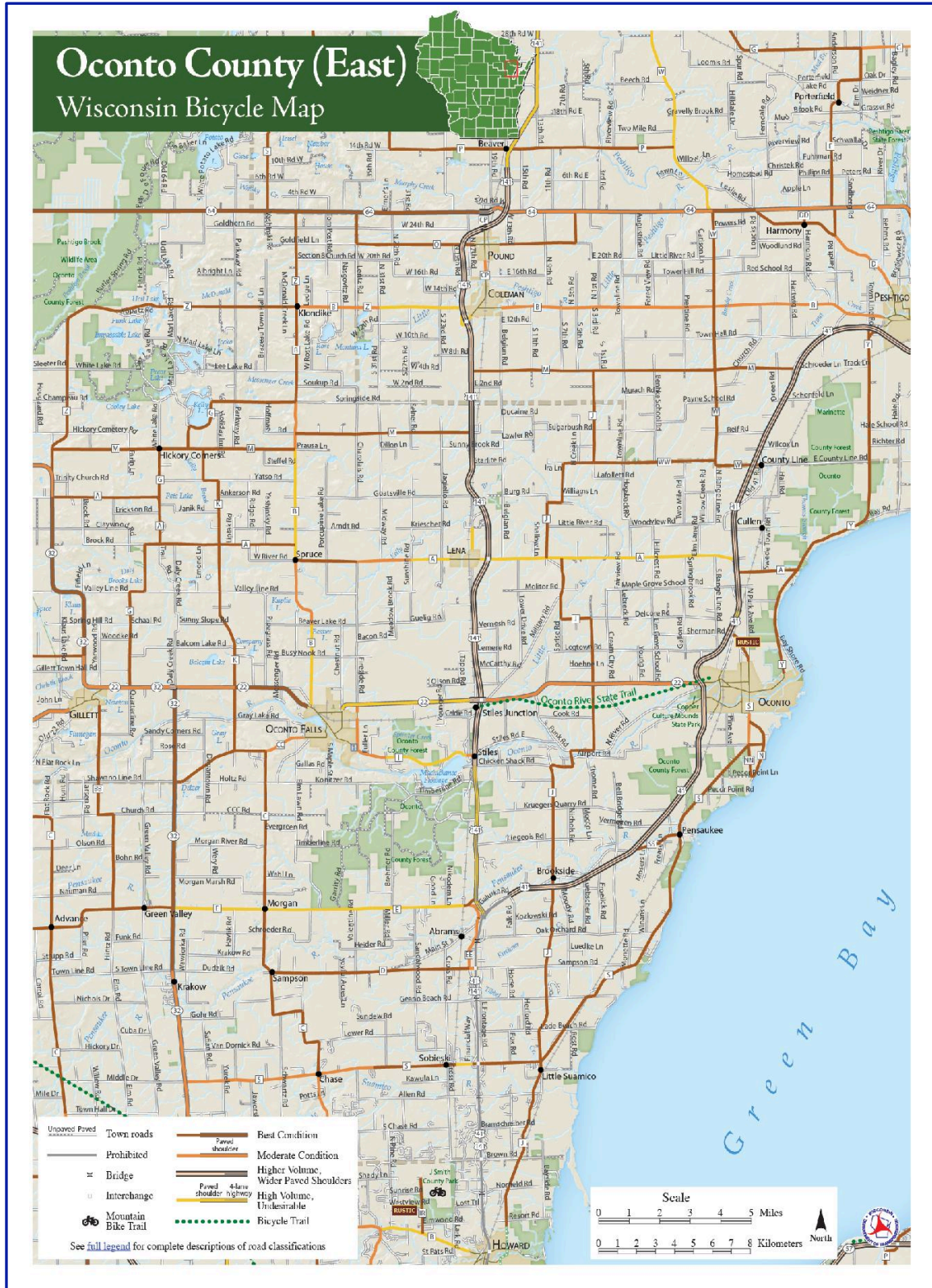
Local roads and streets are used for short trips. Their primary function is to provide access to abutting land uses. Traffic volumes and speeds are relatively low. Examples of locals in the Town include lightly used county highways and town roads.

### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities**

Oconto Falls' transportation system is comprised primarily of town roads and county highways. All of these have been designed for vehicular traffic and possess limited capabilities for serving alternate forms of transportation. Some of the more lightly travelled town roads allow for relatively safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Oconto County (East) Bicycle Map appearing on the following page identifies existing bicycle trails and roads identified as 'best' or 'moderate' for on-road pedestrian bicycle access.

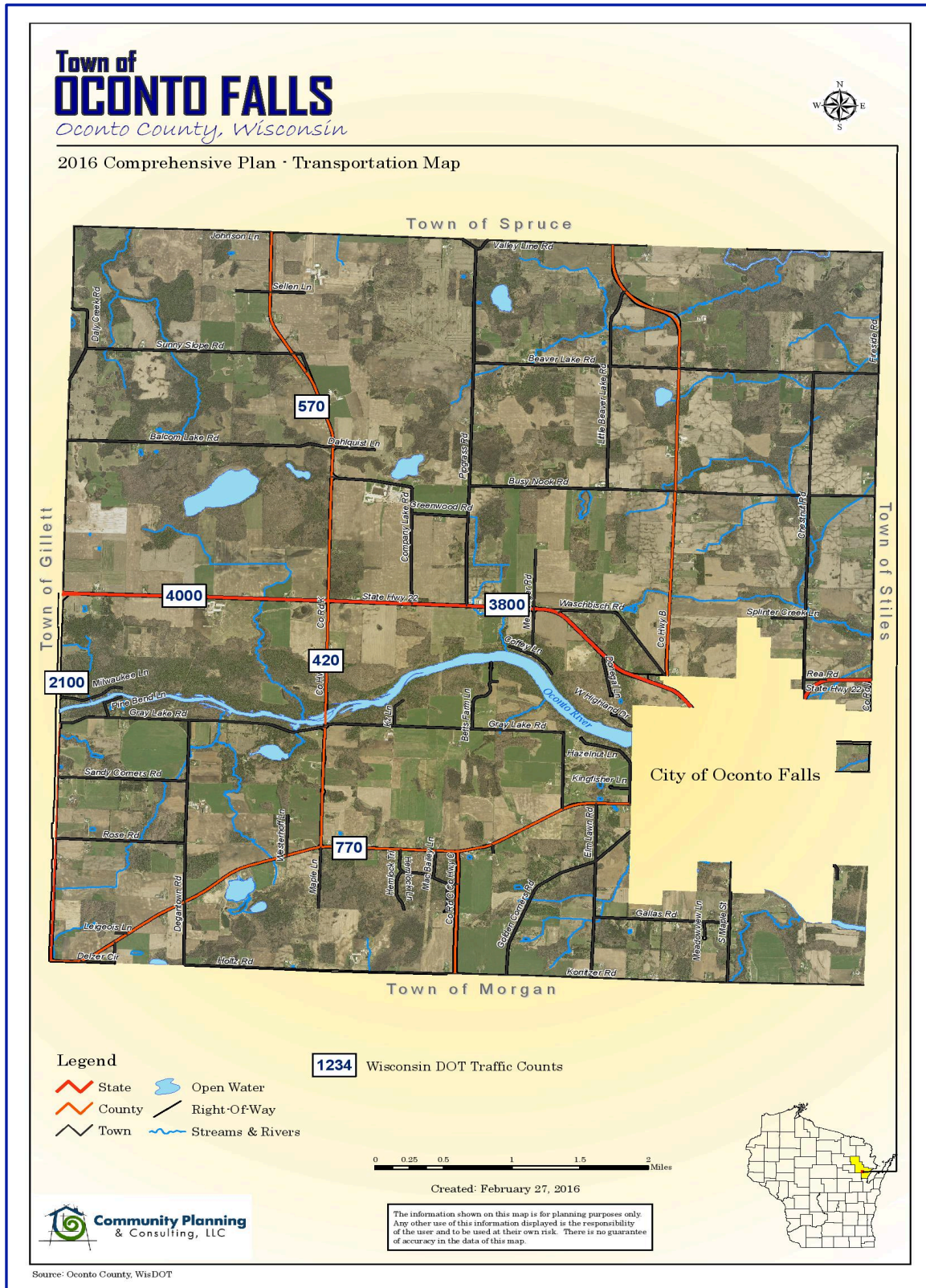
### **Transit Service**

Transit service is not available in the Town of Oconto Falls. The community possesses neither the total population nor population density to support a public transportation system. The Oconto County Commission on Aging (OCCA) provides transportation to the nearest Nutrition Center, shopping, and medical facility for adults in need age 55 and over and people with disabilities. A vehicle owned by OCCA is equipped with a wheelchair lift provides scheduled door-to-door service throughout the county.





## CHAPTER 4: TRANSPORTATION



### Rail Service

There are no active railroad corridors in the Town of Oconto Falls. Freight railroad service via a stub of the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad is available in the City of Oconto Falls.

### Air Service

J. Douglas Bake Memorial Airport is a public use airport located approximately two miles southwest of the central business district in the City of Oconto. The municipal airport has been in service since 1948 and possesses two runways, one asphalt and the other turf. The nearest commercial airport is Austin Straubel International Airport located in the City of Green Bay. The airport provides regular passenger and airfreight service to a number of cities in the U.S. and Canada. The airport also serves general aviation (GA) needs. Austin Straubel is classified as a Small Hub/Commercial Service facility. Small hub airports are those that enplane between .05 percent and .25 percent of total U.S. passenger enplanements. Commercial service facilities support regularly scheduled year-round commercial airline service and support the full range of GA activity and international destinations.



Courtesy AirNav.com

A number of smaller airports and private airstrips are located within a one-hour drive of the community, including a 2700' airstrip located in the northern part of the Town of Oconto Falls parallel to Pipgrass Road.

### Water Transportation

The Oconto River is the primary water feature in the Town. The river is classified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) as a navigable stream and is potentially capable of supporting water-based transportation opportunities. However, the Oconto River is primarily used for recreation purposes. The nearest commercial ports are located in the cities of Green Bay and Marinette.



### Truck Transportation

STH 22 and STH 32 are the primary trucking routes through the Town of Oconto Falls, as designated by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). The designation of a truck route is based upon the design of a roadway and its ability to withstand the traffic and weights associated with trucking.



## CHAPTER 4: TRANSPORTATION

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### Transportation Plan

The land use pattern and transportation system in Oconto Falls is typical of a rural community and largely oriented around serving personal vehicles and farm machinery. The issues and recommendations presented on the following pages recognize this reality and are intended to provide enhancements to the existing system, allowing it to efficiently serve the needs of the community during the next two decades.

### Maintaining Town Road Rural Character

The Town of Oconto Falls takes great pride in its rural roadways. Residents believe it is these rural, hilly roads that help to shape the character of the community. As such, the Town would like to maintain its rural roadways to the fullest extent possible. When improvements projects are considered, the Town encourages that a minimum of roadside trees are removed.

### Pavement Surface Evaluation & Rating

All Town roads are evaluated in accordance with WisDOT requirements using Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER). PASER is a visual inspection system developed to provide a condition rating for community roads. It is an important tool for planning that provides a picture of road conditions on all roads and identifies candidates for maintenance and rehabilitation. Surface defects, cracking, and potholes are all examined during a typical PASER evaluation. Paved roads are rated on a 1-to-10 scale based on their condition. Gravel Roads are rated 1-5.

- Paved Roads

Rating 9 & 10	No maintenance required.
Rating 7 & 8	Routine maintenance, crack sealing and minor patching.
Rating 5 & 6	Preservative treatments (seal coating).
Rating 3 & 4	Structural improvement and leveling (overlay or recycling).
Rating 1 & 2	Reconstruction.
  
- Gravel Roads

Rating 5	No maintenance required.
Rating 4	Good; routine maintenance.
Rating 3	Fair; ditch improvement & culvert maintenance; gravel in some areas.
Rating 2	Poor; new aggregate; ditch reconstruction & culvert maintenance.
Rating 1	Failed; rebuilding.

The Town of Oconto Falls maintains a record of PASER ratings for all roads under its jurisdiction. Please contact the Town Clerk to obtain a copy of the latest PASER ratings.



Courtesy Town of Minong, Wisconsin

### Paved vs. Gravel Roads

Road maintenance generally accounts for the largest town budget expenditure. With recent cuts in state funding, a greater portion of the cost of repairing and replacing paved roads falls on local taxpayers. In communities like Oconto Falls, where many of the roads experience light traffic loads or are primarily used by agricultural equipment, some may question the merit of expending such a large percentage of limited Town resources on their upkeep.

The paved roads that brought rural America into the 20th century are starting to disappear across the Midwest in the 21st. Local officials, facing rising pavement prices, shrinking budgets and fewer residents, are making tough decisions to regress. Many rural roads are deteriorating faster than they used to because farm and industrial equipment are heavier than ever. Meanwhile, the cost of pavement has risen dramatically in recent years. Some engineers estimate it costs up to \$300,000 to replace a mile of paved road surface now. Gravel isn't free, but it's far less expensive. With maintenance costs included, engineers have often used a rule of thumb that a road needs 150 to 200 cars a day, or the equivalent in heavyweight traffic, to be worth paving.<sup>1</sup>

Rebuilding an asphalt road today is particularly expensive because the price of asphalt cement, a petroleum-based material mixed with rocks to make asphalt, has more than doubled over the past 10 years. Gravel becomes a cheaper option once an asphalt road has been neglected for so long that major rehabilitation is necessary. Some experts caution that gravel roads can be costlier in the long run than consistently maintained asphalt because gravel needs to be graded and smoothed. The moves have angered some residents because of the choking dust and windshield-cracking stones that gravel roads can kick up, not to mention the jarring "washboard" effect of driving on rutted gravel. But higher taxes for road maintenance are equally unpopular.<sup>2</sup>

### Rustic Roads

One method of identifying and protecting rural roads is seeking rustic road designation from WisDOT. The Rustic Roads System in Wisconsin was created by the State Legislature in 1973 to help citizens and local units of government preserve what remains of Wisconsin's scenic, lightly traveled country roads for the leisurely enjoyment of bikers, hikers and motorists. Unique brown and yellow signs mark the routes of all officially designated Rustic Roads. These routes provide bikers, hikers, and motorists with an opportunity to leisurely travel through some of Wisconsin's scenic



<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from *Making a Rural Comeback: The Old Gravel Road*, Minnesota Star Tribune, March 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpted from *Roads to Ruin: Towns Rip Up the Pavement*, Wall Street Journal, July 2010.

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### TRANSPORTATION

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countryside.

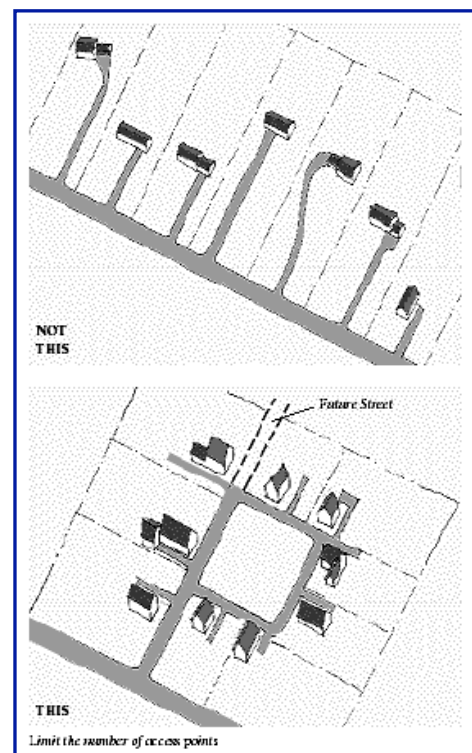
A small placard beneath the Rustic Roads sign identifies each Rustic Road by its numerical designation within the total statewide system. Each road is identified by a number assigned by the Rustic Roads Board. To avoid confusion with the State Trunk Highway numbering, a letter "R" prefix is used (i.e., R50, R120, etc.). WisDOT pays the cost of furnishing and installing Rustic Roads marking signs. An officially designated Rustic Road remains under Town control. A Rustic Road is eligible for state aids just as any other public highway. To qualify for the Rustic Road program, a road should:

- Have outstanding natural features along its borders such as rugged terrain, native vegetation, native wildlife, or include open areas with agricultural vistas that singly or in combination uniquely set this road apart from other roads.
- Be a lightly traveled local access road, one which serves the adjacent property owners and those wishing to travel by auto, bicycle, or hiking for purposes of recreational enjoyment of its rustic features.
- Not be scheduled nor anticipated for major improvements which would change its rustic characteristics.
- Entail a minimum length of 2 miles and, where feasible, provide a completed closure or loop or connect to major highways at both ends of the route.

A Rustic Road may be dirt, gravel, or paved. It may be one-way or two-way. It may also have bicycle or hiking paths adjacent to or incorporated in the roadway area. A maximum speed limit of 45 mph is established by law. A speed limit as low as 25 mph may be imposed by local government.

### Managed Access

One technique to maintain rural roadside character and control traffic access is to utilize managed roadway access techniques. Roadway access refers to the number of points of ingress and egress from a roadway. Managing roadway access points helps to promote safe and efficient travel and minimizes disruptive and potentially hazardous traffic conflicts. Managed roadway access involves minimizing the number of driveways along a roadway and establishing standards for driveway spacing. Rather than promoting driveway after driveway along rural roads, shared driveways and streets are encouraged (see diagram). This concept may be appropriate for residential and commercial development along STH 22, STH 32, and more highly utilized town roads.



### Farm Travel Needs

The Town of Oconto Falls is a farming community and wishes to remain so. It takes great pride in its farming operations and believes farming should be an important part of the Town's future. Modern farming operations often require farmers to travel with large equipment on local roads. These large, slow moving vehicles may present a potential hazard for other motorists and can increase road wear.

### Implements of Husbandry

Act 377, Wisconsin's Implements of Husbandry law, made changes in the way agricultural vehicles and equipment operate on state, county, and local roads. Act 377 established more flexible limitations for weight limits imposed on farm machinery forged a compromise between the agricultural community and local officials. The legislation was intended to balance the need for farm equipment to operate legally and safely on roads with the need to protect local infrastructure. As of April 2014, an implement of husbandry (IOH) is defined as:

- A self-propelled or towed vehicle manufactured, designed, or reconstructed to be used and that is used exclusively in the conduct of Agriculture.
- A combination of vehicles in which each vehicle in the combination is an IOH.
- A combination of vehicles in which an IOH farm wagon, farm trailer, or manure trailer is towed by a farm truck, farm truck tractor, or motor truck.

Effective November 1, 2015, a slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem is a required marking on any type of IOH, including animal drawn, that usually travels at speeds less than 25 mph. It is to be displayed at all times on the most visible rear area of the vehicle or combination of vehicles. If a SMV emblem on a power unit is visible from rear and in compliance, then the towed units are not required to have an SMV emblem. It is allowable for two or three vehicle combinations to have more than one SMV emblem. These emblems should be mounted pointing upward perpendicular to route of travel, with the lower edge 2 to 6 feet off the ground, and either centered or as near to the left of center of the equipment as practical. SMV emblems must be bright and clean, and should be replaced if faded.

### Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Like most rural communities, the town does not have an interconnected street network bounded by a system of sidewalks. Many of the activities that would normally occur on sidewalks or pathways, such as walking and bicycling, take place in driving areas or on narrow road shoulders. This poses risks for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. To create a pedestrian and bicycle system that complements the existing road network, the Town may:

- Seek funding to add wider, paved shoulder to town roads.
- Encourage residential developers to incorporate trails systems in proposed subdivisions.
- Work with Oconto County and WisDOT to include pedestrian and bicycle facilities along county and state highways when these routes are repaired or reconstructed.

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### Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan

The primary mechanism for creating a pedestrian and bicycle system is a Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan. Such a plan identifies existing and potential bicycle routes and pedestrian improvements within the Town. It would also identify and prioritize pedestrian/bicycle facility needs and provide references for best practices in planning, designing, implementing, and maintaining those facilities. A Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan would serve as a blueprint for continuous improvement of pedestrian and bicycling conditions throughout the township.

### Equestrian Trails

As the Town examines the potential for pedestrian and bicycle trails, consideration may also be given to equestrian trails. Future equestrian trails can be coordinated with existing and future recreational facilities.

### Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles

Plug-in hybrid and full electric vehicles are becoming increasingly common on America's roads. Electric plug-in stations are being constructed in cities around the country. These systems may be installed by state and local government or provided by business owners as value-added options at local coffee shops and shopping centers. The Town may consider working with local businesses to consider providing the infrastructure to support electric vehicles. Modular electric plug-in stations are available that do not require extensive infrastructure support. They can generate as much as 16 kWh daily from solar collectors and store up to 22 kWh in on-board batteries. The solar arrays on these systems are capable of tracking the sun's movement to ensure maximum electrical generation.



Courtesy Envision Solar

### Capital Improvements Plan

A capital improvements plan (CIP) assists in planning for major project costs by creating a multiyear scheduling plan for physical public improvements, including transportation. The schedule is based on the projection of fiscal resources and prioritization of improvements five to six years into the future. Capital improvements include new or expanded physical facilities that are relatively large in size, expensive, and permanent. A transportation-oriented CIP outlines a community's capital item needs and purchase plans, including:

- Park acquisition and improvements
- Public buildings improvements and maintenance
- Emergency vehicle purchase and replacement
- Trail development
- Street improvements (e.g. widening, crosswalks, signalization, corridor studies, etc.)



Capital items are generally defined as those that are expensive (cost \$5,000 or more) and will last at least 3-5 years. The CIP also includes improvement projects required for the community's future and the appropriate timeline and funding to be followed to implement the improvements. The CIP process helps to ensure that improvements are made in a logical order and do not surprise local officials or taxpayers. It allows the community to focus on needs and goals and establish rational priorities.

### **Consistency with State and Regional Transportation Plans**

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law (Chapter 66.1001(2)(c), Wis. Stats.) requires that communities to compare their local transportation plan with state and regional transportation plans. Applicable state, regional, and county transportation have been reviewed during the development of this chapter. The goals, objectives, and policies of this document are consistent with and implement all relevant sections of the following plans and programs.

#### **Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020**

WisDOT completed the Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020 in 1998. The plan establishes goals, objectives, and policies for both urban and rural bicycling, and recommends strategies and actions for WisDOT, local governments, and others to take to implement the plan. The goals of this plan include encouraging bicycling and increasing the number of bicyclists in Wisconsin.

#### **The Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020**

WisDOT's Wisconsin Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020 was established to make pedestrian travel a viable, convenient, and safe transportation choice throughout Wisconsin. While the plan primarily aims to minimize barriers to pedestrian traffic flow from State Trunk Highway expansions and improvements, it also provides guidance to local communities on how to encourage pedestrian travel through the creation of pedestrian plans, increasing enforcement of pedestrian laws, adoption and implementation sidewalk ordinances, and the identification of pedestrian issues through the public participation component of comprehensive planning process.

#### **Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020**

This plan provides a framework for the enhancement of public use airports in Wisconsin. Of the 143 public use airports in the state, 100 are part of the State Airport System addressed by this plan. Based on the coverage, facilities and services of existing airports, as well as anticipated demand, no new airports are to be developed and no existing airport is to be eliminated. The plan provides recommendations for needed improvements related to pavement and tarmac, instrument capability, and airport service.



## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **TRANSPORTATION**

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#### **Connections 2030**

Connections 2030 is the WisDOT long-range transportation plan for the state. The plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit. Connections 2030 envisions an integrated multimodal transportation system that maximizes the safe and efficient movement of people and products throughout the state, enhancing economic productivity and the quality of Wisconsin's communities while minimizing impacts to the natural environment. WisDOT officially adopted Connections 2030 in October 2009.

#### **Midwest Regional Rail Initiative**

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, a cooperative, multi-agency effort that began in 1996 and involves nine states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin) as well as the Federal Railroad Administration, has a plan to develop a passenger rail system that offers business and leisure travelers shorter travel times, additional train frequencies, and connections between urban centers and smaller communities. Should this service be implemented, it would provide opportunities for travel throughout the Midwest without using personal vehicles.

#### **Regional Transportation Work Program**

The Regional Transportation Work Program is administered by Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission (BLRPC). BLRPC has provided transportation planning services since 1972 to address both area-wide and local transportation issues. The Regional Transportation Work Program is funded primarily by the Federal Highway Administration with matching funds from WisDOT and BLRPC, with additional revenues provided by specialized planning contracts.

#### **Funding to Develop the Transportation System**

A variety of state and federal programs are available to assist local government in funding transportation projects.

#### **Local Roads Improvement Program**

The Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) assists local governments in improving seriously deteriorating county highways, town roads, and city and village streets. The competitive reimbursement program pays up to 50% of total eligible costs with local governments providing the balance. The program has three basic components: County Highway Improvement (CHIP); Town Road Improvement (TRIP); and Municipal Street Improvement (MSIP).

### **Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program**

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is administered by WDNR to preserve natural areas and wildlife habitat, protect water quality and expand outdoor recreation. Funds from the program can be used for the construction of off-street trail system systems.

### **Highway Safety Improvement Program**

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is administered by WisDOT. Funds are used for highway safety projects at locations that have a high crash history. The objective of the HSIP is to develop and implement stand-alone safety projects that will reduce the number and severity of crashes. The funding ratio for this program is 90% federal and 10% local match.

### **Transportation Alternative Program**

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) provides funding for projects that include on-road and off-road facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, conversion of railroad corridors to trails for pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized users, environmental mitigation, Safe Routes to School and community improvement activities.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program**

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program is a grant program under TAP that provides funding to construct or plan for bicycle or bicycle-pedestrian facility projects. State statutory language specifically excludes pedestrian-only facilities such as sidewalks and streetscape projects. Construction projects costing \$200,000 or more are eligible for funding, as are planning projects costing \$50,000 or more. Additionally, completed projects must be usable and not staged so that additional money is needed to create a useful project. Project sponsors must pay for a project and then seek reimbursement from WisDOT. Federal funds will provide up to 80% of project costs, while the sponsor must provide at least the other 20%.

### **Transportation Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

The goals, objectives, and policies related to transportation are presented in Chapter 10: Implementation.

## **CHAPTER 4: TRANSPORTATION**

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## **Introduction**

The long-term well being of the Town of Oconto Falls is dependent in no small part on the adequacy of the public utilities, community facilities, and municipal services it provides to its residents and business owners. Anticipating and preparing for the future utility and facility needs of the Town is essential to ensuring a sustainable future.



The recommendations presented at the end of this chapter are based on long-range planning considerations and should not be substituted for the detailed architectural and engineering studies required prior to expending capital on specific public works projects. The information contained herein, coupled with the demographic trends and population projections in *Chapter 2: Community Profile*, provide a realistic assessment of the Town's municipal services and was carefully considered in the preparation of *Chapter 8: Land Use*.

## **Utilities & Community Facilities Vision**

*The Town of Oconto Falls will provide well-planned, cost-effective municipal services and infrastructure, in harmony with its rural character and natural environment, in order to maintain a fair and equitable tax rate for its citizens and business owners. It will strive to provide the infrastructure and technology necessary to allow its residents and business to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century marketplace and will continue to pursue opportunities for shared services and facilities with its municipal neighbors when such partnerships would benefit the community and its residents.*

## **Current Utilities & Community Facilities**

### **Drinking Water**

The potable water needs of residents and businesses in the Town of Oconto Falls are met by individual, private wells. The Town of Oconto Falls has a high quality supply of potable groundwater and surface water for nearly all anticipated uses. Additional information about groundwater resources is provided in *Chapter 6: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources*.

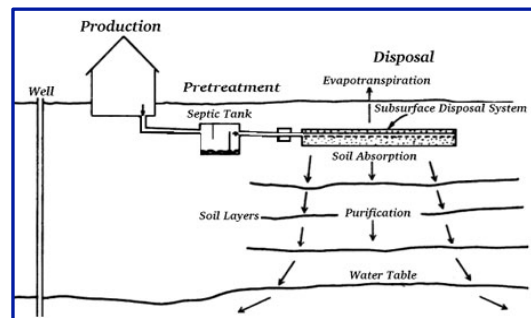
## CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### Wastewater Treatment

All residences and businesses located in the Town of Oconto Falls are served by personal onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS). The most commonly used POWTS in Oconto County are septic systems and mound systems, although a number of other systems are permitted in the state. Chapter SPS 383, Wis. Stats., establishes uniform standards and criteria for the design, installation, inspection and management of POWTS. When properly designed and installed, onsite systems biologically treat effluent as it percolates through the soil and other media before entering the water table.

#### Septic Systems<sup>1</sup>

The modern onsite system has consisted primarily of a septic tank and a soil absorption field. Septic tanks remove most solids and floatable material and function as an anaerobic bioreactor that promotes partial digestion of organic matter. Septic tank effluent, which contains significant concentrations of pathogens and nutrients, is discharged to an absorption field for further treatment through biological processes, adsorption, filtration, and infiltration into underlying soils.

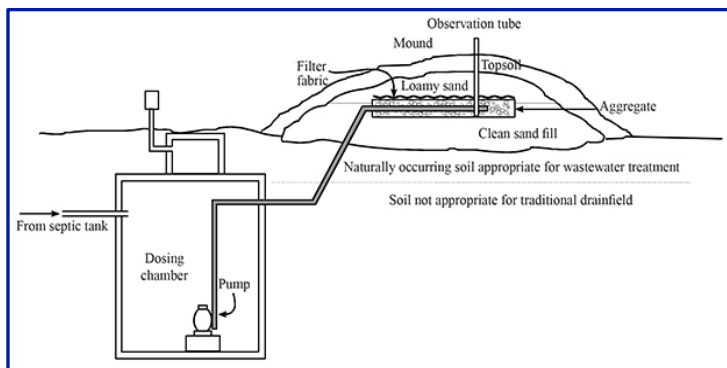


Courtesy USEPA

Conventional septic systems work well if they are located in areas with appropriate soils and hydraulic capacities, designed to treat the incoming waste load, installed properly, and maintained to ensure long-term performance. If not, they become primary sources of groundwater contamination.

#### Mound Systems<sup>2</sup>

A mound system is one of a number of alternative systems that have been developed to overcome site conditions that limit the use of conventional septic systems, including soils with slow or fast permeability, shallow soils over bedrock, or a high water table. Mound systems create suitable conditions for initial wastewater treatment above the natural soil surface. Following preliminary treatment in a septic tank, effluent flows to a dosing chamber. It is then pumped to the mound for further treatment before 'discharging' to the underlying soil strata.



Courtesy Residential Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from USEPA Onsite Wastewater Treatment Manual.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpted from Residential Onsite Wastewater Treatment: Mound Systems.



### Stormwater

Stormwater is surface water in abnormal quantity resulting from heavy falls of rain or snow. In rural communities like Oconto Falls, with limited stormwater management infrastructure (curbs, gutters, storm drains, etc.), stormwater is typically managed through open ditches and road culverts. Erosion resulting from construction sites is currently regulated by Oconto County.

### Electricity and Natural Gas

The Town of Oconto Falls receives its electricity from the Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC) and Wisconsin Public Service (WPS). OEC is a member-owned, not-for-profit, generation & distribution cooperative headquartered in Oconto Falls, Wisconsin. In 1937, the cooperative was formed to serve electricity in rural northeast Wisconsin. Currently OEC serves more than 9,600 members throughout Oconto, Marinette, and small portions of Shawano and Brown County.<sup>3</sup> WPS is headquartered in Green Bay and serves more than 445,000 electric customers and 323,000 natural gas customers in northeast and central Wisconsin and portions of Upper Michigan.



Courtesy Oconto Electric Cooperative

Properties along portions of STH 22 and some town roads can connect to an existing natural gas pipeline. The remainder of the community relies primarily on private propane gas tanks.

### Solid Waste Disposal/Recycling Facilities

The Town of Oconto Falls does not provide solid waste or recycling services. Landowners contract individually with private haulers or take their waste and recycling to the Oconto Falls Recycling Center. This center accepts garbage and recycling materials for disposal from residents of the City and Town of Oconto Falls. Town residents are required to buy garbage bags from the City for this purpose.

### Telephone Providers

Telephone service in the Town is available from a wide array of landline, cable, and cellular providers.

### TV Providers

Residents have access to a variety of television viewing platforms including over-the-air network broadcasts, cable and satellite providers, and the internet, among others.

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpted from Oconto Electric Cooperative website, 2015.

## **CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

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### **Town Facilities**

The Oconto Falls Town Hall is located on STH 22, west of the City of Oconto Falls. The structure includes a public restroom and kitchen facility. The Town also has a garage to store road maintenance equipment.

### **Post Office**

The nearest US Post Office is located at 145 N. Franklin St. in the City of Oconto Falls

### **Cemeteries**

#### **Volk Family Cemetery**

Located on Golden Corners Road near the southern Town boundary, this private cemetery is approximately 1 acre in size. There are no plans to expand this cemetery.



#### **St. John's Riverside Cemetery**

This Town cemetery is approximately 1 acre in size. It is located on the north side of Gray lake Road near STH 32. There are no plans to expand this cemetery.



Sufficient space is available in these cemeteries. No plans are in place to establish additional cemeteries in the Town of Oconto Falls.

### **Childcare**

There are no commercial childcare facilities currently located in the Town of Oconto Falls. Residents utilize informal networks of childcare (i.e., family or friends). Some residents may provide childcare from their home for their neighbors. The nearest commercial childcare centers are found in the cities of Oconto Falls and Gillett.

### **Senior Care Facilities**

There are currently no senior housing, assisted living, or retirement communities located within in the Town. Senior residents in the community live independently or are supported by family members, friends, and neighbors. Oconto County provides a number of services catering to the needs of its seniors.

### Oconto County Commission on Aging

The Oconto County Commission on Aging (OCCA) is a non-profit private organization whose mission is to assist older persons living independently in Oconto County. State and federal grants and local donations fund the organization. OCCA has a small staff and a large network of volunteers to provide services to those in need. The organization offers a number of programs and services to seniors in Oconto County, including:

- A home delivery meal program, which serves over 100 people in the county each day. The program also includes 6 congregate meal sites in addition to the home-delivered meals.
- An on-staff benefits specialist to help older adults with questions about public benefits and programs, provide information related to available services and programs, and offer assistance with winter fuel costs.
- Coordinate transportation for seniors age 60 and over through a network of volunteers.
- Sponsor events and activities like craft fairs, seminars, and special trips.

For additional information related to senior services, please contact OCCA.

### **Libraries**

The Oconto Falls Community Library is located at 251 N. Main Street in Oconto Falls. The 9,600 square foot facility was opened in 1992. The library offers a host of special services and programs including: public Internet access, computers for word processing, a summer reading program, story hours for children, photocopying, and a meeting room which can be rented. In addition to books and periodicals, the library also loans videos, educational play totes for children, and puppets.

The Gillett Public Library was constructed in 1996. It is located at 200 E. Main Street in Gillett. The library has regular hours Tuesday – Saturday and offers an array of services, including a summer reading program and weekly story hour for children.



Courtesy Oconto Falls Community Library (above) and Gillett Public Library (below).

### **School Districts**

The majority of school-aged residents in the Town of Oconto Falls attend schools in the Oconto Falls School District (OFSD). A small number living along STH 32 attend the Gillett School District (GSD). As of 2015, OFSD and GD are the 172<sup>nd</sup> and 300<sup>th</sup> ranked school districts in Wisconsin.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> According to Niche, an educational services company that provides rankings for more than 100,000 public and private districts in the U.S. based on dozens of statistics and 27 million opinions from more than 300,000 students and parents.

## CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### Oconto Falls School District

OFCD is comprised of six schools: Abrams and Oconto Falls Elementary Schools, Washington Middle School, Oconto Falls High School, Falls Alternative Learning Site, and New Path. Total enrollment in the district was 1,746 as of the 2015 Third Friday Count. In terms of total enrollment, OFSD ranks 117<sup>th</sup> of Wisconsin's 447 school districts.

Table 5.1: Oconto Falls School District Enrollment, 2015-16		
Facility	Grades	Enrollment
Abrams Elementary School	K4 through 5th	279
Oconto Falls Elementary School	Pre-K through 5th	544
Washington Middle School	6 <sup>th</sup> through 8th	389
Oconto Falls High School	9 <sup>th</sup> through 12th	506
Falls Alternative Learning Site	10 <sup>th</sup> through 12th	18
New Path	10 <sup>th</sup> through 12th	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,746</b>
Source: Wisconsin Department of Education, 2015.		

### Gillett School District

GSD is comprised of four schools: Gillett Elementary School, Gillett Middle School, Gillett High School, and GOAL Academy. Total enrollment in the district was 536 as of the 2015 Third Friday County. In terms of total enrollment, GSD ranks 311<sup>th</sup> of Wisconsin's 447 school districts.

Table 5.2: Gillett School District Enrollment, 2015-16		
Facility	Grades	Enrollment
Gillett Elementary School	K4 through 5th	245
Gillett Middle School	6 <sup>th</sup> through 8th	101
Gillett High School	9 <sup>th</sup> through 12th	156
GOAL Academy	6 <sup>th</sup> through 12th	34
<b>Total</b>		<b>536</b>
Source: Wisconsin Department of Education, 2015.		

## Parks

There are no park facilities located in the Town of Oconto Falls. However, several City of Oconto Falls and Oconto County park facilities are located in close proximity to the community. These include:

### Eastside Beach

With nearly 4-acres of Oconto River frontage, this park offers a swimming beach, boat launch, fishing piers, picnic areas, playground and a covered shelter. It is located on the northwest side of the City.



Courtesy City of Oconto Falls

### Memorial Park

This 15-acre park between Chestnut Avenue and Jefferson Street is home to the Oconto Falls High School Panther's track, football and baseball programs. It contains covered pavilions, picnic areas, and children's playground equipment.



Courtesy City of Oconto Falls

### Pine Grove Park

Located on the north side of Sherman Street between Oakland

and Elm, this 3.7-acre City park features tennis courts, a basketball court, volleyball courts, playground, a covered shelter and picnic tables.

### Pleasantview Ball Park

The newest park facility in the City, Pleasantview Ball Park, is a 2.5-acre site including a baseball diamond, bleachers and playground equipment. The park is located on the east side of the City off CTH I.

### Tubing Hill

On the slopes of the bluff overlooking the River Island Golf Course, the tubing hill has been a long winter tradition. Operated by the Oconto Falls Lion's Club the rope tow permits tubers the luxury of enjoying the slide down the steep hillside without the struggle of a long climb back to the top. The site of the tow is a wooded 61-acre site bounded by the Oconto River, River Island Golf Course, and residential neighborhoods. The park offers biking and hiking opportunities during the remainder of the year.



Courtesy City of Oconto Falls

### Veterans Park

Once the home of a hospital and City Hall, this 0.4-acre park is located near the Washington Middle School on the corner of Franklin Street and Central Avenue. The park features a war memorial and fountain.

### Westside Beach

Located on the western shore of the Oconto River at the end of Flatley Street, this 3-acre City park includes a picnic shelter, boat launch, picnic areas, hiking opportunities, fishing areas, and a small playground.



Courtesy City of Oconto Falls

### Riverside County Park

Located in the Town of Gillett off CTH B, this day-use park property provides boat access to the Oconto River, as well as fishing opportunities, a sandy beach, and picnic tables.



## CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### ATV/UTV & Snowmobile Trails<sup>5</sup>

Oconto County has over 450 miles of ATV/UTV trails and over 475 miles of snowmobile trails. Trailheads are located: near the Hwy 32/Hwy 64 intersection, just east of Chute Pond; in Gillett at Zippel Park; in Suring near the Town Hall; and, in Lakewood on Hwy 32. ATV/UTV trails are typically open from April through October. Snowmobile trails are open during winter months when conditions permit.

Snowmobile enthusiasts also have access to the Nicolet State Recreational Trail. This county-operated trail meanders for more than 89 miles through the Nicolet National Forest in northeastern Wisconsin. The trail follows the same corridor built by railroad companies in the late 19th century to open up Wisconsin's pine and hardwood forests for the timber industry. The Nicolet State Trail runs through several small communities from Gillett in Oconto County to the Michigan state line.<sup>6</sup>



Courtesy Oconto County Tourism.

### Police Protection<sup>7</sup>

Police protection in the Town of Oconto Falls is provided by the Oconto County Sheriff's Department (OCSD). OCSD is headquartered at 301 Washington Street in the City of Oconto and provides 24-hour emergency assistance to a 1,006-square mile area. Its mission is to *improve the quality of life of all citizens and provide for a safe community by reducing crime and preventing public disorder*. To accomplish that mission, OCSD currently employs 26 deputies, 26 jail staff, 9 telecommunications officers, and 3 support staff. The annual operating budget is approximately 5 million dollars.

### Patrol Deputies

Patrol Deputies investigate all citizen complaints, or requests for assistance that may come to their attention. They shall, at all times, protect life and property, preserve the peace, apprehend criminals, prevent crime, recover lost and stolen property, direct traffic, investigate vehicle accidents, and enforce the ordinances of the County of Oconto and the laws of the State of Wisconsin and United States.



Courtesy Oconto County Sheriff's Department

<sup>5</sup> Excerpted from Oconto County Tourism website, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Excerpted from Nicolet State Trail, WDNR website, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Excerpted from Oconto County Sheriff's Department website, 2015.

### Recreation Deputy

The Recreation Deputy is responsible for enforcement of any laws pertaining to County Forestry Ordinances, and the safe operation of Recreational vehicles including ATV's, Snowmobiles, and Watercraft. The deputy patrols more than 300 miles of ATV trail, 425 miles of snowmobile trails, 49 miles of cross country ski trails, and 151 square miles of lakes and water, including 17 miles of the Bay of Green Bay, and also coordinates water rescue, search and rescue on land, and monitors timber sales.

### Oconto County Jail

The Oconto County Jail has 56 inmate beds in liner/dorm style facility. The facility includes 14 maximum security cells, 5 female cells, 8 medium security dorm beds, 18 minimum/medium security dorm beds, 1 special needs cell, 2 segregation cells, 4 isolation cells, and 4 receiving cells. Overcrowding at the jail has required the housing of inmates at the Marinette, Forest, or Shawano County Jails.

### **Fire & Rescue<sup>8</sup>**

The Oconto Falls Fire Department (OFFD) serves the City and Town of Oconto Falls along with part of the Town of Stiles. All three communities provide funding for the department. The OFFD fire station is located on Cherry Street in the City of Oconto Falls. Current staffing includes 30 trained volunteers with a chief, assistant chief, 2 captains, and 2 safety officers. OFFD provides 911-based emergency service dispatched by the Oconto County Sheriff's Department. Response time within the Town of Oconto Falls vary depending on the location of the call and the time of day, but average between 5-10 minutes.



Courtesy Oconto Falls Fire Department

### **Ambulance Service<sup>9</sup>**

The Oconto Falls Area Ambulance Service (OFAAS) is a progressive, paid on call volunteer 501(C) 3 non-profit organization providing a wide array of pre-hospital emergency medical services to over 9,500 residents in its service area. The OFAAS is staffed by EMTs, EMT-Its, and First Responders trained in the latest techniques of life-saving care.



Courtesy Oconto Falls Area Ambulance Service

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<sup>8</sup> Excerpted from Oconto Falls Fire Department website, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Excerpted from Oconto Falls Area Ambulance Service website, 2015.

## CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

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Courtesy St. Clare Memorial Hospital

### Healthcare Providers<sup>10</sup>

There are no healthcare providers located in the Town of Oconto Falls. The nearest hospital is St. Clare Memorial Hospital located at 855 South Main Street in the City of Oconto Falls. Formerly Community Memorial Hospital, St. Clare joined Hospital Sisters Health System in September 2014 and now offers increased access to physician specialists as well as seamless coordination of primary and specialty care. In affiliation with Prevea Health, St. Clare operates a number of clinics in the area including: Gillett Health Center in Gillette, Oconto Health Center in Oconto, and Suring Health Center in Suring, among others.

### Utilities & Community Facilities Plan

This section of the chapter describes the various issues and opportunities related to utilities and community facilities in the Town of Oconto Falls. The issues associated with the provision of municipal utilities are related to: the timing, location, and construction of new infrastructure; the need for higher levels of services as the community grows; greater economic competition within the region; and fiscal constraints, among others. Opportunities include a healthy local population, economy, and business climate, efficiencies of scale, and possibilities for intergovernmental cooperation and shared services. Properly designed public utility systems can provide maximum protection of community health and guide desirable future growth on the basis of a fair and equitable distribution of benefits and costs.

### Maintaining Reasonable Tax Levels

Residents respect the fiscal discipline demonstrated by local officials and value reasonable tax rates. Given limited finances, coupled with long-term uncertainties surrounding Wisconsin's shared revenue program and state-imposed levy limits, the Town of Oconto Falls understands the need to carefully consider all expenditures. This consideration extends to providing utilities and community facilities for the community. To ensure the supply of efficient, cost-effective services, the Town will continue to consider shared service opportunities with neighboring communities.

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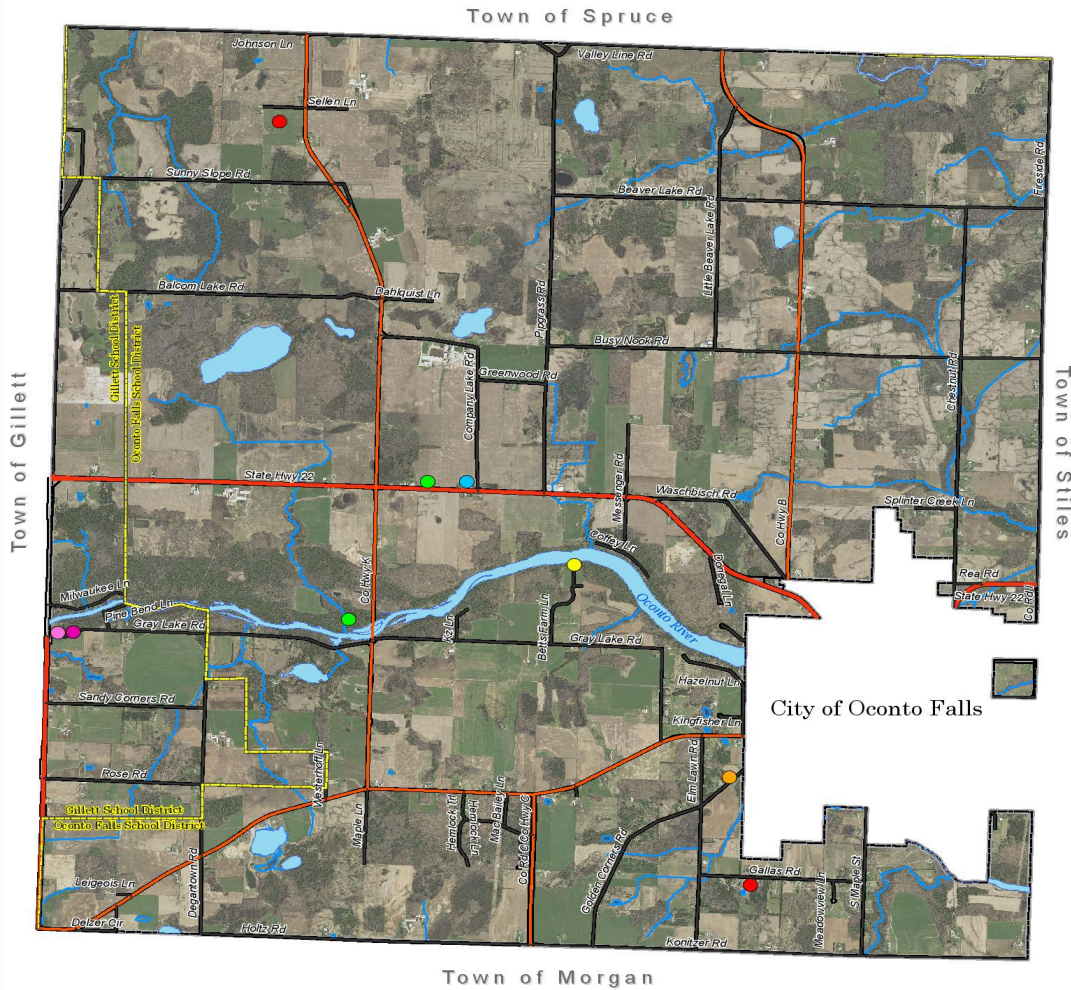
<sup>10</sup> Excerpted from St. Clare Memorial Hospital website, 2015.



## CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### Town of **OCONTO FALLS** *Oconto County, Wisconsin*

2015 Comprehensive Plan - Facilities & Utilities Map



#### Legend

- |   |                            |                    |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------|
| ● St John's Riverside Lutheran Cemetery | ▬ School District Boundary | ■ Open Water       |
| ● St John's Riverside Lutheran Church   | ▬ State                    | ▬ Right-Of-Way     |
| ● Town Hall                             | ▬ County                   | ▬ Streams & Rivers |
| ● Potential Town Park                   | ▬ Town                     | ▬ Township         |
| ● River Access                          |                            |                    |
| ● Tower                                 |                            |                    |
| ● Volk Cemetery                         |                            |                    |

0.0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Created: February 27, 2016



**Community Planning  
& Consulting, LLC**

The information shown on this map is for planning purposes only. Any other use of this information displayed is the responsibility of the user and to be used at their own risk. There is no guarantee of accuracy in the data of this map.



Source: Oconto County, WisDOT

## CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### Alternative Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems

As mentioned earlier in this document, wastewater treatment for homes and businesses in the Town is primarily served via onsite septic and mound systems. These and other POWTS must comply with Wisconsin Statute SPS 383 to ensure that the systems are designed and function properly so as to protect human health and groundwater resources. However, studies have indicated that even properly-designed and maintained conventional septic and mound systems pose a threat to ground water, particularly in soils with high transivity.

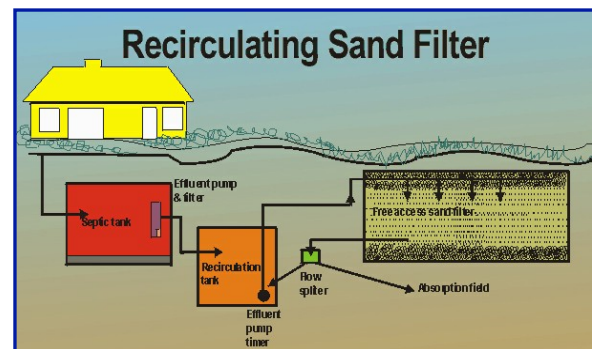
In the City of Oconto Falls, wastewater treatment is provided by the Sewage Disposal Commission via system of gravity flow sewers and force mains. Effluent is treated at the City's trickling filter wastewater treatment plant. The expansion of municipal sewer service often occurs at significant costs, financially and ecologically, and typically requires the annexation of land. Alternative onsite wastewater treatment systems provide a third option.

Alternative sanitary facilities can provide wastewater treatment at a fraction of the cost of conventional onsite systems, particularly when they are clustered to accommodate multiple homes or businesses. Options for clustered sanitary systems permissible in the state of Wisconsin include recirculating sand filters and constructed wetlands, among others. A brief description of these systems is provided below.

#### Recirculating Sand Filters

A recirculating sand filter (RSF) offers an economically viable, environmentally benign alternative to conventional drain field-based treatment systems. The basic components of a RSF system include a septic tank, recirculation tank, and sand or gravel filter. Water discharged from the system far exceeds the quality of a conventional system at a fraction of the price.

RSFs are a viable alternative to conventional methods when soil conditions are not conducive to the proper treatment and disposal of wastewater through percolation beds. Sand filters may be used on sites that have shallow soil cover, inadequate permeability, high groundwater, and limited land area. RSF systems commonly serve subdivisions, mobile home parks, rural schools, small municipalities, and other generators of small wastewater flows.<sup>11</sup>



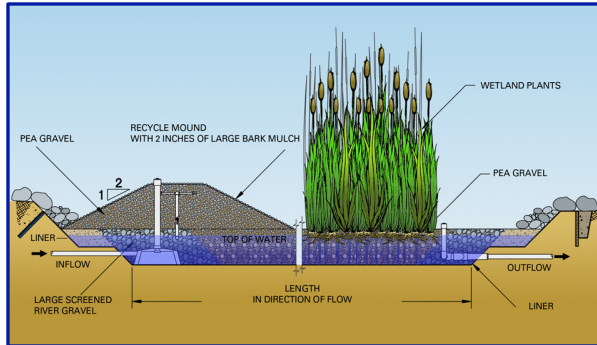
Courtesy Purdue University

#### Constructed Wetlands

Constructed wetlands have been used as effective wastewater treatment systems for more than forty years. They have become the dominant treatment system for communities in the Minneapolis metropolitan region not served by municipal wastewater treatment. Although a

<sup>11</sup> Source: Environmental Technology Institute: Recirculating Sand Filters, 1998.





Courtesy Science for Environmental Policy

variety of wetland-based systems are used to treat effluent, the most common is a subsurface flow wetland. Subsurface flow wetlands utilize an anaerobic reactor (septic tank) for pretreatment followed by a forced-bed aeration system and wetland treatment cells. Constructed wetlands are designed to achieve tertiary treatment at a fraction of the cost of a municipal system. They become cost effective against conventional onsite systems when treating effluent from eight or more homes.

### Personal Energy Systems

With rising energy prices and a greater awareness of the environmental impacts of conventional power plants, more Americans are utilizing personal energy systems to reduce costs associated with electricity, heating, and cooling. In addition, state and federal tax incentives have reduced the total costs of these systems making them available to a greater percentage of users. Personal energy systems include photovoltaic solar, solar thermal, small wind, geothermal, and wood-fired boilers, among others.



The Wisconsin Solar and Wind Access Law (66.0401, State Stats.), defines how local governments are permitted to regulate solar and wind energy systems. It covers zoning restrictions by local governments, private land use restrictions, and system owner rights to unobstructed access to resources. Under the law, local government may not place any restriction on the installation or use of solar or wind energy systems unless the restriction:



- Serves to preserve or protect public health or safety.
- Does not significantly increase the cost of the system or decrease it's efficiency.
- Allows for an alternative system of comparable cost and efficiency.

The law effectively prohibits unreasonable public land use controls covering solar and wind energy systems by defining a fairly narrow set of reasonable conditions. The law subsequently allows for a local permitting procedure for guaranteeing unobstructed access to wind or solar resources. A permit will not be granted if obstruction already exists or if the construction of such an obstruction is already well into the planning stages.

### Mobile Communications Towers

As part of the 2013-14 State Budget the Wisconsin Legislature approved Section 66.0404, Wis. Stats. The law governs the local regulation of mobile towers and tower sites and effectively

## CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

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preempts existing zoning regulations regarding cellular communications towers. Under the new law, local governments are limited in their ability to regulate such towers. The following actions are effectively prohibited:<sup>12</sup>

- Testing, sampling, monitoring or other radio frequency compliance requirements.
- Basing approval on signal strength or the adequacy of existing mobile service infrastructure.
- Moratoriums on the construction of new towers.
- Control over physical placement of towers within the municipality.
- Fees that exceed statutory maximums (\$3,000 or \$500 for “class 2 colocation”) or are recurring.
- Disapproval on purely aesthetic grounds.
- Sureties for the structure in excess of \$20,000 or indemnity requirements.
- Any limits on the durations of permits.
- Any limits on the height of structures to anything less than 200 feet (above 200 feet is regulated by the FAA anyway).
- Setbacks or fall zones that are any different than other commercial structures.
- Regulation of related power systems.
- Disapprovals based on lighting or lack thereof of the structure.

### Parks and Recreation Facilities

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends a community standard of ten acres of parks and recreation land per 1,200 residents. The 2015 population of the Town of Oconto Falls is an estimated 1,275 persons with a projected 2035 population of 1,565. Based on these standards the minimum recommended park acreage necessary to meet anticipated needs over the next 20 years is approximately 13 acres. As noted earlier in this chapter, a number of parks and recreational facilities are located in the City of Oconto Falls. Although enjoyed by Town residents, these facilities are paid for by city taxpayers.

During the development of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, two sites were considered as potential locations for Town parks. The first is adjoining the current location of the Town Hall. Although site limitations and traffic volumes on STH pose challenges, the location may be suited to picnic tables, play apparatus, and a pavilion, among others. The more ideal site is located in Section 20, where CTH K meets the Oconto River. It is centrally located, situated off the highway, and is large enough to accommodate a variety of facilities. Perhaps most importantly, it is located on the banks of the Oconto River and provides opportunities for public access.



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<sup>12</sup> Excerpted from Wisconsin Towns Association, “New Mobile Service (Cell) Tower Preemptions.”

### Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

A Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) is a document that describes current parks, recreation, and open space assets and presents a strategy for meeting future needs. The purpose of the plan is to guide land acquisition, development, and maintenance activities by identifying the general location, character, and extent of existing and desired parks, playgrounds, and special recreation areas. By statute, a CORP must be updated every five years.

The funding of local parkland acquisition and development has become more difficult with legislation limiting local government's ability to establish and enforce impact fees upon new residential development projects. As a result, more Wisconsin communities are seeking grant funding to offset the cost of park and recreation development. Wisconsin statutes prohibit local government from applying for state and federal parks and recreation funding without an adopted CORP.

### **High-Speed Internet**

Access to high-speed (or broadband) internet is critical in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. The improved connectivity provided by such access supports robust business services, expands access to health care, and improves the quality of education in schools. It has become a necessity, as vital to rural America's future today as electricity and the telephone were in the last century. The technology is a must for the types of home-based and value-added businesses that can thrive in a community like Oconto Falls.

### **Capital Improvements Plan**

As mentioned in *Chapter 4: Transportation*, a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is a budgeting tool used to plan for major capital expenditures. CIPs are typically five-year plans identifying necessary and desired improvements related to infrastructure, facilities, and parks and recreation areas.

## **Utilities & Community Facilities Programs**

The following pages describe the various federal and state programs that are available to aid the Town in implementing its utilities and community facilities plan.

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development**

#### Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program

The Rural Economic Development Loan (REDL) and Grant (REDG) programs provide funding to rural projects through local utility organizations. Under the REDL program, USDA provides zero interest loans to local utilities that are then passed through to local businesses for projects that will create and retain employment in rural areas. The ultimate recipients repay the lending utility directly. The utility is responsible for repayment to USDA. Under the RED program,

## **CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

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USDA provides grant funds to local utility organizations to establish revolving loan funds. Loans are made from the revolving loan funds to projects that will create or retain rural jobs. When the revolving loan fund is terminated, the grant is repaid to the Agency.

### Rural Utilities Program

A number of programs are available through the Rural Utilities Program as part of the Water and Environmental Programs (WEP). WEP provides loans, grants, and loan guarantees for drinking water, sanitary sewer, solid waste, and storm drainage facilities in rural areas, cities, and towns of 10,000 or less. Public bodies, non-profit organizations, and recognized Indian Tribes may qualify for assistance. WEP also makes grants to nonprofit organizations to provide technical assistance and training to assist rural communities with their water, wastewater, and solid waste programs. Available programs include:

- Water and Waste Disposal Direct and Guaranteed Loans
- Water and Waste Disposal Grants
- Technical Assistance and Training Grants
- Solid Waste Management Grants
- Rural Water Circuit Ride Technical Assistance

### Telecommunications Program

The Telecommunications Program improves the quality of life in rural America by providing capital for the deployment of rural telecommunications infrastructure. Funding is available under various grant and loan programs.

## **Wisconsin Department of Administration**

### Community Development Block Grant – Public Funds

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for Public Funds supports infrastructure and facility projects for communities. Eligible projects include improvements, repairs, or expansions of streets, drainage systems, water and sewer systems, sidewalks, and community centers. Grants are limited to projects that, if implemented, would meet a CDBG National Objective.

### Community Development Block Grant – Public Facilities Economic Development

Grant funds under the CDBG for Public facilities Economic Development are awarded to local governments for public infrastructure projects that support business expansion or retention. Examples of eligible applications include: new or improved water & sewer service and streets that result in business expansion and job opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals.

## **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources<sup>13</sup>**

### Clean Water Fund Program

The Clean Water Fund Program (CWFP) provides subsidized interest rate loans to municipalities seeking to fund wastewater and stormwater infrastructure projects. The CWFP also includes pilot projects to fund adaptive management and other non-traditional projects to comply with a municipality's permit limit. Applications for funding are accepted year round as long as funding is available.

### Safe Drinking Water Loan Program

The safe Drinking Water Loan Program provides subsidized interest rate loans to municipalities seeking to fund drinking water infrastructure projects. Applications are accepted year round when funding is available.

### Acquisition and Development of Local Parks Program

The Acquisition and Development of Local Parks Program provides assistance to local government to buy land or easements and develop or renovate local parks and recreation area facilities for nature-based outdoor recreation purposes (e.g., trails, fishing access and park support facilities). Applicants compete for funds on a regional basis. This grant program is part of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

### Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a Federal program administered in all states that encourage creation and interpretation of high-quality, outdoor recreational opportunities. Funds received under this program are split between WDNR projects and grants to local governments for outdoor recreation activities. Grants cover fifty percent of eligible project costs.

### Recreational Trail Aids

Municipal governments and incorporated organizations are eligible to receive reimbursement for development and maintenance of recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses. Eligible sponsors may be reimbursed for up to fifty percent of the total project costs. This program may be used in conjunction with the state snowmobile and ATV/UTV programs and Stewardship development projects.

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<sup>13</sup> Excerpted from various WDNR websites.



## **CHAPTER 5: UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

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### Municipal Flood Control Grants

Available to all cities, villages, towns, tribes, and metropolitan sewerage districts to provide assistance with items such as the acquisition of property, vacant land, structure removal, flood proofing, administrative support and other activities.

### Urban Nonpoint Source & Stormwater Management Grants

This program provides competitive grants to local governments to reimburse costs of planning or construction projects controlling urban nonpoint source and stormwater runoff pollution.

### **Utilities & Community Facilities Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

The goals, objectives, and policies related to utilities and community facilities are presented in Chapter 10: Implementation.

## Introduction

The Town of Oconto Falls has a strong farming history. Its landscape is dominated by farm fields, woods, rolling hills, open spaces, lakes, and rivers...each contributing to the community's character and sense of place. However, residential, commercial, and industrial development is changing the face of communities throughout Wisconsin. Most new construction outside of urban environments occurs on previously undeveloped agricultural lands and open spaces.



As the Town of Oconto Falls grows it must consider how best to preserve the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources that have defined it, for the long-term benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

The purpose of this chapter of the comprehensive plan is to describe the resources present in the community, identify those most valued by residents, and prepare a plan for their preservation.

## Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources Vision

*The Town of Oconto Falls will adopt policies and programs to preserve its prime agricultural lands, unique natural environment, and cultural and historic resources to ensure that these assets remain available for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.*

## Agricultural Resources

The preservation of farmland was a main area of focus for the 2006 comprehensive plan, and remains so in the 2016 update. Although farming (along with the other 'natural resource' industries such as forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining) employs fewer than 60 residents of the Town, agriculture remains the dominant land use and a driver of the local economy. It is also among the most threatened, since agricultural land in areas experiencing development demand is highly sought after for residential and commercial uses. Future development in the Town will result in a decrease of available agricultural acreage unless steps are taken to preserve farming, as both a viable land use and as an income producer for farm families.

## Agricultural Challenges

The removal of land from agricultural use is not always avoidable. Roads need to be built and people need places to live and work. Agriculture needs land in order to operate and land is a commodity that cannot be manufactured. It seems logical to make some effort to assure that

## CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

there will be land available to farm in the future. A variety of factors may threaten the long-term viability of farming in Oconto Falls. They include:

- A slowly but steadily increasing population.
- Conflicts between agricultural and residential land uses, including the fragmentation of farm fields.
- Agricultural land values exceeding possible agricultural income opportunities.
- The increasing average age of the typical farm operator combined with fewer young people interested in farming.
- The desirability of the Town as a 'bedroom community' for people employed in the Green Bay Metropolitan region.

### How to Minimize Conflicts between Farms and Residential Development

- Encourage or require the establishment of **vegetated buffers** between farms and fields and proposed subdivisions.
- Educate new residents about realities of rural living.
- Encourage farmers to use manure management practices and technologies to limit odors.
- Encourage farmers to communicate with neighbors when spreading or storing waste.

### Loss of Farmland<sup>1</sup>

From 1992 to 2010, Wisconsin lost a total of 396,583 acres of farmland to urban development (267,798 acres of cropland and 126,768 acres of pasture or grassland). Some farmland is being lost in every county, but the effects are not equally distributed throughout the state. Eight counties in the state each lost more than 10,000 acres of farmland in 19 years leading up to 2010. They included Waukesha (21,768 acres lost), Dane (20,466), Outagamie (16,516), Brown (14,974), Winnebago (11,817), Racine (10,357), Washington (10,357), and Kenosha (10,077). Oconto County lost a total of 4,463 acres, an indication that development pressure is growing but has not yet reached the level of the Fox Cities and Madison and Milwaukee metropolitan regions.

### Manure and Nutrient Management

Manure application to farm fields has come under increasing scrutiny, particularly the spreading of manure during winter months. Best management practices and best available technology govern the application of manure to frozen and snow covered ground. Although necessary to protect the quality of ground and surface water resources, these technologies increase the cost of farming and can pose particular challenges for smaller farming operations.

Oconto County adopted an Animal Waste Ordinance and permit system in April 2001. The ordinance regulates the installation, movement, reconstruction, extension, enlargement, conversion, substantial alteration, and abandonment of animal waste storage facilities in the county. A permit is also required for animal feedlots that exceed the state's prohibitions, do not meet state standards, or receive notice of discharges from the DNR. Feedlots of greater than 10,000 square feet and/or 10 animal units must be permitted.

The ordinance is intended to protect the groundwater and surface water resources of Oconto

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from 'Losing Ground: Tracking the Rate of Farmland Loss in Wisconsin Counties', University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Center for Land Use Education, April 2012.

County by regulating the permitting of storage facilities, nutrient management practices, the four state prohibitions, and new and expanding feedlots. It also requires the removal of abandoned feed piles. Technical assistance is available at the Land Conservation Department to ensure such projects meet code requirements.<sup>2</sup>

### **Aging Farmers<sup>3</sup>**

As the average age of the American farmer has crept up to 60, fewer young people are filling in the ranks behind them. That's prompted some to ask if young people even want to farm anymore. The quick answer is yes, just not in the same numbers as they used to. And surveys indicate many of them don't want to farm in conventional ways. A 2011 survey from the National Young Farmers Coalition showed access to land and capital to be the single biggest factors keeping young people from getting into farming or ranching. The survey also indicated young people are concerned about the environment — they're "generation organic" — and interested in small-scale operations.

### **Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations**

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) are agricultural meat, dairy, or egg facilities where animals are kept and raised in confined situations. Feed is brought to the animals rather than the animals grazing or otherwise seeing feed in pastures, fields, or on rangelands. CAFOs concentrate animals, feed, waste (manure and urine), and production operations on a small area of land. In 2012, the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) reported that CAFOs make up approximately 15 percent of total Animals Feeding Operations in the United States.

The US EPA defines CAFOs as livestock operations where the animals are confined for at least 45 days in a 12-month period and have no grass or other vegetation present in the confinement during the normal growing season. In Wisconsin, a CAFO generally means a livestock operation with 1000 animal units. Animal units are based on the weight of the animals. The concentrated design of CAFOs can also pose many challenges, including bulk storage and application of large volumes of animal wastes and associated nuisance odors and noise.

### **Wisconsin Livestock Siting Law**

Wisconsin's Livestock Siting Law (ATCP 51, Wis. Stats.) was adopted in 2004 and established a statewide framework for local regulation of livestock facilities, including limitations on the exclusion of livestock facilities in agricultural zones and requirements for issuing conditional use or other permits for siting livestock facilities housing cattle, swine, poultry, sheep or goats. Local governments implement the siting law by enacting ordinances that require new or expanding operations to obtain either a zoning or licensing permit. Under the siting law, local jurisdictions are not required to adopt regulation for siting livestock facilities; however, if a local

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpted from Oconto County website, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Excerpted from 'Young Farmers Break the Bank Before They Get to the Field', National Public Radio, August 2013.

## **CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES**

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government elects to require permits, they must follow the requirements of the siting rule for approving new or expanding livestock facilities.

Under the law, a local government may not deny or prohibit the siting or expansion of a livestock facility of any size unless one of the following applies:

- The site is located in a non-agricultural zoning district.
- The site is located in an agricultural zoning district where the livestock facility is prohibited. The zoning prohibition, if any, must be clearly justified on the basis of public health or safety. The law limits exclusionary local zoning based solely on livestock facility size.
- The proposed livestock facility violates a valid local ordinance adopted under certain State laws related to shoreland zoning, floodplain zoning, and construction site erosion control or stormwater management.
- The proposed livestock facility violates a State building, electrical or plumbing code for that type of facility.
- The proposed livestock facility will have 500 or more “animal units” (or will exceed a lower threshold incorporated in a local zoning ordinance prior to July 19, 2003), and the proposed livestock facility violates either the standards in the rule or a stricter local standard by ordinance. Those standards must be based on scientifically defensible findings of fact that clearly show the standards are necessary to protect public health or safety.

### **Natural Resources**

The variety and abundance of natural resources within a community play a significant role in attracting development, providing recreational opportunities, and maintaining a high quality of life among residents. A correlation exists between the presence and prevalence of open space and the positive feelings people have about their community. The Town of Oconto Falls benefits from a rich mosaic of landscapes and a diversity of ecosystems. Its natural environment includes upland hardwood forests, riparian systems, wetlands, glacial features, mineral deposits, and large expanses of prime agricultural soils, among others. The purpose of the Natural Resources section of this chapter is to describe the variety of resources present within the Town, identify those at greatest risk of loss due to development pressure, develop a plan for their sustainable use, and identify a means by which to preserve them for the future.

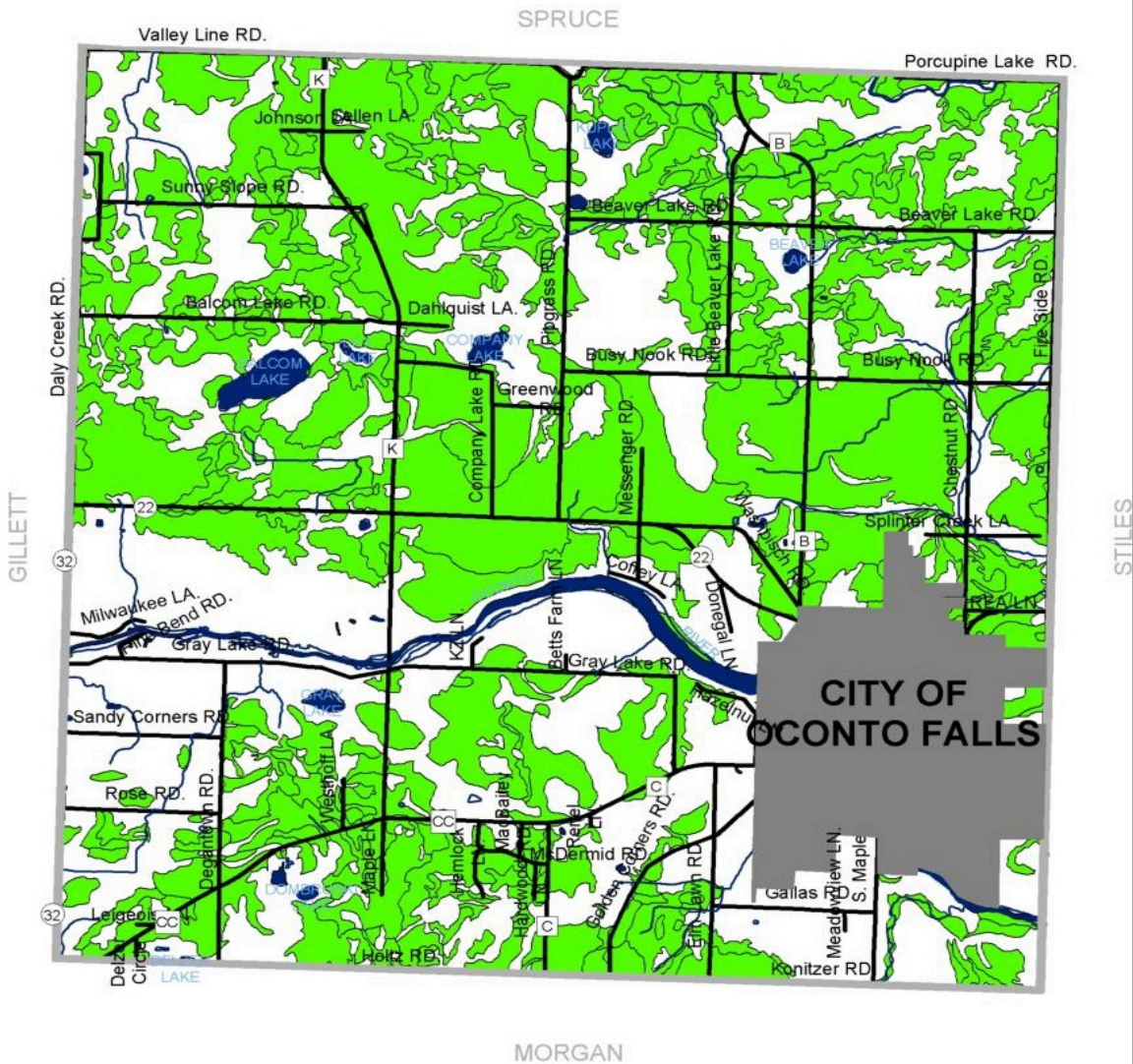
### **Bedrock Geology**

Crystalline rocks of the Precambrian Era underlie Oconto County. These rocks are composed mainly of granites and other igneous and metamorphic types. Overlying the Precambrian layer in the central and southern sections of the county are younger rocks of the Cambrian and Ordovician Periods. These form the existing bedrock.



# AGRICULTURAL SUITABILITY

## TOWN OF OCONTO FALLS



LOCATION: F:\GIS\DATA\BANDS\DRAWING\Agriculture\_11\17.mxd  
SOURCE: OCONTO COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Areas in green indicate soil types which are capable of producing high yields of crops typically grown in the county under a high level of management. Productive soils are considered to be those which are capable of producing an average of 4 tons per acre per year of grass-legume hay, or 100 bushels per acre of corn. The Soil Conservation Service considers a "high level of management" to include provisions for adequate drainage, appropriate tillage, planting and seeding with high yielding varieties, control of weeds, diseases, insects, optimum fertilizer application and timely, efficient harvesting techniques.

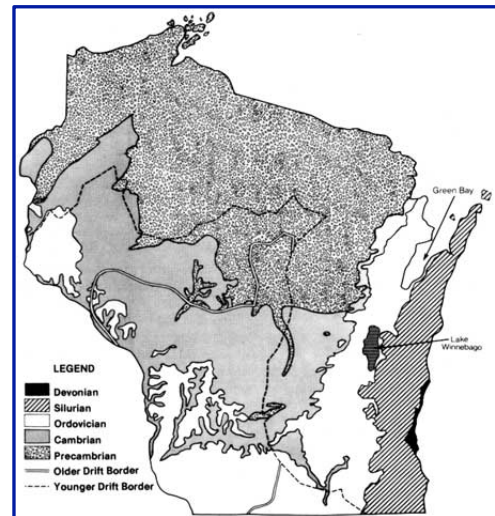


## CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

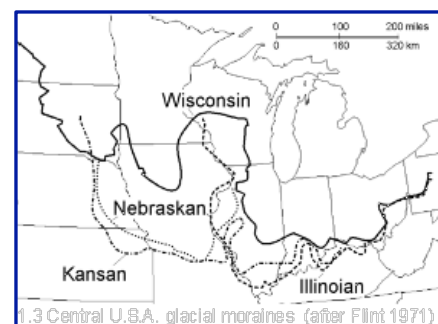
The northwest portion of Oconto County was once a mountainous region of Precambrian rock, since reduced by erosion and glaciations. This area is now covered with glacial material deposited during the last stages of glaciation. Landforms are composed of end moraines and pitted outwash plains. These features create an undulating and rolling surface with soils containing large quantities of sand and gravel. The central portions of Oconto County, including the Town of Oconto Falls, is relatively gently rolling plain approximately 20 miles wide and underlain by Cambrian sandstone. Relief in this area is modest, mostly composed of glacial lake deposits and ground moraines.

### Glaciation and Topography

The topography in the Town of Oconto Falls is characterized by rolling hills, plain meadows, lush and forested wetland and river systems. The area's major topographic features resulted from frequent periods of glaciation. Glaciers made four separate advances across what is Oconto County. These periods of glacial advance are called the Nebraskan, Kansan, Illinoian, and Wisconsin stages and are believed to have begun about one million years ago. The most recent advance, the Wisconsin stage, consisted of two major sub-stages known as the Cary and Valders. The Wisconsin period began approximately 70,000 years ago. This ice mass had its origin in the snowfields of the Hudson Bay region of Canada.



Courtesy Geology of Ice Age National Scientific Reserve of Wisconsin



Courtesy University of Arizona, History of Pleistocene Study

### Watersheds & Drainage

A watershed is the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place. John Wesley Powell, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century soldier, geologist, explorer of the American West, and professor at Illinois Wesleyan University, described a watershed as, "That area of land, a bounded hydrologic system, within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course and where, as humans settled, simple logic demanded that they become part of a community."<sup>4</sup>

The Town of Oconto Falls is split between three watersheds: the Lower Oconto River, Little River, and Pensaukee River. The map on the following page illustrates the boundaries of each watershed in the Town.

<sup>4</sup> Excerpted from "What is a Watershed", US Environmental Protection Agency, 2012.

## **Surface Water**

The Oconto River is the primary water resource in the Town. It flows through the center of the Town, parallel with STH 22. The WDNR *Land Legacy Report* identifies the Oconto River as an important state environmental asset that should be protected. The purpose of the report was to identify important natural areas in the state. It did not identify how or who should be responsible for the protection of the natural areas identified.



Other water features of significance in the Town include local streams and several lakes, including Balcom Lake, Dunk's Lake, Lily Lake, Company Lake, Kuplie Lake, Gray Lake, Dombroski Lake and Delzer Lake. Dunk's Lake has public access from Pipgrass Road. Balcom Lake also has public access on its north side from an easement acquired by Oconto County. All of the other lakes are privately owned with undeveloped shores.

## **Soils<sup>5</sup>**

The areas of the Town not covered by wetland generally are comprised of soils well suited to agricultural uses. The dominant soil types present in the community are Onaway Fine Sandy Loam and Solona Fine Sandy Loam. The Onaway series consists of very deep, well drained or moderately well drained soils formed in loamy deposits on ground moraines, end moraines, and drumlins. Onaway soils are important agricultural soils. Most are used for general farming and dairying. Corn, grain, hay, and potatoes are the principal crops. Wooded areas support northern hardwoods, with sugar maple predominating.

The Solona series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils formed in loamy glacial till on ground moraines. These soils have moderate permeability. Most areas covered by this soil type are used for cropland. Common crops are corn, small grain, and hay. Native vegetation is mostly mixed deciduous forest. Common trees are white ash, sugar maple, northern red oak, and American basswood. The Town of Oconto Falls Soils Association map is presented on page 6-10.

## **Shorelines and Floodplains<sup>6</sup>**

The diversity of plant and animal species in shoreland zones and floodplains can be as much as 500% greater than in nearby upland areas. These areas about the many rivers, streams, and lakes in the Town. The Oconto County Shoreland/Wetland Ordinance regulates land use and

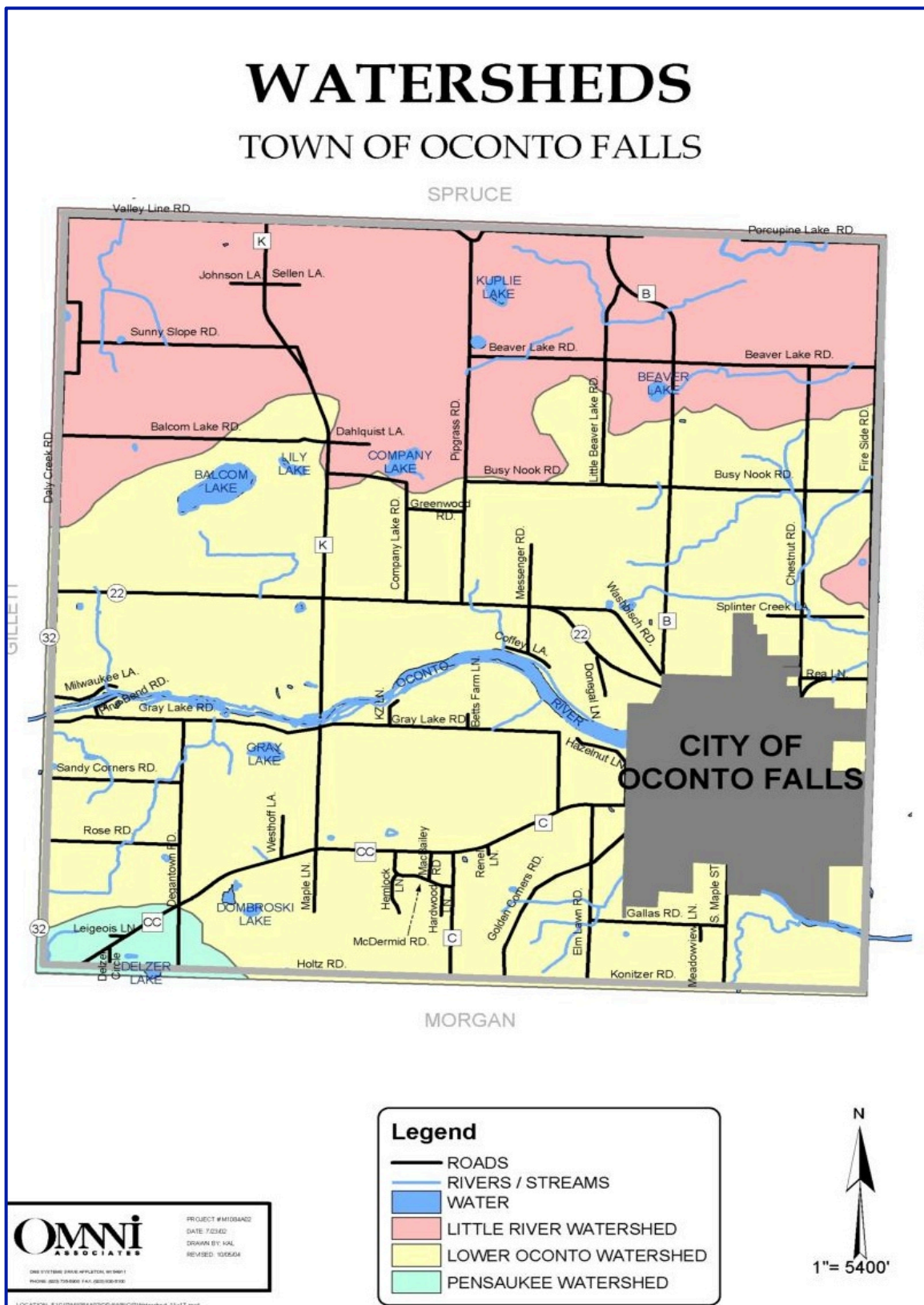
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<sup>5</sup> Excerpted from US National Soil Cooperative website, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Excerpted from Information for this section was obtained from 'The Shoreland Stewardship Series', UW-Extension, WDNR, Wisconsin Lakes Partnership, the GMU Basin Teams, and the Wisconsin Association of Lakes in 2002.



# CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES



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development within 1,000 feet from the ordinary high water mark of a lake, pond or flowage, and within 300 feet from the ordinary high water mark of a river. A permit is required before any filling or grading activities may occur within shoreland areas.

### Wetlands

Wetlands act as a natural filtering system for sediment and nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrates, and serve as natural buffers protecting shorelines and stream banks from erosion. They are essential in providing wildlife habitat, flood control, and groundwater recharge. Floodplains serve a number of important functions related to flood and erosion control, water quality, groundwater recharge, and fish and wildlife habitats. They provide areas for streams and creeks to expand during high rainfall and snowmelt events. Floodplains are generally unsuitable for development due to potential risk to lives and property. The majority of wetlands in the Town are located within riparian areas. These typically entail smaller floodplain systems associated with adjoining lakes, creeks and streams.

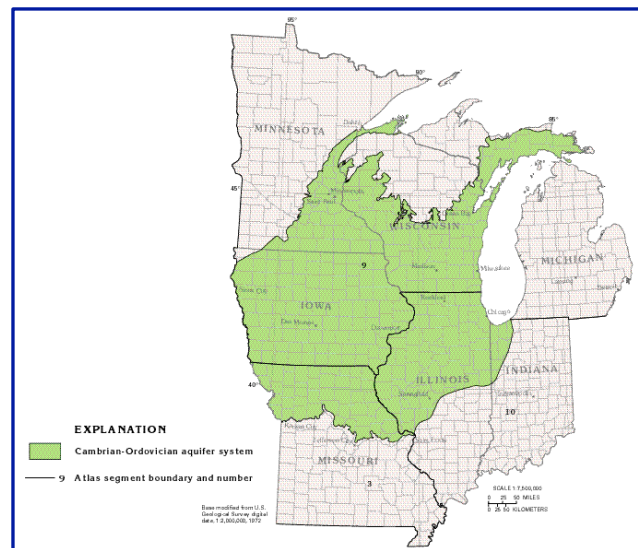
### Quarries

A quarry is a type of open-pit mine from which rock or minerals are extracted. Quarries are generally used for extracting building materials such as dimension stone and are usually shallower than other types of open-pit mines. Types of rock extracted from quarries include cinders, coquina (a type of limestone), blue rock, granite, grit stone, limestone, marble, sandstone, and slate. Resources desirable for quarrying exist throughout the Town. Three are currently in operation: Zippel Quarry on CTH K, Waschisch Quarry on STH 22, and Kurt Streblow Quarry on CTH CC.

### Groundwater

Oconto County's groundwater source is part of a large aquifer system called the Cambrian-Ordovician aquifer system. It is the second largest source of groundwater for public, agricultural, and industrial use in the upper Midwest. This aquifer is a complex multi-aquifer system with several aquifers separated by leaky confining units.<sup>7</sup>

The depth to groundwater depends upon the general topography, the elevation above permanent stream level, and the lithology of the underlying bedrock and glacial deposits. Water is stored in porous or permeable strata (i.e., aquifers).

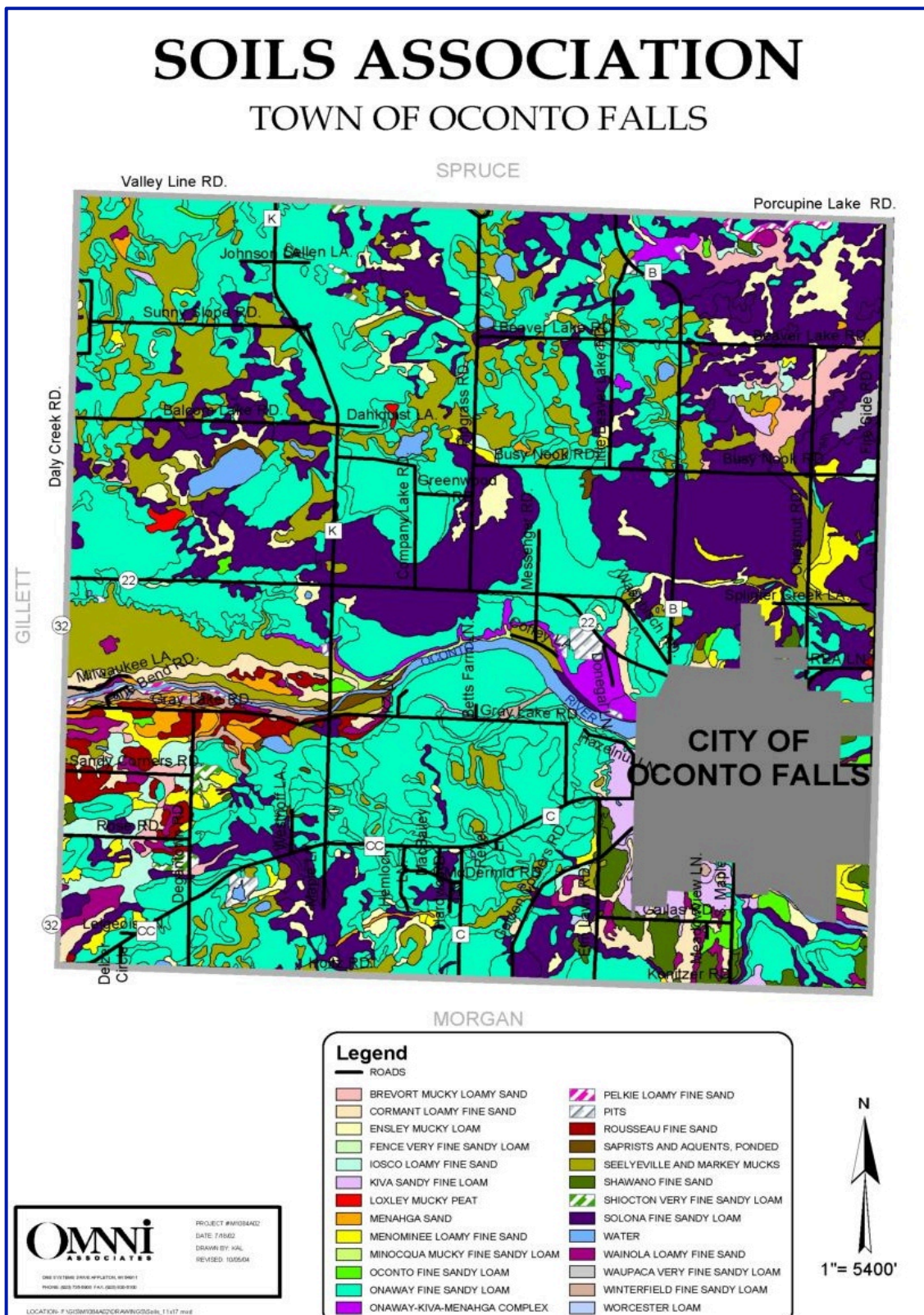


Courtesy H.L. Young, US Geological Survey

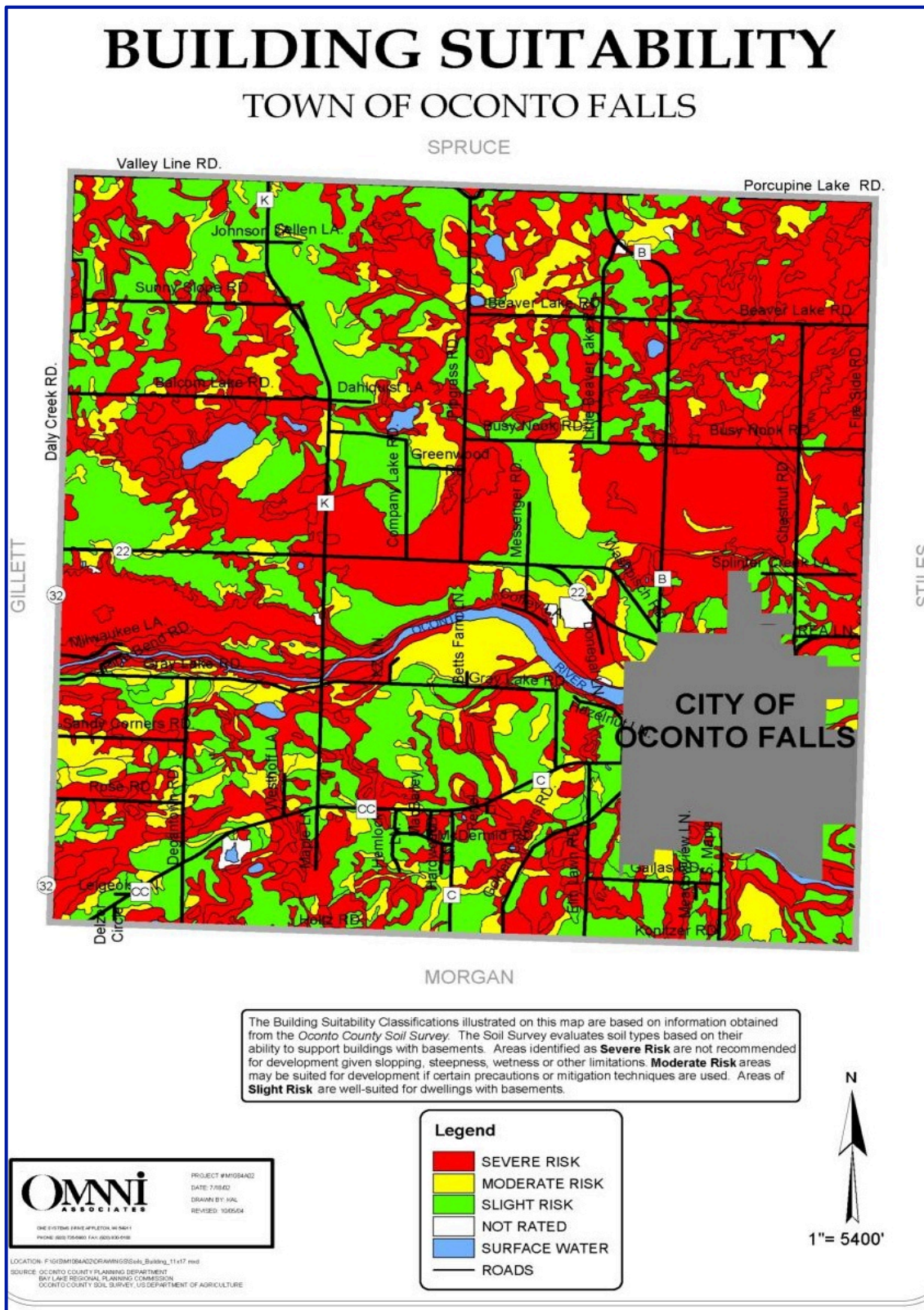
<sup>7</sup> Excerpted from 'Oconto County Comprehensive Plan', Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission.



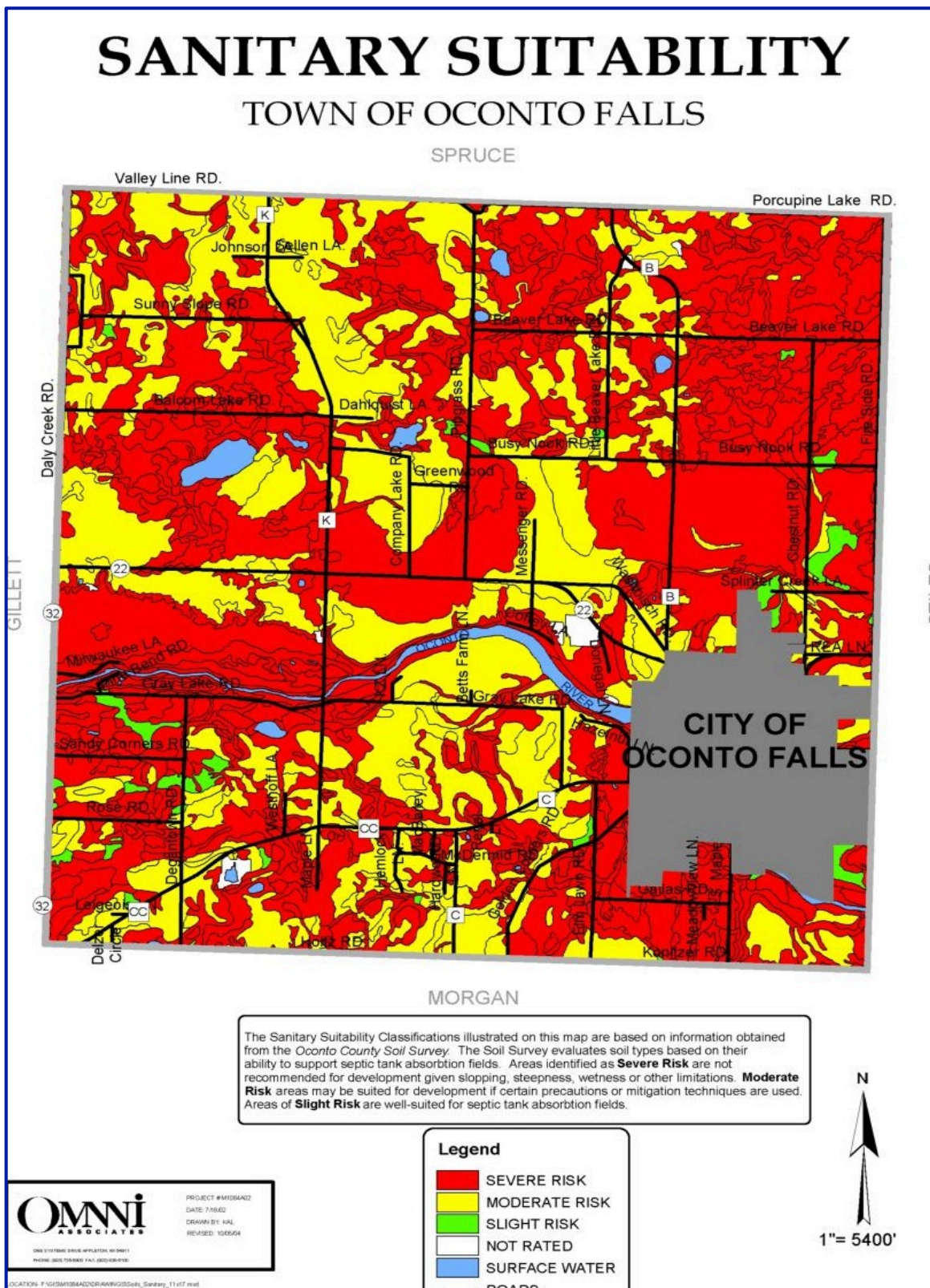
# CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES







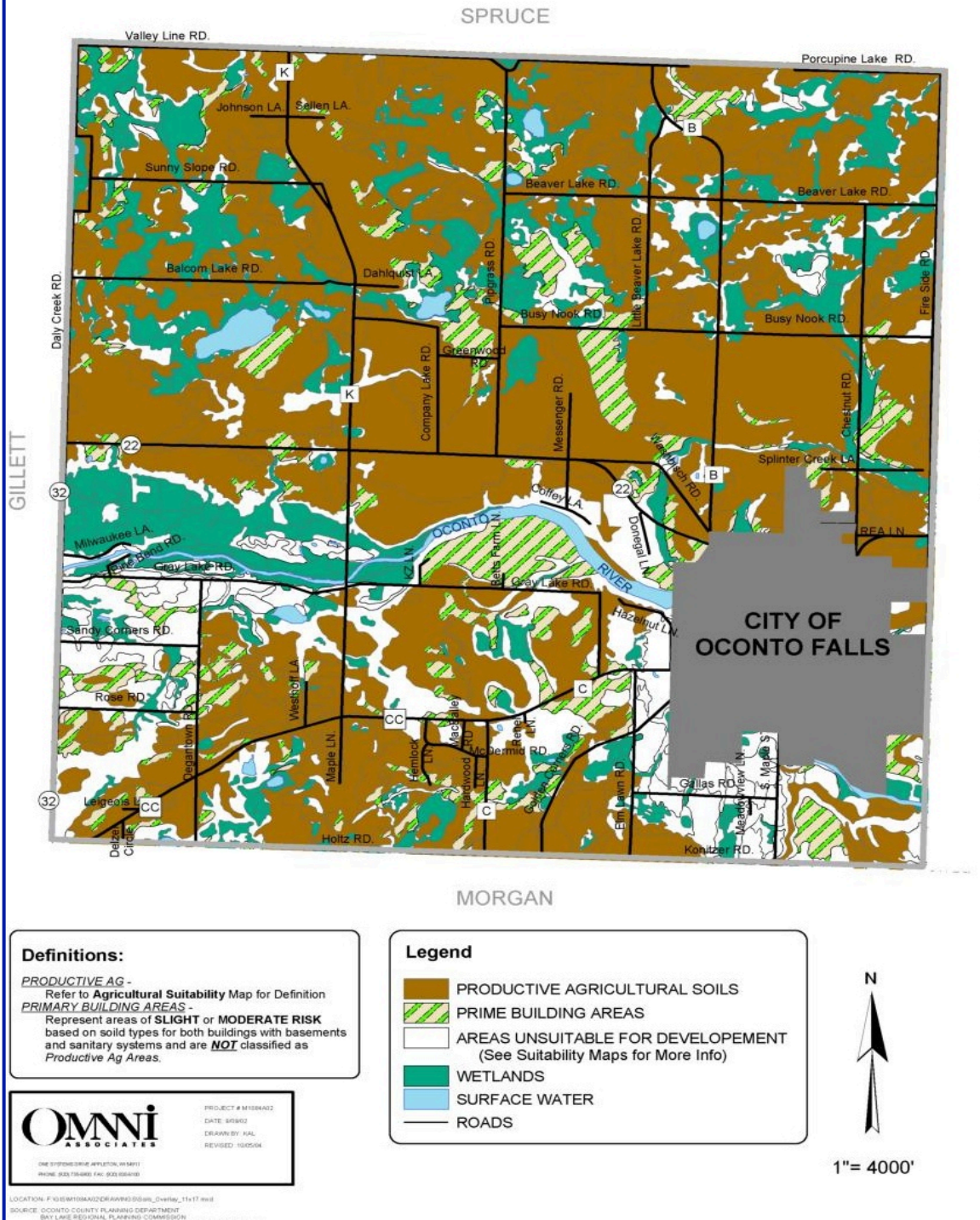
## CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES



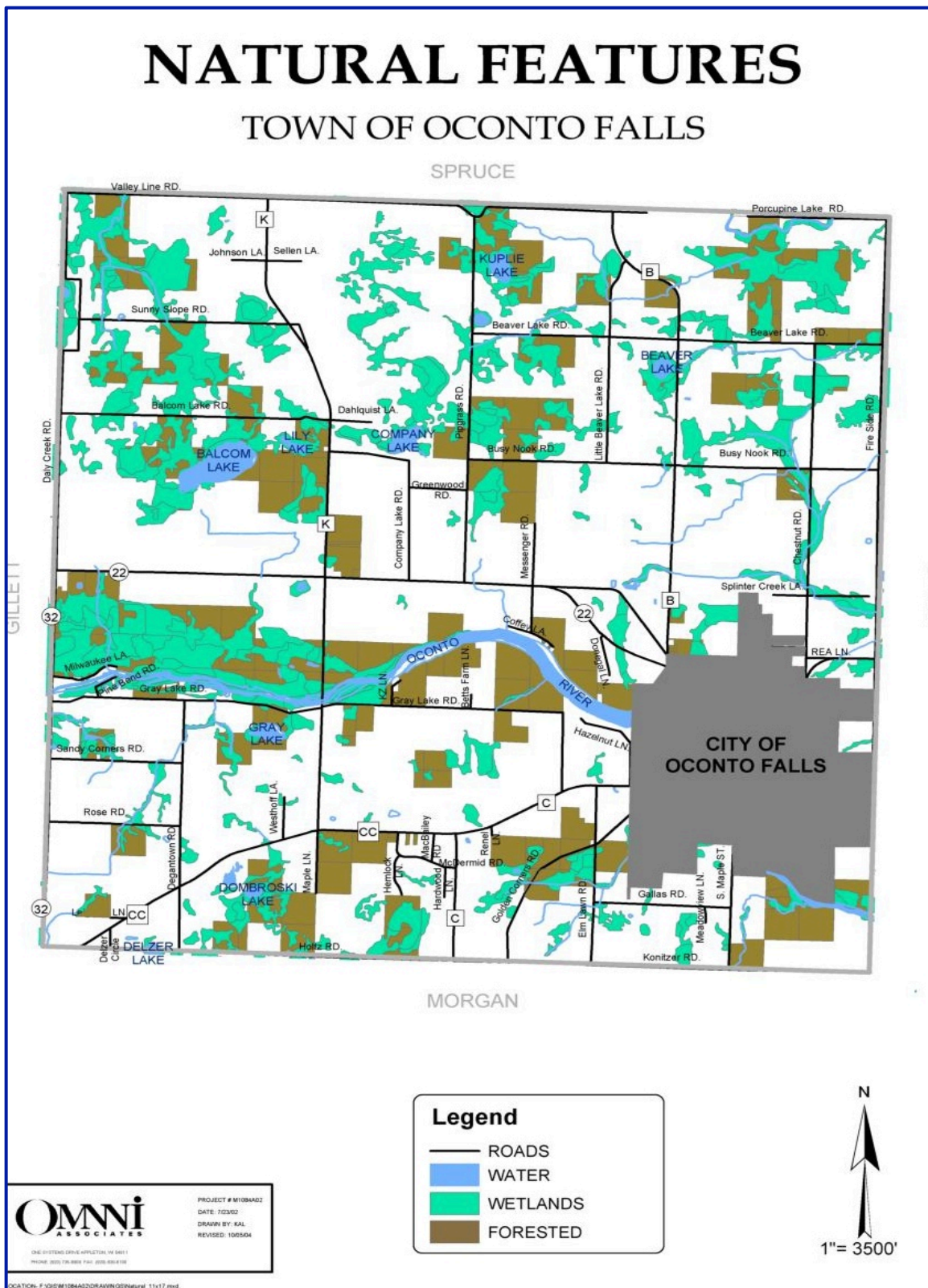


# DEVELOPMENT SUITABILITY MAP

## TOWN OF OCONTO FALLS



# CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES





The level of groundwater may rise or fall depending on annual precipitation and local draw down.<sup>8</sup> All of the water used by municipalities and in homes in Oconto County comes from groundwater; 26% of county residents get drinking water from five municipal water utilities while 74% (approximately 27,700 residents) get drinking water from private wells. More than 12,000 wells have been constructed in Oconto County, the vast majority private.<sup>9</sup>

### **Woodlands**

Historically, the landscape of Oconto County was dominated by a mixed conifer-northern hardwood forest (the northern mesic forest). Prior to Euro-American settlement, the northern mesic forest covered the largest acreage of any Wisconsin vegetation type. It is still very extensive, but made up of second-growth forests that developed following the Cutover. It forms the matrix for most of the other community types found in northern Wisconsin, and provides habitat for at least some portion of the life cycle of many species. It is found primarily on loamy soils of glacial till plains and moraines deposited by the Wisconsin glaciation. Sugar maple is dominant or co-dominant in most stands. Historically, eastern hemlock was the second most important species, sometimes occurring in nearly pure stands with eastern white pine; both of these conifer species are greatly reduced in today's forests.<sup>10</sup>

### **Wildlife Habitat**

Primary wildlife habitat areas in Oconto County provide food and cover for deer, raccoons, skunk, and other animals common in the area. Farm fields serve as a food source for deer, sand hill cranes, turkeys, and waterfowl. Agricultural areas are important to wildlife because they provide travel corridors between waterways, woodlands, wetlands, and other habitat. Farmland also provides the cover and large contiguous open spaces needed by many wildlife species. Wildlife habitat includes an array of varied systems each critical to the viability of local species. These include:

- Feeding Habitat – The right types of food and the opportunity for animals to consume it.
- Nesting/Resting/Breeding/Burrow Habitat – places to lay eggs, rear young, rest, and breed.
- Wintering/Migratory Habitat – Places to rest during migratory flights and the availability of food and open water for over-wintering species.

#### **Habitat Fragmentation**

A primary threat to wildlife is fragmentation, the breaking up of larger habitat areas into smaller sections. This results from modification or conversion of the landscape due to development or agricultural operations.

Fragmentation decreases wildlife population sizes, isolates habitat areas and creates more edges – where 2 dissimilar habitats meet (e.g. grassland and residential subdivisions). Carefully planned environmental corridors provide opportunities to reconnect fragmented natural areas and improve habitat for important plant, animal and insect species.

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<sup>8</sup> Excerpted from 'Soil Survey of Oconto County, Wisconsin', US Department of Agriculture.

<sup>9</sup> Excerpted from 'Protecting Wisconsin's Groundwater Through Comprehensive Planning', University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Center for Land Use Education, January 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Excerpted from 'Northern Mesic Forest', WDNR website, 2015.

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- Environmental Corridors – Places that provide wildlife the ability to move to different habitats in order to complete daily and seasonal living cycles (see Environmental Corridors later in this section)

### Environmental Corridors: Nature's Hallways

One way to think of environmental corridors is to compare them to hallways. A building contains hallways, which are places of concentrated movement back and forth; and rooms, which are destination points where people eat, work, play, and sleep. The hallways serve to link places of activity. Just as hallways enhance the operation of a building, environmental corridors increase the value of natural resource areas. Areas of concentrated natural resource activity ("rooms"), such as wetlands, woodlands, prairies, lakes, and other features, become more functional when linked by environmental corridors ("hallways").

Source: Environmental Corridors: Lifelines for Living, University of Illinois Extension, 2001.

### Environmental Corridors

Environmental corridors connect natural areas and open spaces. They provide physical linkages between fragmented habitat areas and provide animals and insects a means of travel to and from feeding and breeding places. Wildlife populations depend upon movement through environmental corridors. Most native species decline when habitat areas are fragmented due to agricultural operations or development. Wildlife populations isolated in one location, like a stand of trees or a secluded wetland, can overpopulate or die out without access to adequate environmental corridors. The functional effectiveness of an environmental corridor depends on the type of species that use it and its

size, shape, and edge effects<sup>11</sup>.

Larger corridors offer greater habitat diversity. Linear corridors tend to be less diverse but offer important migration routes. In farming communities, corridors often lie along stream and riverbanks. More than seventy percent of all terrestrial wildlife species use riparian corridors. Fencerows provide important habitat links for songbirds and other wildlife. Historically, fencerows were used to mark off ownership of farm fields. Stones and stumps cleared from cultivated areas were laid along property lines.

During the 1920's the federal government advocated tree-lined fencerows as a means of reducing topsoil loss. Nationwide, farmers planted tree wooded lines to reduce wind erosion. Over time, these fencerows matured and provided new habitat for plants and animals. As farmland is developed, these important areas of habitat are lost.

### Threatened & Endangered Species

Plant and animal species are considered one of the fundamental building blocks of ecological landscapes and biodiversity. The presence of one or more rare species can be an indication of an area's health and ecological importance, and should prompt attention to conservation, management and restoration needs. Protection of such species is a valuable and vital component of sustaining biodiversity.

<sup>11</sup> Edge effects include the penetration of wind, light, and sound, as well as visibility beyond and into surrounding areas. They are crucial in determining the type of habitat a corridor will provide.

While the conservation of plants, animals and their habitat should be considered for all species, this is particularly important for those that are rare or in decline. An endangered species is one whose continued existence is in jeopardy and may become extinct. A threatened species is one that is likely, within the foreseeable future, to become endangered.

### Endangered Species Act<sup>12</sup>

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) defines an endangered species as "any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range." Endangered species are automatically protected by prohibitions of several types of "taking," including harming, harassing, collecting, or killing, under Section 9 of the ESA. There are some limited exceptions to these rules listed in Section 10 of the ESA. The ESA defines a threatened species as "any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range." Threatened species receive protections through regulations issued under Section 4(d) of the ESA. These regulations occur separately from the listing and detail what take prohibitions are in effect. Also called 4(d) rules, they can include the same prohibitions under Section 9.

Scientists may not consider the economic impact of listing a particular species. One must be listed if it is threatened or endangered due to any of the following five factors:

- Present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range.
- Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes.
- Disease or predation.
- Inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms.
- Other natural or human-made factors affecting its continued existence.

At present, there are no confirmed species on the federal endangered and threatened list present in Oconto County.

### Wisconsin Endangered & Threatened Species<sup>13</sup>

WDNR manages the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) database, the most comprehensive source of rare species data for Wisconsin. The data collected by NHI are used for a variety of purposes including research, land management, state land master planning, community planning, conservation planning, and review of public and private activities across the state. It is provided for general planning and assessment purposes only and should not be used for screening or reviewing proposed land development or land management projects.

Please visit the WDNR NHI website for a complete listing of endangered and threatened species present in Oconto County.

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<sup>12</sup> Excerpted from USEPA ESA website, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Excerpted from WDNR NHI website, 2015.

## CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

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### Invasive Species

An invasive species is defined as, “A species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.” The definition includes any species that is not native to a given ecosystem. Invasive species can be added to a community by natural range extensions as a result of human activity. Non-native invasive plants and animals threaten biodiversity by displacing species native to the region. They also pose a threat to agricultural, forestry, and fishery operations costing an estimated \$137 billion in damages annually in the United States.

### Invasive Species Commonly Used in Landscaping

The following species, often used in residential and commercial landscaping, are classified as invasive by the WDNR:

- Norway maple
- Bigtooth aspen
- Grey dogwood
- Red osier dogwood
- Wayfaringtree
- Smooth sumac
- Staghorn/Stagham sumac
- Purple loosestrife
- Hawthorne
- Japanese barberry



Examples of invasive plant species prevalent in Oconto County include, from left, phragmites, purple loosestrife, and Canada thistle.

### Cultural Resources

Historical and cultural resources are valuable community assets warranting preservation. The term “cultural resources” typically refers to historic buildings and structures and archaeological sites; however, municipalities are granted the authority to identify the places that are cultural significant within their boundaries irrespective of the National Register of Historic Places or the State Historical Preservation Office. One of the most effective ways to do so is through a local historic preservation ordinance. A historic preservation ordinance can establish procedures to designate historically and culturally sensitive properties and places, and to review projects that have the potential to negatively affect these important places.

Another way in which local governments can protect historically significant structures and places is through the use of overlay zoning in the zoning ordinance. An overlay zone is an additional layer of regulations for a particular area that is laid atop the underlying or base zoning regulations. A design review board, site plan review committee, or historic preservation commission administers the regulations within the historic overlay zone.

Finally, the designation of ‘secondary conservation areas’ within the conservation subdivision component of a local subdivision ordinance allows a community to identify structures and places that should be preserved during the residential development process.

### **Wisconsin State Historical Society<sup>14</sup>**

The mission of the Wisconsin State Historical Society (WSHS) is to maintain, promote and spread knowledge relating to the history of North America, with an emphasis on the state of Wisconsin. WSHS helps people connect to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. Its guiding principles are to:

- Reach out and partner with the broadest possible public.
- Present and promote sound and authentic history.
- Share its riches of staff, collections, and services in ways that captivate and respect its many audiences.
- Collect and safeguard evidence of Wisconsin’s diverse heritage according to the highest standards of stewardship

### **Architecture and History Inventory**

The Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) is a digital source of information on more than 140,000 historic buildings, structures and objects throughout Wisconsin. Each property has a digital record providing basic information about the property and most include exterior images. The AHI contains information on buildings, structures, and objects that illustrate Wisconsin’s unique history. It documents a wide range of historic properties such as round barns, log houses, cast iron bridges, small commercial buildings, and Queen Anne houses, among others. The AHI lists four structures within the Town of Oconto Falls, all located on the ‘Jerry Coolman Farm’ on Daly Creek Road and including:

- Front Gabled Clapboard Style House.
- Astylistic Utilitarian Building Wisconsin Dairy Barn.
- Astylistic Utilitarian Building Metal Pole Building.
- Astylistic Utilitarian Building Shed.

Inclusion in the AHI conveys no special status or advantage. The inventory is merely a record of the property resulting from site reconnaissance conducted by staff of the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

## **Agricultural Resources Plan**

The remainder of this chapter focuses on current and potential challenges related to agricultural, natural, and cultural resources; and the tools and methods with which the Town of Oconto Falls can ensure their long-term preservation.

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<sup>14</sup> Excerpted from Wisconsin State Historical Society website, 2015.



## **CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES**

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### **Sustaining Farmland and Natural Areas**

Preservation of natural resources and farmland is important to sustaining the local economy, maintaining wildlife habitat, and providing the 'green infrastructure' (e.g., wetlands and floodplains for stormwater management, scenic areas, etc.) necessary in recharging groundwater and reducing the impact of flood events. They are also important landscape features contributing to the Town's high quality of living.

### **Farmland Preservation Zoning<sup>15</sup>**

Under the Farmland Preservation Program (Chapter 91, Wis. Stats.) administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), local governments may choose to adopt and have certified a farmland preservation zoning ordinance to ensure that landowners covered by the ordinance are eligible to claim farmland preservation tax credits. The credits are applied against tax liability on an annual basis. Tax credit amounts are as follows:

- \$5.00 per eligible acre for farmers with a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009 and located in an agricultural enterprise area.
- \$7.50 per eligible acre for farmers in an area zoned for farmland preservation.
- \$10.00 per eligible acre for farmers in an area zoned and certified for farmland preservation and in an agricultural enterprise area, with a farmland preservation agreement signed after July 1, 2009.

Certification of a zoning ordinance must be obtained through application to DATCP. Landowners must be residents of Wisconsin and their agricultural operations must meet the following criteria:

- Acres claimed must be located in a farmland preservation area identified in a certified county farmland preservation plan. Eligible land includes agricultural land or permanent undeveloped natural resource areas or open space land that is in an area certified for farmland preservation zoning, and/or is located in a designated agricultural enterprise area and under a farmland preservation agreement.
- Claimants must have \$6,000 in gross farm revenue in the past year or \$18,000 in the past three years. Income from rental receipts of farm acres does not count toward gross farm revenue. However, gross farm revenue produced by the renter on the landowner's farmland can be used to meet this eligibility requirement.
- Claimants must be able to certify that all property taxes owed from the previous year have been paid.
- Farmers claiming farmland preservation tax credits must certify on their tax form that they comply with state soil and water conservation standards. New claimants must also submit a certification of compliance with soil and water conservation standards that has been issued by the county land conservation committee.

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<sup>15</sup> Source: Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, Farmland Preservation website, 2015.

The Oconto County Farmland Preservation Plan was certified by DATCP in 2015 allowing for eligible landowners in the town of Oconto Falls to collect farmland preservation tax credits.

### Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that limits present and future development of a parcel. Under a conservation easement, the landowner retains ownership of the land (within the terms of the easement, i.e. only for farmland or natural space, not for development) and a land trust or similar organization assumes the responsibility for protecting the land's conservation values.

Donated conservation easements that meet federal requirements can provide significant tax advantages to landowners since their land will be assessed as undevelopable land, which has a much lower tax value than developable land. Qualified easements may also generate charitable contribution deductions for income and transfer tax purposes. All land is "taxed" at the same rate, though value determinations are variable.

### Specialty Farming

On average, close to 3,000 acres of productive farmland are lost to development in the U.S. each day. Adapting to survive, many farmers have embraced a new paradigm that focuses on agricultural models custom-fit to changing markets and filling local niche markets with specialty produce and value-added products. Specialty (or niche) farming provides an alternative to conventional agricultural practices, particularly for smaller farmers attempting to compete with larger operations. The movement seems to be working.



Courtesy Washington Island Ostrich Farm

According to Agricultural Census data nearly 300,000 new farms have begun operations during the past decade. Compared with all farms nationwide, these new arrivals tend to have more diversified production, fewer acres, lower total-dollar sales, and operators who also work off-farm. The Town of Oconto Falls' proximity to Green Bay and the Fox Cities provides opportunities for directly marketing specialty agricultural products to local consumers.

Examples of specialty agricultural products include:

- Agroforestry
- Aquaculture products
- Alternative Grains and Field Crops
- Industrial, Energy and Non-food Crops
- Native Plants and Ecofriendly Landscaping
- Organic milk and cheese
- Organic produce
- Ornamental and Nursery Crops
- Post-harvest Handling and Processing
- Medicinal and Culinary Herbs

## CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Raising of non-traditional farm animals (llama, ostrich, bison, etc.)
- Seeds and Plant Breeding
- Specialty, Heirloom and Ethnic Fruits and Vegetables

### Organic Agriculture

Organic farming is a particularly attractive specialty farm option given that organic food is the fastest growing segment of the agricultural industry. Products that once occupied a boutique marketplace niche are becoming mainstream as consumers seek healthier alternatives to conventional farm produce. Organic and specialty farming counter the notion that agricultural operations must become very big to remain profitable.

### Community Supported Agriculture<sup>16</sup>

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a system in which a farm operation is supported by shareholders who share both the benefits and risks of food production. CSAs consist of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes the 'community's farm', with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm's bounty throughout the growing season, as well as satisfaction gained from reconnecting to the land and participating directly in food production. Members also share in the risks of farming, including poor harvests due to unfavorable weather or pests. By direct sales to community members, who have provided the farmer with working capital in advance, growers receive better prices for their crops, gain some financial security, and are relieved of much of the burden of marketing.



Courtesy Kellner Back Acre Garden,  
Denmark, WI

### No-Till Farming

In conventional tillage, soil is turned to a depth of eight to twelve inches with a plow. Subsequently, the plot is disked at least twice more to prepare the seedbed before planting takes place. In no-till, the first three steps in conventional cultivation are dispensed with. Planting is done right *through* the residues of previous plantings and weeds with a device (usually a coultter) that cuts a slot a few inches wide, followed by equipment that places the seeds and closes the trench.



Courtesy University of Wisconsin-  
Extension

Extensive field-scale research and more than five hundred farm operations in the U.S. have demonstrated how diverse crop rotations can make no-till profitable. Crop diversity keeps pests such as weeds, insects, and diseases in check, and techniques such as precise nutrient

<sup>16</sup> Excerpted from United States Department of Agriculture, Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, 2015.

placement, accurate seeding, and proper variety selection enhance crop competitiveness. No-till farming also conserves soil moisture allowing for enhanced crop production. A properly implemented no-till saves water, uses little or no fertilizers and pesticides, increases yield, and is more profitable than conventional techniques.

### **Agri-Tourism**

Agri-tourism is a commercial enterprise at a working farm conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates supplemental income for the owner. It is one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry. Agri-tourism operations may include outdoor recreation, educational experiences, entertainment, hospitality services, and on-farm direct sales, among others.

<b>Table 6.1: Examples of Agri-tourism Opportunities in Town of Oconto Falls.</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Outdoor Recreation	Horseback riding; wildlife viewing & photography; fee fishing & hunting; camping & picnicking; wagon/sleigh rides; cross-country skiing; game preserve; clay bird shooting; off-road vehicles.
Educational Experiences	Farm tours; school and church tours; garden/nursery tours; winery tours; agricultural technical tours; historical agriculture exhibits; exotic animal farm.
Direct Agricultural Sales	On-farm sales; roadside stand; agriculture-related crafts/gifts; u-pick operations; farmers' market.
Accommodations	Bed & breakfast inn; farm vacations; youth exchange; elder hostel.
Entertainment	Concerts or special events; festivals or fairs; petting zoo; hunting/working dog trials/training.
Source: University of California Cooperative Extension, Small Farm Program website, 2015.	

### **Purchase and Transfer of Development Rights**

Another means of preserving agricultural (and natural) land is through the establishment of a purchase of development rights (PDR) or transfer of development rights (TDR) program. Such programs 'send' development from farmland and natural resource areas to designated 'receiving' areas within a community. Advantages of these approaches include just and fair compensation for landowners, permanent protection of farmland and natural resources, and voluntary participation.

#### Purchase of Development Rights

In a PDR program, a land trust, local government, or other organization offers to purchase the development rights on a parcel. The landowner is free to decline the offer or negotiate a higher price. When the development rights to a farm are sold, the landowner typically receives payment equal to the difference between the fair market value of the land and the price the land would command for agricultural use. Upon payment, a conservation easement is recorded on the property deed. The easement stays with the land in perpetuity.

The landowner retains the right to occupy and make economic use of the land for agricultural purposes, but gives up the right to develop the property in the future. Farmers are not compelled to sell their development rights. The main disadvantage of PDR is cost. Development rights can be expensive, so funding for a PDR program must be selectively targeted in order

## CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES

to protect the agricultural land that is most worthy of preservation. As a result, not every farmer who wants to sell his or her development rights will be able to do so.

Table 6.2: Purchase of Development Rights	
Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Permanently protects land from development</li> <li>▪ Landowner is paid to protect land</li> <li>▪ Local governments can target locations effectively</li> <li>▪ Land remains in private ownership and on the tax rolls</li> <li>▪ Program is voluntary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can be costly for local unit of government, therefore land is protected at a slower rate</li> <li>▪ Land remains in private ownership – typically no public access</li> <li>▪ Since program is voluntary, it may be difficult to preserve large tracts of contiguous land</li> </ul>

### Transfer of Development Rights

TDR involves transferring development rights from one piece of property to another. In this approach, a landowner is compensated for selling his/her development rights. However, rather than simply eliminating these rights, they are transferred to another property in the community that is targeted for development. That landowner of the ‘targeted property’ is free to develop the land and may use the transferred rights to develop at a greater density or intensity (e.g., smaller lot sizes to locate more homes in a single area). This approach preserves farmland and natural areas in designated sending zones while allowing for more intensive development to occur in the receiving zones.

Table 6.3: Transfer of Development Rights	
Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Permanently protects land from development</li> <li>▪ Landowner is paid to protect their land</li> <li>▪ Local governments can target locations effectively</li> <li>▪ Low cost to local unit of government</li> <li>▪ Utilizes free market mechanisms</li> <li>▪ Land remains in private ownership and on tax roll</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can be complex to manage</li> <li>▪ Receiving area must be willing to accept higher densities</li> <li>▪ Difficult program to establish</li> <li>▪ Program will not work in areas where there is little to no development pressure on the area to be preserved</li> </ul>

### **Wisconsin Right-to-Farm Act**

Wisconsin’s Right-to-Farm Law (Section 823.08, Wis. Stats.) protects farmers from nuisance lawsuits. As residential development expands into agricultural areas, issues often arise related to manure spreading and storage, plowing and harvesting at night, and large farm vehicles on roads (among others). People who move to rural areas may not be aware of these and other potential nuisances. To minimize conflicts, education is strongly recommended (newsletters, Town website, etc.). By educating new landowners about potential conflicts, ‘surprise’ nuisances can be avoided. Many communities require that right-to-farm language be included with the deed for all new home sales in or adjoining active agricultural lands.



## Natural Resources Plan

### Preservation of Surface Water Quality

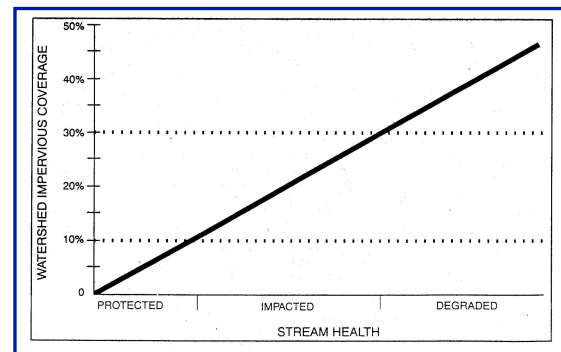
The Oconto River and the smaller creeks and streams in the community are important elements of the landscape. They provide critical habitat for important fish and wildlife species and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. However, strains are placed on aquatic systems with each new home, business, or road constructed. Development in a watershed has direct and predictable effects on streams and wetlands. The implementation of best management practices can protect water quality during construction, road building, and farming.

Historically, water quality was degraded by point sources, or direct discharges to lakes and rivers from industry, municipal sewerage districts and the like. Since the passage of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 (the Clean Water Act), the United States had taken dramatic steps to improve the quality of water resources. No longer are industries allowed to discharge untreated waste directly to surface waters.

Today, the greatest threat from a cumulative standpoint to streams and lakes comes through nonpoint-source water pollution. Nonpoint-source water pollution, or runoff, cannot easily be traced to a single point of origin. It occurs when rainwater or snowmelt flows across the land and picks up soil particles, organic wastes, fertilizers, and other contaminants that become pollution when carried to surface and/or groundwater. Nonpoint pollution, in the form of nitrogen, phosphorus and total suspended solids (soil particles), contaminates streams and lakes, increases the growth of algae and harmful aquatic weeds, covers spawning beds and feeding areas, and turns streams into conveyances of stormwater. The main sources of nonpoint pollution include impervious surfaces, agricultural fields, and residential lawns.

### Impervious Surface

A correlation exists between the percentage of impervious surface in a watershed and surface water quality (see graph). Stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as roads and roofs has an adverse effect on surface waters. As the percentage of impervious surfaces increases in a watershed, lakes and streams experience greater degradation from stormwater runoff.



Courtesy Center for Watershed Protection

According to the Center for Watershed Protection (CWP) in Ellicott City, Maryland, more than 30 different scientific studies have documented that stream, lake, and wetland quality declines sharply when impervious cover in upstream watersheds exceeds ten percent.

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### Agricultural Fields



Conventional agricultural practices expose topsoil to erosion from wind and precipitation. Plowed fields, row crops, the conversion of wetlands, and the overuse of commercial pesticides and fertilizers all intensify nonpoint source pollution loading to surface waters. By utilizing techniques such as conservation tillage, nutrient management planning, wetland restoration, grazing management, cover crops, and agricultural buffers, farmers can dramatically reduce nonpoint source pollution as well as the cost of farming.

### Residential Lawns

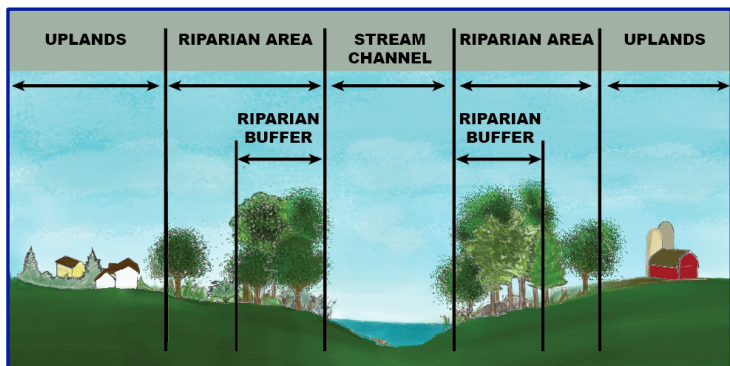
Historically, Wisconsin and Minnesota residents use more fertilizers and pesticides on their lawns per capita than those of any other state.<sup>17</sup> Upwards of 95% of the chemicals applied to residential lawns are washed into storm drains and then into nearby creeks and streams following rain events. In northern climates, turf grass effectively utilizes fertilizer only during the fall. Fertilizers applied during spring and summer months contribute to algae blooms and eutrophication of surface waters. Moreover, many turf grass herbicides/pesticides, even those that claim to be focused on specific weeds or pests, kill beneficial organisms and are suspected causal factors in a number of autoimmune and endocrine illnesses in people and pets.



### Riparian Buffers<sup>18</sup>

Riparian buffers are zones adjacent to water bodies such as lakes, rivers, and wetlands that protect water quality and wildlife, including both aquatic and terrestrial habitat. These zones minimize the impacts of human activities on the landscape and contribute to recreation, aesthetics, and quality of life.

Buffers include a range of complex vegetation structure, soils, food sources, cover, and water features that offer a variety of habitats contributing to diversity and abundance of wildlife such as mammals, frogs, amphibians, insects, and birds. Buffers can consist of a variety of canopy layers and cover



Courtesy USEPA

<sup>17</sup> Source: USEPA, Fertilizer and Pesticide Use on Turf Grasses IN THE U.S. and their Effects on Surface Waters, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Excerpted from Managing the Water's Edge: Making Natural Connections, USEPA

types including: ephemeral (temporary-wet for only part of year) wetlands, ponds, and spring pools; shallow and deep marshes; wetland meadows; wetland mixed forests; grasslands; forests; and prairies. Riparian zones are areas of transition between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems that provide numerous benefits to wildlife and people including pollution reduction and recreation. Riparian buffers are widely considered to be the single most effective protection for water resources.

### **Native Landscapes**

A native landscape is generally defined as one comprised of species that occur naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, or habitat, and that were present prior to European settlement. Landscaping with native wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees improves the environment. Natural landscaping brings a taste of wilderness to urban, suburban, and corporate settings by attracting a variety of birds, butterflies, and other animals. Once established, native plants do not need fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, or watering, thus benefiting the environment and reducing maintenance costs.<sup>19</sup> Finally, their extensive root systems create pathways for the infiltration of precipitation and snow melt thereby reducing runoff and the costs associated with constructed stormwater management systems.

The benefits of native landscapes include:

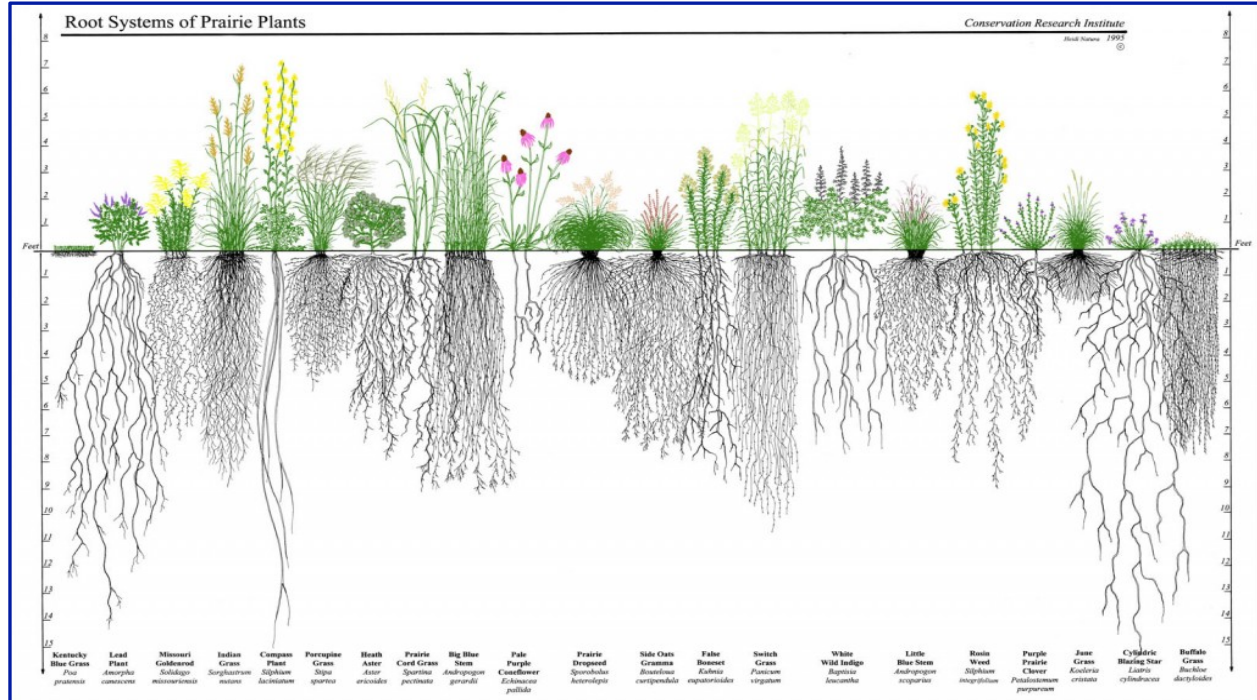
- Environmental - Once native plants are returned to the land, many species of birds, mammals, reptiles and beneficial insects return as well, restoring a vital part of the web of life. Landscaping with natives enriches the soil, decreases water run-off, and filters the pollution caused by nonpoint source pollution from commercial sites, subdivisions, parks, and farms.
- Economic - Over the long term, native landscaping is more cost-effective than traditional landscaping and requires no fertilizers, pesticides, or irrigation. Increased infiltration reducing the need for expensive stormwater management infrastructure.
- Aesthetic - While traditional landscapes use one or two species of grass, native landscape designs may include dozens of species of trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. Each is unique and constantly evolving, and thrives in wet, dry, sunny, and shaded locations.
- Educational - Native landscapes provide hands-on opportunities for people of all ages to learn about habitats and ecosystems.

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<sup>19</sup> Excerpted from Landscaping with Native Plants in the Great Lakes Region, USEPA.



## CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES



Comparing the root system of typical turf grass (far left) with those of grass and flower species native to Wisconsin. Deeper root systems provide greater opportunities for infiltration of precipitation and snow melt thereby reducing the incidents of flood events. Courtesy Conservation Research Institute

## Cultural Resources Plan

### Agricultural Heritage

The Town of Oconto Falls began as and remains an agricultural community. Farming is a cornerstone of the community's economy and culture and will remain so into the foreseeable future. However, land uses evolve over time. Across Wisconsin, historically and culturally significant farm structures are being lost to development or replaced with their modern equivalents...pole barns and semi-rigid livestock shelters.



Preserving important remnants of the Town's agrarian past will allow future generations to connect with the land and their ancestors. As development occurs, the Town will work with agricultural landowners and developers to preserve structurally sound barns, silos, fencerows, and other examples of Oconto Falls farming history.



### Century Farms<sup>20</sup>

The Century Farm and Home Program began in 1948 in conjunction with the State of Wisconsin's Centennial Celebration. There are currently 8,583 Century Farms and Homes nestled throughout the Badger State. The Sesquicentennial Program originated in 1998 as part of the State's Sesquicentennial Celebration, and since that time, 616 families have been honored. In 2011, 138 Century properties and 30 Sesquicentennial properties were recognized for carrying on Wisconsin's rich family farming tradition.

### **Secondary Conservation Areas**

As discussed in *Chapter 3: Housing*, conservation subdivisions provide a means by which local government, landowners, and developers may preserve important natural and cultural features present on a given piece of property. They do so by identifying *secondary conservation areas* (SCA) to be preserved during the residential development process. Unlike primary conservation areas (wetlands, flood plains, steep slopes, etc.), SCAs are cultural, natural, and agricultural resources that hold particular value within a given community. Examples of cultural SCAs may include architecturally significant homes, structurally sound barns, fencerows, and windmills, among others. Most importantly, SCAs are determined at the local level based upon local values.

### **Historic Preservation**

The term historic preservation refers to the protection, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of cultural resources. Cultural resources can include structures, sites, and objects having historical, archaeological, social, or cultural significance within a community. Historic preservation ordinances are the tool typically utilized by local government to protect cultural resources.

Historic preservation ordinances provide protection to individual sites and structures or historic districts through a permitting process that requires advance review of proposed projects by a preservation commission or other administrative body. While similar in many respects, preservation ordinances can differ widely from place to place. Variations arise due to differing levels of political support for preservation. The most effective ordinances are tailored to meet the individual needs of the community and the resources being protected.

### **Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resource Programs**

The following pages describe the various federal, state, and local programs that are available to aid the Town of Oconto Falls in implementing its agricultural, natural, and cultural resources plan.

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<sup>20</sup> Excerpted from Agri-View website.

## **CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES**

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### **United States Department of Agriculture**

#### Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is an offshoot of the Conservation Reserve Program, the country's largest private-land conservation program. Administered by the Farm Service Agency, CREP targets high-priority conservation issues identified by local, state, or tribal governments, or non-governmental organizations. In exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from production and introducing conservation practices, farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners are paid an annual rental rate. Participation is voluntary, and the contract period is typically 10–15 years, along with other federal and state incentives as applicable per each CREP agreement.

#### Natural Resource Conservation Service – Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum term of ten years in length. These contracts provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns, and for opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, and related resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland. In addition, a purpose of EQIP is to help producers meet federal, state, tribal, and local environmental regulations. Owners of land in agricultural, or forest production or persons who are engaged in livestock, agricultural or forest production on eligible land and that have a natural resource concern on the land may participate in EQIP.

#### Natural Resource Conservation Service - Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) - Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and rangeland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with state, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement.

#### Natural Resource Conservation Service – Financial Assistance Program

NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners and agricultural producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. Through these programs the agency approves contracts to provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns or opportunities to help save energy, improve soil, water, plant, air, animal, and related resources on agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest land.

### Natural Resource Conservation Service – Landscapes Initiatives Program

The NRCS Landscape Initiatives Program (LIP) is intended to accelerate the results that can be achieved through voluntary conservation programs. All NRCS programs are designed to support farmers, ranchers, and foresters in improving the environment while maintaining or improving a vibrant agricultural sector. Most program delivery is driven primarily by grassroots input and local needs. Landscape conservation initiatives enhance the locally-driven process to better address nationally and regionally important conservation goals that transcend localities. Improving water quality in the eight state Great Lakes region is a priority of the LIP.

### **Farm Services Agency – Conservation Reserve Program**

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

### **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**

#### Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program – Acquisition and Development of Local Parks Program

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (KNSP) sets aside fifty percent of the funds in the Local Assistance Program for projects that improve community recreation areas and acquire land for public outdoor recreation. Funds are allocated on a regional basis with seventy percent distributed on the basis of each county's proportionate share of the state population, and thirty percent distributed equally to each county. Applicants compete against other applicants from their region. Funds may be used for both land acquisition projects and development projects for nature-based outdoor recreation.

Under all KNSP programs, eligible local governments are only those towns, villages, cities, counties, and tribal governments that have a DNR-accepted comprehensive outdoor recreation plan or master plan that has been approved by resolution by the local governing unit. Local governments with qualifying plans receive eligibility to apply for grants for up to five years.

#### Managed Forest Law

The intent of the Managed Forest Law is to promote forest management practices through property tax incentives. Property must be a minimum of ten contiguous acres of which eighty percent must be capable of producing merchantable timber.

## **CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES**

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### Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program – Acquisition of Development Rights Program

The purpose of the Acquisition of Development Rights Program is to protect natural, agricultural, or forestlands that enhance and/or provide nature-based outdoor recreation. "Development Rights" are the rights of a landowner to develop their property to the greatest extent allowed under state and local laws.

### Land and Water Conservation Fund Program

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal program administered in all states that encourages creation and interpretation of high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities. Funds received by the DNR for this program are split between DNR projects and grants to local governments for outdoor recreation activities. Grants cover fifty percent of eligible project costs. Eligible projects include:

- Land acquisition or development projects that will provide opportunities for public outdoor recreation.
- Property with frontage on rivers, streams, lakes, estuaries, and reservoirs that will provide water-based outdoor recreation.
- Property that provides special recreation opportunities, such as floodplains, wetlands, and areas adjacent to scenic highways.
- Natural areas and outstanding scenic areas, where the objective is to preserve the scenic or natural values, including wildlife areas and areas of physical or biological importance. These areas shall be open to the general public for outdoor recreation use to the extent that the natural attributes of the areas will not be seriously impaired or lost.
- Land or development within urban areas for day use picnic areas.
- Land or development of nature-based outdoor recreation trails.
- Development of basic outdoor recreation facilities.
- Renovation of existing outdoor recreation facilities which are in danger of being lost for public use.

### Wisconsin Forest Landowners Grant Program

The Wisconsin Forest Landowners Grant Program (WFLGP) program assists private landowners in protecting and enhancing their forested lands, prairies, and waters. The program allows qualified landowners to be reimbursed up to fifty percent of the eligible cost of eligible practices. Private landowners are eligible for WFLGP funding if they own at least ten contiguous acres of non-industrial private forest, but not more than five hundred acres within Wisconsin.

### Wisconsin Coastal Management Program

Approximately \$1,500,000 is available through the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program (WCMP) to enhance and restore coastal resources within the state's coastal zone--all counties adjacent to Lakes Superior and Michigan. Projects eligible for WCMP funding include:



- Coastal Wetland Protection and Habitat Restoration.
- Nonpoint Source Pollution Control.
- Coastal Resource and Community Planning.
- Great Lakes Education.
- Public Access.
- Community Planning.

## **Wisconsin Historical Society**

### Historic Home Owner's Tax Credits

The Wisconsin Historical Society's Division of Historic Preservation (DHP) administers a program of twenty-five percent state income tax credits for repair and rehabilitation of historic homes in Wisconsin. To qualify, the residence must be one of the following:

- Listed in the state or national register.
- Contributing to a state or national register historic district.
- Be determined through the tax credit application process to be eligible for individual listing in the state register.

And, the property owner must spend at least \$10,000 on the following types of eligible work within a 2-year period:

- Work on the exterior of the house, such as roof replacement and painting, but not including site work such as driveways and landscaping.
- Electrical wiring, not including electrical fixtures.
- Plumbing, not including plumbing fixtures.
- Mechanical systems, such as furnaces, air conditioning, and water heaters; and Structural work, such as jacking up floors.

### Historic Preservation Tax Credits for Income-Producing Historic Buildings

Owners of historic income-producing properties in Wisconsin may be eligible for two income tax credits that can help pay for their building's rehabilitation. DHP administers both programs in conjunction with the National Park Service (NPS). The programs are:

- Federal Historic Preservation Credit. This program returns 20 percent of the cost of rehabilitating historic buildings to owners as a direct reduction of their federal income taxes.
- Wisconsin Supplemental Historic Preservation Credit. This program returns an additional 5 percent of the cost of rehabilitation to owners as a discount on their Wisconsin state income taxes. Owners that qualify for the Federal Historic Preservation Credit automatically qualify for the Wisconsin supplement if they get NPS approval before they begin any work.

## **CHAPTER 6: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, & CULTURAL RESOURCES**

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### UW-Extension Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program<sup>21</sup>

Despite the rich stock of historic barns in the Wisconsin landscape, we see fewer attempts to save them. The threats to these buildings are many, including urban growth and its associated roadway expansion, improper maintenance and upkeep, and new construction techniques, materials, and design. The University of Wisconsin-Extension and Wisconsin Historical Society, are spearheading a multifaceted approach aimed at saving many of Wisconsin's historic agricultural buildings. The Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program is aimed at both addressing public concerns and drawing attention to the importance of preserving the elements of Wisconsin's rural countryside, those elements that make it a unique part of America. Some of the strategies being pursued by this group include the coordination of regional educational workshops, the production of technical resource materials and the support of non-profit organizations that can help orchestrate efforts to establish grants and other kinds of technical assistance programs aimed at helping barn owners interested in preservation.

### **Oconto County Land Conservation Department**

The Oconto County Land Conservation Department (OCLCD) administers funds and technical assistance on Best Management Practices available for cost-share through the Pensaukee River Priority Watershed Program, Soil & Water Resource Management Grant, and Oconto County Cost-Share Program. OCLCD also provides the following, when funds are available:

- Technical assistance with abatement and damage claims in the Wisconsin Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program in conjunction with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
- Technical advice to landowners and agricultural operators for the planning, designing and installation of facilities and practices required under the Animal Waste Management Ordinance to protect surface and ground water quality.
- Technical advice to landowners and assist in securing any available funding to install practices and reach objectives identified in the County Land and Water Resource Management Plan.
- Technical advice to landowners in any matters of general natural resource management to protect and preserve the environment that is Oconto County.

### **Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resources Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

The goals, objectives, and policies related to agricultural, natural, and cultural resources are presented in Chapter 10: Implementation.

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<sup>21</sup> Excerpted from Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program website, 2015.

## Introduction

From a policy perspective, economic development can be defined as efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating and retaining jobs and growing incomes and the local tax base.<sup>1</sup>

Creating a successful economic development plan involves defining the local economy, determining its strengths and weaknesses, anticipating change, building resilience through diversification, and identifying sources of financial and technical assistance. It involves the sustained actions of elected and appointed officials, often in partnership with the private sector, intended to promote the standard of living and economic health of a community. Such actions target multiple areas of the local economy including development of human capital (through higher education and job training), critical infrastructure, regional competitiveness, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and health and safety, among others. The elements of a successful economic development plan include:



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- A detailed analysis of the local economy.
- A common vision based upon what residents and businesses value in the community.
- Strong collaboration between the public and private sectors oriented around agreed-upon goals.
- Diversity in the types of businesses and industries.
- Resilience, or the ability of the community to adapt quickly to change based on regional, national, and global economic conditions.
- Cooperation, not competition, between neighboring municipalities.

A vibrant economy is essential for community wellbeing since it effects so many aspects of community life, including the ability to earn a living, develop skills and access training, attract new residents and businesses, and to access services. Economic development expenditures are investments in the community.

The purpose of the economic development chapter is to describe the current economy of the Town, identify opportunities to enhance and diversify its economic base, and prepare a plan to achieve future economic development goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition courtesy Salmon Valley Business Center.

## **Economic Development Vision**

*The Town of Oconto Falls will maintain a proactive approach to economic development by strongly supporting local businesses and encouraging new development in harmony with the community's culture and rural character. Farming and agriculture-related industries will remain the dominant component of the Town's economy, with limited small business development occurring in areas designated on the Future Land Use Map. The Town will seek to expand communication technology and infrastructure to create additional opportunities for telecommuting and home-based businesses.*

## **Current Economy**

The economy of the Town of Oconto Falls is typical of a rural, farming community. Agriculture, scattered small businesses, natural resource and extraction industries, and taverns comprise the bulk of current commercial uses. Existing businesses are concentrated along the STH 22 and STH 32 corridors. The natural landscape (wetlands, floodplains, the Oconto River, etc.) and its distance from major markets limit opportunities for large-scale economic development in the community. The nearby City of Oconto Falls serves as the Town's commercial center, with a greater number and diversity of industry sectors. The vast majority of residents find employment outside of the Town.

## **Types of Municipal Economies**

Five general categories are used to describe the economies of small communities: *resource-based, industrial, metropolitanizing, dependent, and lifestyle.*<sup>2</sup>

- **Resource-Based.** This type of economy is characterized by geographic isolation. They are typically far away from larger cities/metro areas and have limited interstate access. These communities often have an aging population base and lack of opportunities for higher education and local employment.
- **Industrial Economy.** The industrial economy is characterized by dependence on yesterday's economic base. Often a community of this type has a single manufacturing or industrial operation that sustains the vast majority of residents.
- **Metropolitanizing Economy.** These communities are experiencing a high amount of residential development which causes concern about decreasing land supplies, loss of community identity, maintaining small town character, and avoiding becoming a "bedroom community."
- **Dependent Economy.** Usually an unincorporated area outside of the suburban ring of development. The economic vitality of this community depends on the economic success of the larger adjacent/nearby community. The primary challenge is handling local residential development pressure.
- **Lifestyle Economy.** These communities tend to include university towns, small communities with military bases, and tourist destinations. Residents enjoy their small

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<sup>2</sup> Randall Gross, Embracing Change in Small Communities, APA National Conference, March 2005.



community setting and quality of living, but are concerned about their long-term dependency on a single economic source.

The Town of Oconto Falls can best be described as having an economy straddling the ‘resource-based’ and ‘dependent’ categories.

### **Labor Force and Economic Base**

Detailed demographic data related to the Town’s labor force and economic base are provided in the Economic Profile section of *Chapter 2: Community Profile*. Highlights from that chapter include:

- Median household income as of 2013 is \$60,486, higher than most neighboring municipalities, Oconto County, and the State of Wisconsin.
- Fewer than 3% of families and individuals have incomes falling below the US Department of Health & Human Services poverty threshold.
- Nearly 30% of the population was unemployed (3.3%) or no longer in the labor force (26.3%) as of 2013.
- The top five industry sectors for employment include: manufacturing (166 residents, 24% of total); educational services, health care, and social assistance (150, 22%); retail trade (77, 11%); transportation, warehousing, and utilities (63, 9%); Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining (59, 9%).

### **Current Business Inventory**

The Town of Oconto Falls is home to nearly fifty small businesses (not including farming operations). Due to the fluid nature of most commercial and industrial operations, it is of questionable benefit to present a complete listing of each business by name. However, there is some merit in providing a general description of the types of businesses currently operating in the community. These include:

- Contractors and Consultants – Accounting, appraisals, carpentry, construction, electrician, land surveying, masonry, taxidermy, trash collection.
- Dining and Hospitality – Bars and taverns, supper clubs.
- Extraction Industries – Excavation, logging, nonmetallic mining.
- Natural Resources – Game farms, tree plantations.
- Repair Shops – Auto repair, machine shops.
- Sales – Antiques, chemicals, livestock feed, well drilling and supplies.
- Transportation – Cattle hauling, trucking.
- Value-added Operations – Lumber, milk production.

## **Economic Development Plan**

The remainder of the chapter focuses on strategies to secure the types of commercial and light-industrial development desired within the community. It also describes the various tools that may aid in achieving the Town's economic development goals.

### **Growing from Within**

Local ownership of businesses tends to maintain economic diversity because it builds on the loyalty shared between customers, owners, and their community. Local businesses offer connections to place through everyday transactions. They keep money circulating in the community, thereby stimulating the economy and creating new economic niches. Businesses that begin in a community tend to stay in that community. The most effective way to ensure a healthy local economy over time is to offer assistance for those interested in starting their own business and provide the means to relocate within the community when growth merits such a move.

### **Business Retention**

The key to a successfully business retention strategy is building trust between business owners and local officials. Communities must identify the specific gaps and niches their economies can fill, and promote a diversified range of specialized industry clusters drawing on local advantages to serve local, regional, and international markets. Local government, business groups, educators, and the public must work together to create a vibrant local economy, through a long-term investment strategy that:<sup>3</sup>

- Encourages local enterprise.
- Serves the needs of residents, workers, and businesses.
- Promotes stable employment and revenues by building on local competitive advantages.
- Protects the natural environment.
- Increases social equity.
- Is capable of succeeding in the local, regional, and global marketplace.

Local businesses provide employment for a wide array of supporting services. They hire architects, designers, cabinet shops, sign makers, and contractors for construction. Opportunities grow for local accountants, insurance brokers, computer consultants, advertising agencies, etc. Local retailers and distributors are more likely to carry locally made goods, thereby creating additional jobs for local producers. Some of the ways in which the Town of Oconto Falls can achieve high rates of business retention include:

- Develop a Town website and utilize it (and social media tools) to promote local businesses.
- Assist businesses that have outgrown current facilities or sites with identifying new locations within the community.

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpted from Ahwahnee Principles for Economic Development, Economic Development for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2015.

- Supporting local business associations.
- Providing clearly understandable processes for construction and economic development within local ordinances.

### Social Media

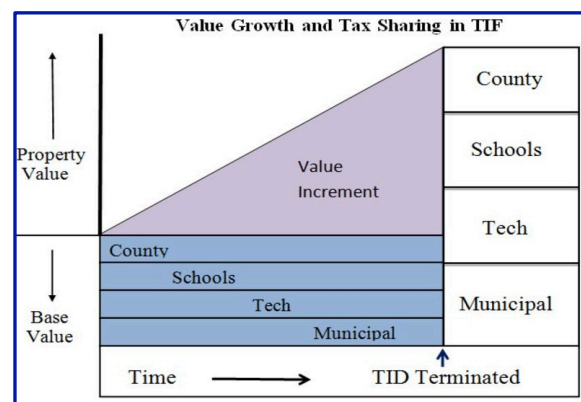
Americans of all ages and backgrounds are increasing their use of social media tools as a way to connect to each other and the issues they care about. Local governments can use these same tools to promote the community and inform residents and business owners. Although benefit can be gained by using social media to augment traditional communication methods, it presents both opportunity and risk to municipal government. Prior to implementing a social media strategy it is important to develop an agreed-upon policy for its use.

Some of the ways in which local governments utilize social media include:<sup>4</sup>

- **Economic Development** – Many companies use social media to scope out communities as they look to build or relocate their business. Economic developers use social media to attract those businesses to the area and build relationships with current ones. This is arguably the most important reason for local government to maintain an active social media presence.
- **Community Building** – Building a sense of community pride by recognizing local business, sharing photos and stories about the community, and marketing local events.
- **Public Service Announcements** – Emergency alerts and severe weather updates, general health and safety tips, road construction schedules, and other important local information.
- **Governmental Meetings** – Posting schedules, agendas, and meeting minutes.

### Tax Increment Financing<sup>5</sup>

Tax Increment Financing is an economic development tool that allows municipalities to invest in infrastructure and other improvements intended to facilitate private development. When a Tax Increment District (TID) is created, it establishes the current (or base) value of the taxable property within its boundaries. The base value represents pre-TID tax rates and is reflected by the blue rows in the chart at right. Once the TID is underway, taxes collected from the base value are allocated to the local government, county, schools, and technical colleges (taxing jurisdictions) as they were prior to the TID's creation.



Courtesy Wisconsin Department of Revenue

<sup>4</sup> Excerpted from 10 Ways Local Government Can Use Social Media, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpted from Tax Increment Financing Manual, Wisconsin Department of Revenue, July 2014.

## CHAPTER 7: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Over the life of the TID, the taxing jurisdictions collect taxes from the property in the TID base. Meanwhile, new construction and investment increases the value of the property within the TID. All of the taxes collected on the growth in value of the property (the value increment in purple on the chart) are turned over to the municipality as tax increment revenue. The municipality then uses this additional revenue stream to pay off bonds used to develop the infrastructure and improvements made to the property as part of the approved project plan.

At the end of the maximum life period, or as soon as tax increments are collected in excess of total approved project costs, the TID must be terminated. The entire value of the property is returned to the tax rolls of the overlying taxing jurisdictions (the column at right in the chart). This represents the additional property value subject to taxes. While the TID exists, the tax collections for each overlying jurisdiction are limited to the base value of the TID parcels. After termination, the overlying taxing jurisdictions share in a much larger tax base. Partnering to facilitate development spreads the risk of development and increases the tax base for each of the jurisdictions.

Since 2004, Towns in Wisconsin have been able to utilize tax increment financing for a specific set of agricultural, forest, manufacturing, and tourism activities. These include:

- Agricultural projects – Crop production, animal production, support activities for agriculture and forestry, support activities for animal production, and refrigerated farm product warehousing and storage.
- Manufacturing projects – Animal slaughtering and processing, wood product manufacturing, paper manufacturing, and ethyl alcohol manufacturing.
- Forestry projects – Forestry and logging, and support activities for forestry.
- Tourism projects – Recreational and vacation camps (except campgrounds), RV parks and campgrounds, racetracks, dairy product stores, public golf courses.

### Capital Improvements Plan

The capital improvements plan (CIP) is an effective tool to prepare for and budget the future improvements necessary to stimulate economic development. Please refer to *Chapter 5: Utilities & Community Facilities* for detailed information on the CIP.

### Agri-Tourism

Agri-tourism provides opportunities to increase farm income and diversify the local economy. It is one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry. The Town's farming culture and natural environment create unique opportunities for such development. For more information regarding agri-tourism, please refer to *Chapter 6: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources*.



## **Economic Development Programs**

### **Federal and State Programs**

#### [US Department of Agriculture – Rural Development Grant<sup>6</sup>](#)

The United States Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development Grant (RDG) provides loans, grants and loan guarantees to support essential services such as housing, economic development, health care, first responder services and equipment, and water, electric and communications infrastructure. The RDG promotes economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks, credit unions and community-managed lending pools.

#### [US Environmental Protection Agency – Revolving Loan Fund<sup>7</sup>](#)

The Revolving Loan Fund provides funding for grant recipients to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites. Through these grants, the Environmental Protection Agency seeks to strengthen the marketplace and encourage stakeholders to leverage the resources needed to clean up and redevelop brownfields. When loans are repaid, the loan amount is returned into the fund and re-lent to other borrowers, providing an ongoing source of capital within a community.

#### [Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation<sup>8</sup>](#)

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation’s (WEDC’s) Community Development Investment Grant (CDIG) program helps transform communities by supporting local development unique to Wisconsin’s communities in Wisconsin. The CDIG supports urban, small city and rural community redevelopment efforts by providing financial incentives for shovel-ready projects with emphasis on, but not limited to, downtown community-driven efforts. Grants up to \$50,000 are available for planning efforts, and grants up to \$500,000 are available for implementation projects. The program operates through a competitive process that occurs two to three times per fiscal year. Grant recipients must demonstrate significant, measurable benefits in job opportunities, property values and/or leveraged investment by local and private partners.

### **Regional and County Programs**

#### [NEW North<sup>9</sup>](#)

New North, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, regional marketing and economic development organization fostering collaboration among private and public sector leaders throughout the 18

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<sup>6</sup> Excerpted from United States Department of Agriculture website, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Excerpted from United States Environmental Protection Agency website, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Excerpted from Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation website, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Excerpted from NEW North website, 2015.

## CHAPTER 7: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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counties of Northeast Wisconsin, known as the New North region. New North is a regional partner to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and the State of Wisconsin, as well as local economic development partners, and represents more than 100 private investors. The New North brand unites the region both internally and externally around talent development, brand promotion and business development, signifying the collective economic power behind our 18 counties. The counties include Outagamie, Winnebago, Calumet, Waupaca, Brown, Shawano, Oconto, Marinette, Door, Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Florence, Menominee and Waushara.

The key initiatives of NEW North are to:

- Attract, develop and retain diverse talent.
- Foster targeted industry clusters and new markets.
- Support an entrepreneurial climate and small business.
- Encourage educational attainment.
- Elevate sustainability as an economic driver.
- Promote the regional brand.

### [Bay Lake Regional Planning Association<sup>10</sup>](#)

The Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission annually creates a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report, which evaluates local and regional population and economic activity. The purpose of the CEDS is to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy and to qualify the region for additional EDA assistance. A section within the CEDS identifies other economic development initiatives at the state, regional, sub-regional, and local levels. The CEDS analyzes local and regional economies and serves as a guide for promoting regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources.

### [Oconto County Economic Development Corporation<sup>11</sup>](#)

The Oconto County Economic Development Corporation (OCEDC) is charged with fostering economic development in Oconto County. It does so in a number of ways including working with prospects and leads, providing data and information on the County, compiling available buildings and sites information, and working with new business start ups. OCEDC's major economic development tool is the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). The RLF is an Oconto County financing program to provide loans to businesses expanding or locating to Oconto County. The Fund was created to enable businesses to grow, create jobs, and improve the local economy. Any type of business located in, or relocating to Oconto County is eligible. Applicants must demonstrate that loan funds will create or retain jobs in the County. Loan amounts are subject to the availability of program funds; with a minimum loan of \$20,000 and maximum loan of \$200,000.

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<sup>10</sup> Excerpted from Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission website, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Excerpted from Oconto County Economic Development Corporation website, 2015.

## **Economic Development Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

The goals, objectives, and policies related to economic development are presented in Chapter 10: Implementation.

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## **Introduction**

Land use is the defining element of the comprehensive plan. It will serve as a framework for decision makers, guiding future growth and development in the Town of Oconto Falls. This chapter describes existing land use patterns in the Town and sets forth a plan for future land use consistent with the community's



visions. It will guide the Town Board, Plan Commission, property owners, developers, and others in decisions regarding the category, location, and density of future development.

The land use chapter is divided into two parts. *Section I: Current Land Use* focuses on existing land uses. It provides an inventory of current land uses, identifies land use trends, and describes the tools currently used to guide development. *Section II: Future Land Use* comprises the 20-year land use plan for the Town of Oconto Falls and presents the tools that may be useful in implementing the plan.

Implementation of the comprehensive plan will result from the incremental decisions made by elected and appointed officials during the review and approval of zoning changes, certified survey maps, subdivision plats, site plans, and the like. Through these decisions, the Town may realize its goals as they relate to the physical growth and development of the community. Successful implementation will require a sustained effort by the public and private sectors to utilize this chapter, and the Future Land Use map contained within it, as *the essential decision-making guide* for land use in the Town of Oconto Falls.

## **Land Use Vision**

*The Town of Oconto Falls will strive to preserve the places and land uses most important to our community while allowing for well-planned residential and commercial development designed in harmony with the natural landscape so as to ensure a safe, beautiful, and thriving community for future generations.*

### **Section I: Current Land Use**

The purpose of the current land use section of the chapter is to describe the existing land base of the community (i.e., residential, commercial, agricultural, open space, etc.). It also includes an inventory of the ordinances policies, and other land use tools utilized to guide development.



## CHAPTER 8: LAND USE

### Current Land Use Inventory

The inventory of current land uses presented in Table 8.1 is based upon the Current Land Use map appearing on page 8-3. The map was developed using available GIS/mapping data provided by Oconto County, Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission, and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, among others. The purpose of the map is to provide a reasonably accurate ‘snap shot’ of the community, as it exists today, and to serve as a foundation for the Future Land Use map appearing on page 8-10.

Table 8.1: Current land Uses in the Town of Oconto Falls, 2015		
Land Use	Total Acreage	Percent of Total Acreage
Agricultural	11,430.80	54.67%
Commercial	19.56	0.09%
Communications & Utilities	17.63	0.08%
Governmental & Institutional	2.67	0.01%
Industrial	94.38	0.45%
Mobile Homes	28.40	0.14%
Open Space & Fallow Fields	42.07	0.20%
Parks & Recreation	348.17	1.67%
Residential	889.69	4.26%
Roads	171.76	0.82%
Transportation	0.01	0.00%
Woodlands & Natural Areas	7,864.03	37.61%
Total	20,909.17	100%
Source: Town of Oconto Falls Current Land Use map, 2015.		

### Residential & Population Density

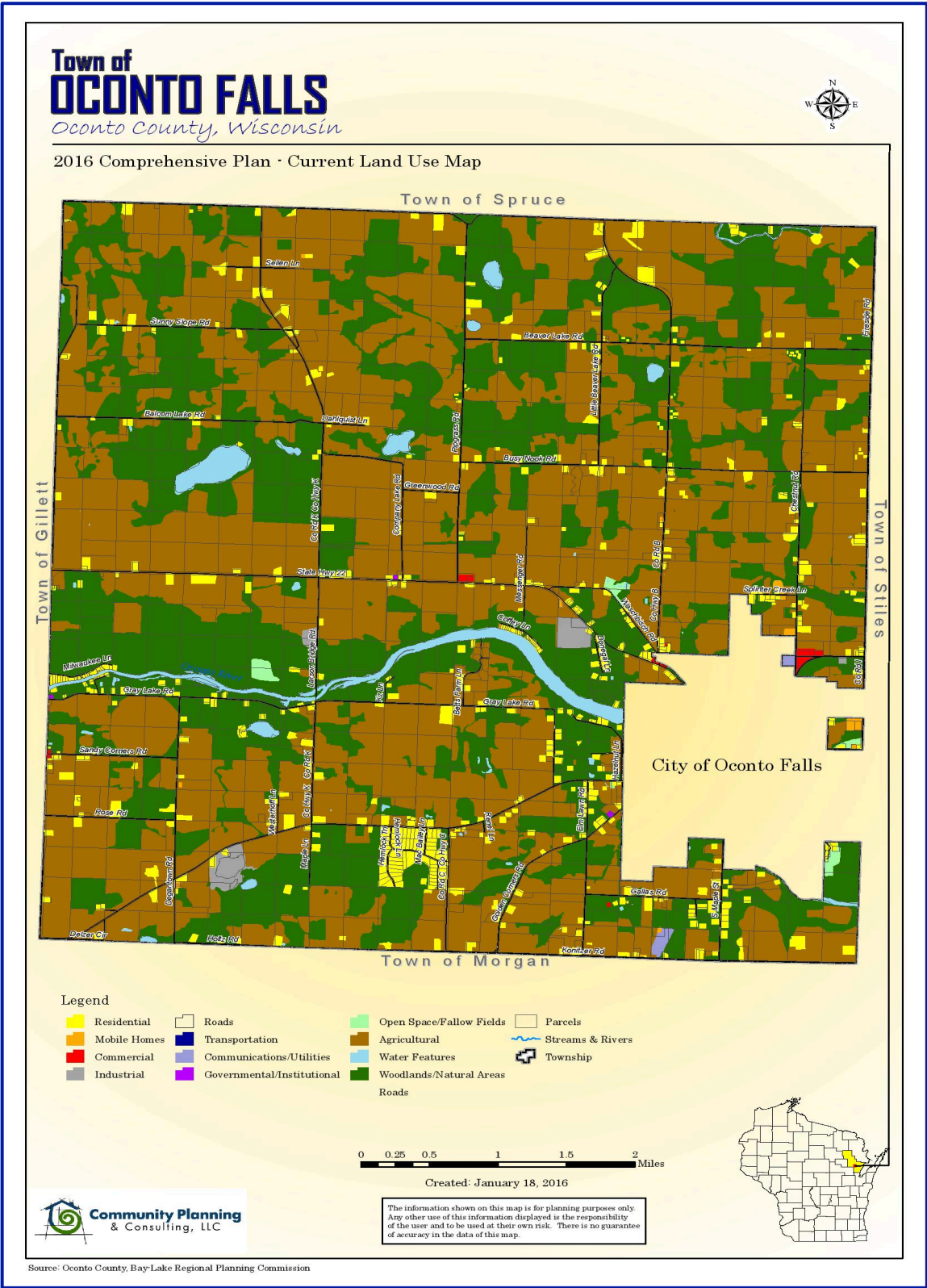
With a total of 488 housing units on 32.76 square miles of land, the net residential density in the town is roughly 15 units per square mile. The population density is 39 persons per square mile based upon an estimated 2015 population of 1,275 people.

### Land Use Trends & Supply

The Town’s land base is comprised primarily of agricultural lands, woodlands, the Oconto River valley, and sparsely scattered single-family housing. Due to the preponderance of wetland and floodplains, the vast majority of future development will occur on lands currently classified as Agricultural or Woodlands / Open Space. The available supply of developable land is sufficient to meet future land use goals.

### Current Land Use Regulations

A variety of mechanisms are currently utilized in the Town to guide development and resource preservation, including zoning and subdivision ordinances. Additional tools that may be adopted are presented later in this chapter.



## CHAPTER 8: LAND USE

### Zoning Regulations

The purpose of a zoning ordinance is to identify the permitted and conditional uses allowed on parcel of land within designated zoning districts. Zoning ordinances may also regulate lot size, road frontage, density, and the location, height, and size of structures, among others. Oconto County administers and enforces zoning regulations with the Town of Oconto Falls.

Oconto County utilizes a conventional (or Euclidean) zoning regime that is based upon the designation of zoning districts within which permitted and conditional uses are permissible. Alternative zoning models are presented later in this chapter. Table 7.2 lists the zoning districts within the Town and provides a brief description of district regulations.

<b>Table 8.2: Zoning Districts and District Regulations in the Town of Oconto Falls</b>			
<b>District</b>	<b>Permitted Uses</b>	<b>Conditional Uses</b>	<b>Minimum Lot Size</b>
A Agricultural	Multiple (consult ordinance).	Multiple (consult ordinance).	10 acres.
F Forest	Agricultural production (crops, livestock, or both); forestry, forestry services, logging, portable sawmills, and portable planing mills; hunting, trapping, and game production; municipal parks; single-family; manufactured home; mobile home; firewood processing facility (less than 20 cord per year).	Community buildings; community garages and storage facilities; kennels; landfills; permanent sawmills; shooting ranges; utility towers; firearms sales and/or service; firewood processing facility (20 or more cord per year); private parks.	10 acres
GC General Commercial	Multiple (consult ordinance).	Multiple (consult ordinance).	Determined by Zoning Administrator based upon site plan.
I Industrial	Multiple (consult ordinance).	Multiple (consult ordinance).	Determined by Zoning Administrator based upon site plan.
RR Rural Residential	Agricultural production (crops, livestock, or both); temporary auctions; manufactured homes; single-family homes; animal shelters, barns, and sheds; accessory structures; utilities.	Addition, expansions of, or conditional operations of pre-existing uses; Conditional uses in A and F districts; mobile home; two-family home; bed & breakfast establishments; daycare centers, more than 8 children; utility towers; conditional uses in R-1 district; firework sales; firearm sales and/or service.	2 acres
R-1 Residential Single-Family	Cemeteries; churches; community buildings; municipal parks; manufactured home; single-family; schools.	Bed & breakfast establishments; duplexes; daycare centers, more than 8 children; utility towers; firework sales; firearm sales and/or service; private parks.	Sewered: 10,000 sq ft Unsewered: 20,000 sq ft
Note: The permitted uses, conditional uses, and minimum lot sizes listed in this table are for planning purposes only. This table contains only those Oconto County zoning classifications that exist within the Town of Oconto Falls. Landowners should consult the Oconto County Zoning Ordinance for formal requirements and specific regulations related to each district.			
Source: Oconto County Zoning Ordinance.			

Oconto County also administers Floodplain and Nonmetallic Mining ordinances within the Town.

## **Land Division & Subdivision Regulations**

Unlike zoning, which regulates the use of land, subdivision regulations govern the manner in which land transitions from one use to another (typically from agricultural or open space to residential). A subdivision ordinance provides the procedures and standards for dividing a large parcel into smaller parcels for sale or development. Subdivision regulations require that developers meet certain conditions in order to record a certified survey map or plat. As with zoning, subdivision regulations are an effective tool through which local government can implement a comprehensive plan. The Town of Oconto Falls administers and enforces its own subdivision ordinance; though it does so in consultation with Oconto County.

## **Section II: Future Land Use**

This section of the chapter will serve as the primary guidance tool for the Town in implementing the plan. Like a blueprint for a building renovation, the comprehensive plan serves as a guide to construct, or design, the future Town of Oconto Falls. The section is segmented into two broad focus areas:

- Community Design Considerations. The underlying issues guiding future development in the community. Presented and discussed in earlier chapters, these are the primary areas of focus for the comprehensive plan.
- Community Design Approaches. The broad strategies and specific policies (including ordinances) used to guide future development in the Town and to address community design considerations.

## **Community Design Considerations**

Community design is an important component of planning and plays a significant role in determining quality of life in and preserving the character of a community. Elements of community design may include the culture and history of a community along with architectural standards, open space and natural resource protection, transportation and access, and recreation, among others. Ordinances provide the primary means by which local governments implement community design requirements.

## **Property Rights**

The issue of private property rights versus community need underlies every comprehensive planning effort. Property rights are ingrained in American jurisprudence. Those rights have been respected, to the greatest extent feasible, throughout the planning effort. This chapter describes and illustrates proposed development patterns for the Town of Oconto Falls. It will be used by local officials, landowners, developers, and others to make informed land use and development decisions. Should a landowner disagree with the Future Land Use map, or any other aspect of this plan, he/she has the right to petition the Town for an amendment to the

## CHAPTER 8: LAND USE

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document. All amendments will occur through a public process, defined by state law, and will include a public hearing. The process of amending the comprehensive plan is described in *Chapter 10: Implementation*.

### Community Character

Character is defined differently for each community but includes a blend of natural, built, visual, and cultural characteristics. It represents the sum of the attributes and assets that make a community unique, and that establish a sense of place for its residents. In the Town of Oconto Falls, community character means:

- An economically viable agricultural sector for the long-term.
- Scattered single-family residential development.
- Preserved forests and open space.
- High-quality surface waters and preserved riparian corridors.
- A healthy and sustainable landscape.
- A safe and friendly community.

### Community Design Approaches

Community design approaches represent the guiding principles of the comprehensive plan and are integral to the desired future for Oconto Falls. Their incorporation into the application review and approval process will ensure that new development blends harmoniously with the existing built and natural environment, while providing for land use patterns that promote a high quality of living.

### Conservation Design

The landscape of the Town offers an array of natural features that defines its character. Preserving rural character is a primary goal of the comprehensive plan. To accommodate future growth while maintaining the integrity of the natural environment, the Town of Oconto Falls will encourage *conservation design* approaches to new development. Conservation design will allow the community to:

- Protect rural character by maintaining (and restoring) natural areas, woodlands, scenic views, open undeveloped areas and farm fields, while addressing desired residential and commercial development needs.
- Lower the cost of development by reducing the amount of impervious surface, minimizing stormwater management expenditures, shortening permit review times, and addressing the desire for community parks and open space.
- Create natural corridors of green space between developments that can be utilized by wildlife and have the potential to be used as trail or walkway areas to improve connections between development nodes.



- Preserve agricultural lands to ensure that they remain an economically viable component of the landscape.
- The principles of conservation design can be applied to rural and urbanized environments and may be incorporated into residential, commercial, and industrial, development as well as parks and municipal properties.

## Future Land Use Map

The future land use map is the visual representation of the visions, goals, objectives, and policies presented in the comprehensive plan. It is the principal tool used by the Town to guide development. As per Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law, decisions related to development and governed by the zoning and subdivision ordinances must be made in a manner "consistent" with the map.

## Relationship to Zoning Map

The future land use map is not a zoning map. It is a compilation of the elements comprising the earlier chapters of the comprehensive plan including agricultural and natural resources, economic development, housing, and transportation. It reflects the desired 20-year future for the Town. Table 8.3 presents information differentiating the future land use and zoning maps.

<b>Table 8.3: Comparison of Future Land Use Map and Zoning Map</b>		
	<b>Future Land Use Map</b>	<b>Zoning Map</b>
Comprehensive Plan Requirement	Yes	No
Wisconsin Statutes (chapters, sections)	66.1001(2)(h)	59.69(5); 60.61(4); 62.23(7)
Local Government Adopts	By ordinance as part of comprehensive plan	By ordinance as part of zoning ordinance
Parcel-based	No	No
Displays	General land use categories	Zoning districts
Use	Visual guide for the community	Designate height, bulk, and use of land
Source: University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point Center for Land Use Education, 2004		

## How will the Future Land Use Map be Used?

The future land use map will guide the Town Board and Commission during the review of requested zoning changes, land division and subdivision applications, and other local land-use decisions in accordance with the Planning Law. Landowners and developers will consult the plan when making development decisions, and should be confident that an application for development that is consistent with the comprehensive plan will be approved. It is important to note that a plan is not a static document. It must evolve to reflect current conditions. If not regularly reviewed and amended, it will become less effective over time. Applications for rezoning and development that are inconsistent with the plan must be given due consideration, not rejected out of hand. In some situations, it may be desirable to amend the plan (and maps) to accommodate a compatible, but previously unplanned use. Likewise, a change in county or

## CHAPTER 8: LAND USE

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regional policy, technological advances, the economy, or the natural environment may affect the plan.

Changes to the plan (including plan maps) must be considered in the context of all nine required plan elements, and reflect the visions, goals, objectives, and policies expressed within the document. If an amendment is to be approved, the process must include a formal public hearing and distribution per the requirements of the Planning Law (see *Chapter 10: Implementation* for amendment process). Amendments must be reviewed by the Plan Commission and approved by the Town Board before the plan may be revised.

### Description of Future Land Uses

This section provides a brief description of the proposed land uses presented on the future land use map. Table 8.4 presents land use projections for the Town of Oconto Falls through the year 2035.

#### Alternative Residential

Areas well suited to alternative residential living options. Such housing may include: senior living, small unit multi-family (duplexes, quadplexes), live-work units, etc.

#### Community Park / Preserved Open Space

Community parks are generally five or more acres in size and are intended to serve the recreational needs of the greater community. They may be active, passive, or a combination thereof. Amenities within an active park may include athletic fields, play equipment, tennis courts, basketball courts, band shells, pavilions, restrooms, and the like. Passive parks provide opportunities for rest and reflection and interaction with nature. They may include nature trails, hiking and skiing trails, and picnic areas, and tend to include restorative and educational elements such as prairie restoration and reforestation.

#### Gateway Features

Gateway features are intended to inform visitors that they have entered the Town of Oconto Falls. Main entry points (STH 22 and STH 32) will utilize larger features, with smaller versions associated with County highways and appropriate Town roads. The most important element of a gateway system is consistency in design, materials, and landscaping.

#### Limited Access Corridor

STH 22 and STH 32 have been designated as a limited access corridor by the WDOT. As a result, development along these corridors should utilize side streets and crossroads for access as opposed to providing additional driveways directly onto the state highway.

### Mixed Commercial / Industrial

Areas identified as suitable for a mixture of compatible commercial and industrial land uses on shared or adjoining parcels. The Town will look to utilize the Light Industrial (LI) and multiple commercial districts in the county zoning ordinance within these mixed commercial/industrial areas.

### Riparian Corridor

The boundaries of the proposed riparian corridor would extend 100' from the high-water mark on each side of the selected stream segments (encompassing County shoreland setbacks). The purposes of the parkways will be to provide vegetated buffers between streams and adjacent land uses so as to improve water quality, preserve wildlife habitat, and mitigate flooding. Riparian corridors would not be imposed upon existing land uses, but implemented upon review of applications for rezones and land divisions.

### Transitional Residential

The purpose of the Transitional Residential (TR) is to create an intermediary buffer between the more densely developed areas in the southeast corner of the Town and the less densely developed agricultural areas throughout the remainder of the community. The TR allows for market-based residential development consistent with the goal of preserving rural character and functional open space. All minor land divisions (through certified survey maps) and subdivision plats within the TR would follow the principals of conservation design. The TR land use category may be implemented utilizing the zoning districts available in the county zoning ordinance. The Town will work with the county to develop other means of implementing the TR land use category as necessary.

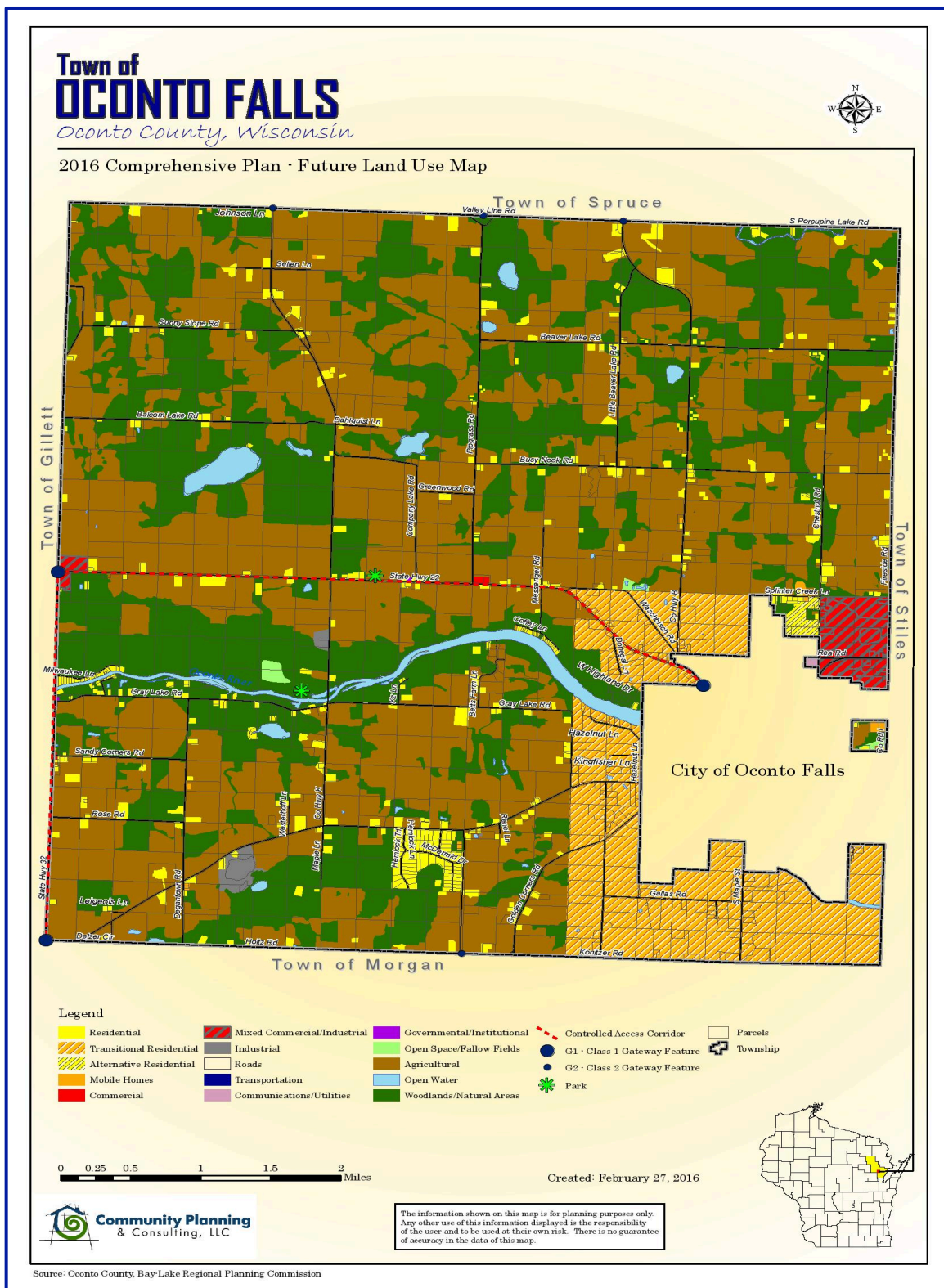
## **2035 Land Use Projections**

<b>Table 8.4: Land Use Projections for the Town of Oconto Falls, 2015-2035</b>					
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Acreage by Year</b>				
	<b>Current</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>	<b>2035</b>
Agricultural	11,431	11,179	10,927	10,676	10,426
Commercial	20	16	13	9	5
Industrial	94	85	76	66	57
Mixed Commercial / Industrial	0	61	122	183	244
Residential (all categories)	918	1,356	1,794	2,232	2,670
Source: Town of Oconto Falls Future Land Use Map.					

## **Land Use Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

The goals, objectives, and policies related to land use are presented in Chapter 10: Implementation.

## CHAPTER 8: LAND USE



## Introduction

Intergovernmental cooperation may be defined as any arrangement through which two or more municipalities communicate visions and coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can include the sharing of information, facilities, and equipment or involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements.<sup>1</sup>



The purpose of the intergovernmental cooperation chapter of the comprehensive plan is to describe current intergovernmental agreements, explore opportunities for future collaboration, and identify potential areas of conflict between the Town and its governmental neighbors.

## Intergovernmental Vision

*The Town of Oconto Falls will continue to work with its municipal neighbors, Oconto County, and the State of Wisconsin to pursue opportunities for cooperation and collaboration that lead to improved services and reduced costs for its residents, land owners, and business owners.*

## Adjacent Municipalities

The Town of Oconto Falls is located in southern Oconto County in northeast Wisconsin and shares boundaries with the following municipalities:

- City of Oconto Falls
- Towns of Gillett, Morgan, Spruce, and Stiles.

The Town maintains a positive working relationship, and shares services, with each of its municipal neighbors.

## Oconto County

Oconto County provides a number of services to its municipalities including:

- Farmland preservation planning and technical assistance.
- Highway maintenance and improvement programs.
- Library funding and support.
- Senior and social services.
- Veterans' services.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from Guide to Preparing the Intergovernmental Element of a Comprehensive Plan, Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2002.



## **CHAPTER 9: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION**

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The Oconto County Planning & Zoning Department is responsible for administering and enforcing zoning and shoreland zoning within the Town of Oconto Falls. The Department also works with the Oconto County Land Conservation Department to administer Wisconsin's Farmland Preservation Program (chapter 91, Wis. Stats.).

### **School Districts**

Residents of the Town of Oconto Falls are served by the Oconto Falls and Gillett School Districts. The Town has a positive relationship with the school districts and will advise them of future large-scale residential development projects so that they may better prepare for potential increases in student enrollment.

### **Quasi-governmental Organizations**

The Town is also a member of the Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission, a multi-service planning organization established under Chapter 66.0309, Wis. Stats. It has benefited from cooperation with BLRPC in the past and will continue to utilize the services provided by the organization when appropriate

## **Intergovernmental Cooperation - Benefits & Challenges**

### **Benefits**

Intergovernmental cooperation between and among cities, villages, towns, and counties often produces less expensive and more efficient governmental services. Mergers of similar services can provide substantial cost savings when administrative and equipment duplication is reduced. Significant savings may be realized when local governments combine purchasing, planning, and contracted service delivery processes.

Cooperation during comprehensive planning efforts may be the most effective way to collaborate with neighboring communities. It provides opportunities to collectively identify issues, brainstorm ideas, and reach consensus. It also offers an occasion to address critical issues before decisions have been made and before development activities occur that may limit future solutions. Cooperating with planning provides opportunities for jurisdictions to be proactive rather than reactive.

Opportunities for collaboration in planning and the sharing of facilities and services between municipal governments include, among others:

- Water and wastewater treatment facilities.
- Public safety, including police, fire, and rescue.
- Joint economic development efforts.
- Libraries and parks & recreation.
- Solid Waste & Recycling.
- Group purchasing (health insurance, retirements, investments, etc.).
- Partnerships in pursuit of state and federal funding.

- Sharing of municipal vehicles and equipment (snow plows, mowers, dump trucks, etc.).
- Sharing of staff.

## **Challenges**

There are often strong desires on the part of elected officials and residents to maintain the independence of existing jurisdictions. Efforts to increase cooperation and collaboration must deal with existing organizational missions and structures that support the independence of each community. The issues to be addressed when entering into multi-jurisdictional partnerships include:

- Desire for community autonomy.
- Questions regarding the allocation of costs.
- Fear of loss of service quality.
- Creating trust and an effective implementation mechanism.

## **Intergovernmental Notices**

At the onset of the process to update the Town of Oconto Falls comprehensive plan, intergovernmental notices were mailed to the municipalities and organizations listed below. The purpose of the notices was to inform intergovernmental partners of the planning effort and to invite comment on draft plan chapters. A second mailing was sent prior to the Public Hearing to solicit testimony related to the recommended plan.

- Oconto County Planning & Zoning Department.
- City of Oconto Falls.
- Towns of Abrams, Gillett, Lena, Maple Valley, Morgan, Spruce, and Stiles
- Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission.
- Gillett and Oconto Falls School Districts.
- Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources and Transportation.

## **Current Intergovernmental Agreements**

As of January 2016, the Town of Oconto Falls is party to the following intergovernmental agreements:

- Municipal Intergovernmental Functional Collaboration Agreement.
- MABS-Division 137 Mutual Aid Agreement.
- Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Working Still Mutual Aid for Fire, Rescue, and/or Emergency Medical Services.
- Intergovernmental agreement for Town to use Oconto County Recycling Center in City of Oconto Falls.

## **CHAPTER 9: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION**

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### **Intergovernmental Programs**

The following organizations provide intergovernmental assistance to local government:

#### **Wisconsin Department of Administration<sup>2</sup>**

The Wisconsin Department of Administration *Division of Intergovernmental Relations* (DIR) provides a broad array of services to the public and state, local and tribal governments. It supports counties, municipalities, citizens, and businesses by providing support services in land use planning, land information and records modernization, municipal boundary review, plat review, demography, and coastal management programs.

#### **League of Wisconsin Municipalities<sup>3</sup>**

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities (LWM) is comprised of 190 cities and 397 villages. LWM provides technical and legal assistance to member governments. It also acts as a representative of the state's incorporated communities before the governor and state legislature.

#### **Wisconsin Towns Association<sup>4</sup>**

The Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA) is a statewide, voluntary, non-profit and non-partisan association of member town and village governments in the State of Wisconsin controlled by its Board of Directors. WTA's twin purposes are to support local control of government and to protect the interest of towns. In furtherance of those goals WTA provides three types of services for its members: legislative lobbying efforts, educational programs, and legal information. As of 2015, WTA's membership consists of 1,257 towns and 20 villages. Its services are made available to every elected or appointed officer of such member governments.

### **Intergovernmental Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

The goals, objectives, and policies related to intergovernmental cooperation are presented in Chapter 10: Implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpted from Wisconsin Department of Administration website, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Excerpted from League of Wisconsin Municipalities website, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Excerpted from Wisconsin Towns Association website, 2016.

## **Introduction**

The implementation chapter is the “how to” portion of the plan. It describes the actions necessary to realize the visions presented in this document through the goals, objectives, and policies associated with each chapter. The information included herein represents the commitments the Town of Oconto Falls has made to achieve its desired future.

## **Responsible Parties**

The responsibility for implementing this plan will primarily lay with the Plan Commission, with the Town Board retaining the authority to approve recommended implementation actions. All Town Board and Plan Commission decisions pertaining to land use and development will be made in accordance with this document. The individuals and groups responsible for each action item are listed within the tables that follow.

## **Measuring Progress**

Milestone dates are provided for each policy task so that the Town may track progress and ensure that the plan is fully implemented. The Town Board and Plan Commission reviewed and approved the milestone dates presented in the tables that follow.

## **Review and Update Process**

The comprehensive plan may be revised at any time. However, state statutes require that a comprehensive plan be updated no less than once every ten years. The Town of Oconto Falls will adhere to the following comprehensive plan review timeline:

- Five-year Review – Within five years of plan adoption, the Plan Commission will undertake a thorough review of the document to determine whether revisions are warranted. Any changes to the document trigger the same public participation requirements as adoption of the initial plan including, but not limited to: intergovernmental announcements, public participation plan, and a Class 1 public hearing. The Town Board shall approve the amended plan..
- Ten-year Update – Within ten years of plan adoption, the Planning & Zoning Commission will update the plan as required under Chapter 66.1001(2)(i), Wis. Stats., and consistent with all other requirements of Wisconsin’s Comprehensive Planning Law.

## **Introduction**

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## CHAPTER 10: IMPLEMENTATION

### Petitions for Plan Revision

Any interested party may petition the Plan Commission for a revision to the comprehensive plan. The process for revising the plan would entail:

- Submittal of a request to have a *petition for revision* placed on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Plan Commission.
- Plan Commission review of request and recommendation to the Town Board.
- Town Board approval of opening the comprehensive plan to potential revision.

Once the Town Board approves opening the plan for potential revision, the process must adhere to all plan development and adoption requirements as per Chapter 66.1001, Wis. Stats.

### Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan presents the goals, objectives, and policies for housing; transportation; utilities and community facilities; agricultural, natural, and cultural resources; economic development; land use; and, intergovernmental cooperation.

#### Housing Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Housing Goal #1: Utilize the Future Land Use Map to guide residential development in the Town.			
Policy	Funding	Responsible Party	Milestone Date
<b>Objective: Establish policies to ensure that Town actions related to housing conform to the consistency requirements of Section 66.1001(3) Wis. Stats.</b>			
Review and, if necessary, revise application forms related to the administration of local land use regulations (subdivisions, driveways and culverts, access, etc.) to ensure that proposed actions are consistent with the comprehensive plan.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
Provide each member of the Town Board, Plan Commission, and Building Inspector with a copy of the adopted comprehensive plan.	n/a	Clerk	2016
Ensure that the plan is incorporated into all review and decision processes related to land use.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016

Housing Goal #2: Ensure that the Town possesses the tools necessary to manage and guide residential development.			
Policy	Funding	Responsible Party	Milestone Date
<b>Objective: Work with Oconto County to consider amendments to the zoning ordinance that address the policy directions presented below.</b>			
Ensure that minimum lots sizes in residential zoning districts do not restrict the development of conservation subdivisions	n/a	Plan Commission Oconto County Consultant	2016

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Consider amendments to the zoning ordinance that would allow for smaller single-family structures than would otherwise be permitted.	n/a	Plan Commission Oconto County Consultant	2016
Consider amendments to the zoning ordinance that would allow for secondary suites as conditional uses on residential parcels.	n/a	Plan Commission Oconto County Consultant	2016
<b>Objective: Review land division and subdivision regulations to ensure consistency with adopted plan.</b>			
Consider utilizing density bonuses within the subdivision ordinance to encourage developers to provide the infrastructure necessary to support personal energy systems.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
Consider requiring Traffic Impact Analyses for all proposed subdivisions to ensure that the local road network is adequate to support future residential development.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
<b>Objective: Review existing land use ordinance and application forms for new residential development to ensure a clearly understood process for application, review, and approval.</b>			
Provide clear explanations of the Town's decision processes and expectations to developers, builders, and landowners as they become involved in those processes.	n/a	Plan Commission	Continuous

### **Housing Goal #3: Provide a diverse array of housing options to meet the needs of a growing and evolving demographic base.**

Policy	Funding	Responsible Party	Milestone Date
<b>Objective: Ensure that local land use tools allow for diversity in lot sizes.</b>			
Consider utilizing density bonuses to encourage developers to include a variety of lot sizes in proposed subdivisions.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
Consider amendments to land use ordinances that provide incentives to developers to create affordable housing options for seniors and people with disabilities.	n/a	Plan Commission Oconto County Consultant	2016
Encourage the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design within future subdivisions.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	Continuous

### **Housing Goal #4: Ensure that future residential development occurs in harmony with the natural and cultural landscape of the Town.**

Policy	Funding	Responsible Party	Milestone Date
<b>Objective: Protect valued ecosystems and natural resources during and following the development process.</b>			
Ensure that all relevant permit application forms include confirmation of compliance with county, state, and federal environmental ordinances, regulations, and statutes.	n/a	Plan Commission	2016
Adopt policies to encourage the principles of low impact development during and following residential development to reduce stormwater runoff and flooding.	n/a	Plan Commission	2017
Consider developing a Stormwater Management and Construction Site Erosion Control ordinance.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Consultant	2017

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<b>Objective: Protect locally valued cultural and historic places and structures during and following the development process.</b>			
Include provisions within the subdivision ordinance to ensure that historic and cultural resources, as determined by the Town, are preserved during residential development.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
Encourage developers to incorporate existing farm structures into future residential development projects.	n/a	Plan Commission	Continuous

<b>Housing Goal #5: Preserve the quality of existing housing and maintain housing values over time.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Develop the appropriate land use tools and programs necessary to maintain a desirable housing stock.</b>			
Develop, administer, and enforce the residential codes and ordinances necessary to ensure that properties are well maintained.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Building Inspector	Continuous
Promote inspection, maintenance, and rehabilitation programs that aid homeowners in maintaining current dwellings.	n/a	Town Board	Continuous

### Transportation Goals, Objectives, and Policies

<b>Transportation Goal #1: Develop the Town of Oconto Falls transportation network in accordance with adopted plans, natural resource limitations, economic considerations, physical constraints, and community desires in order to meet local travel needs.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Develop the tools necessary to effectively implement the transportation plan.</b>			
Develop a Capital Improvements Plan to aid in identifying and budgeting for future transportation improvements.	n/a	Town Board Consultant	2018
Use the CIP, PASER ratings, traffic counts, and accident rates to coordinate and plan for annual roadway improvements and maintenance.	n/a	Town Board Clerk	Continuous
Review and, if necessary, update the Driveway Ordinance so that it may aid in implementing the comprehensive plan	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
Adopt an Access Control Ordinance to regulate access to town roads.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
<b>Objective: Coordinate transportation improvements with adjoining municipalities, Oconto County, BLRPC, and WisDOT.</b>			
Provide copies of the Comprehensive Plan and Official Map to Oconto County, BLRPC, and WisDOT.	n/a	Clerk	2016
Encourage Oconto County, BLRPC, and WisDOT to provide regular updates of pending and in-progress transportation projects to the Town Board.	n/a	Town Board	Continuous
<b>Objective: Minimize environmental impacts resulting from future street and road construction.</b>			
Adopt policies to create transportation infrastructure that promotes land use patterns that encourage the sustainable use of resources and reduces demands on the natural environment.	n/a	Town Board	2016-17
Consider requiring Traffic Impact Analyses for all proposed residential subdivisions and commercial/industrial development.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Consultant	2017

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<b>Objective: Maintain the rural character of town roads.</b>			
Work with Oconto County to minimize the visual impact of signage along Town roads and County highways.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission	2017
Identify potential candidates for Rustic Road status.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016-17
Apply with WisDOT for Rustic Road status.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2017

<b>Transportation Goal #2: Keep residents and local business owners informed of pending transportation improvements.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Utilize a variety of tools to inform stakeholders of current transportation issues and pending projects.</b>			
Develop a Town website.	n/a	Clerk Consultant	2016
Consider the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to provide information and solicit feedback related to the transportation network and road projects; develop a social media policy.	n/a	Clerk Town Board Plan Commission	2016
Provide information about pending transportation projects at public meetings, via newsletters, on the Town website, and via social media.	n/a	Clerk	Continuous

<b>Transportation Goal #3: Create a diverse multi-modal transportation system to provide for the efficient, safe, and convenient movement of people, goods, and services.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Create an integrated pedestrian and bicycle system comprised sidewalks, trails, paths, and other facilities to meet both transportation and recreation needs.</b>			
Develop a Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan emphasizing connectivity with key local destination nodes, adjoining municipalities, and regional trail systems.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2017
Incorporate elements of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan into the CIP.	n/a	Town Board Consultant	2018
Pursue grant funding to develop desired trail and bicycle routes.	WisDOT  WDNR	Town Board Oconto County Adjoining Municipalities Consultant	2018
Identify existing and potential barriers to pedestrian mobility, particularly with respect to seniors and people with disabilities; prioritize locations where improvements are necessary.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2017
Encourage or require that residential developers design streets that provide for traffic movement while ensuring a safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle friendly neighborhood environment.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2017
Encourage or require that residential and commercial developers incorporate trails and paths within proposed development projects with links to adjacent trail systems to provide safe and convenient opportunities to walk and bike and to ensure the creation of a network of pedestrian and bicycle trails and paths throughout the Town.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2017

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Work with WisDOT and Oconto County to ensure that appropriate highways and bridges have adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities when they are constructed or reconstructed.	n/a	Town Board	Continuous
<b>Objective: Encourage the development of infrastructure so support electric vehicles.</b>			
Study opportunities to engage in public/private partnerships to provide EV infrastructure within appropriate areas of the Town.	n/a	Town Board Private Sector	Continuous

<b>Transportation Goal #4: Engage the community in a discussion regarding the future of the Town's road system.</b>			
Policy	Funding	Responsible Party	Milestone Date
<b>Objective: Evaluate the merits of retaining paved town roads versus reverting to gravel roadways.</b>			
Hold a 'community meeting' to discuss issues related to road repair and replacement costs and the reversion to gravel roads as a means of avoiding increased taxes.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Consultant	2016
Contract with a transportation consulting firm to provide a detailed cost/benefit analysis regarding paved versus gravel roads.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission	2017
Meeting with adjoining municipalities and the County to explore alternatives to paved town roads.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission	2017
Explore opportunities to shared purchases of road maintenance equipment with neighboring municipalities.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission	2017

### Utilities & Community Facilities Goals, Objectives, and Policies

<b>Utilities &amp; Community Facilities Goal #1: Utilize the Future Land Use Map to guide the development of municipal infrastructure in the Town.</b>			
Policy	Funding	Responsible Party	Milestone Date
<b>Objective: Establish policies to ensure that Town actions conform to the consistency requirements of Section 66.1001(3) Wis. Stats.</b>			
Review and, if necessary, revise all application forms related to the installation of utilities to ensure that proposed actions are consistent with the comprehensive plan and future land use map.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
Provide each member of the Town Board and Plan Commission with a copy of the adopted comprehensive plan.	n/a	Clerk	2016

<b>Utilities &amp; Community Facilities Goal #2: Provide public utilities and services in a manner that will promote efficient and orderly growth and development.</b>			
Policy	Funding	Responsible Party	Milestone Date
<b>Objective: Promote the availability of state-of-the-art utilities including on-site wastewater treatment, personal energy systems, communications technology, high speed internet, electricity, and natural gas.</b>			
Encourage developers to utilize clustered, alternative wastewater treatment systems for proposed subdivisions.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
Consider develop a Personal Energy Systems Ordinance to regulate the installation and operating of photovoltaic solar, personal wind, geothermal, and other small energy systems.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2017



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Continue to consider opportunities for cooperation and non-duplication of services between the Town and neighboring units of government.	n/a	Town Board	Continuous
Pursue opportunities to expand high-speed internet access throughout the Town.	USDA	Town Board Oconto County	2016-17
<b>Objective: Ensure long range financial planning for anticipated public improvements.</b>			
Develop a Capital Improvements Plan.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Consultant	2017
Identify potential sites for community facilities, such as a municipal buildings, parks, community centers, etc.	n/a	Plan Commission	2017
Pursue grants to fund necessary and desired improvements.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	As needed
<b>Objective: Promote the fair and equitable distribution of benefits and costs for future public utility extensions.</b>			
Consider requiring the completion of Infrastructure Impact Statements for all new commercial and residential development projects.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2017

<b>Utilities &amp; Community Facilities Goal #3: Maintain a high quality of life in the Town.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Provide adequate police and fire protection and emergency services to all areas of the Town.</b>			
Undertake an analysis of police, fire, and EMS response times throughout the Town.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2018-19
Continue to cooperate with other local units of government in providing effective, efficient, law enforcement, fire protection, and EMS services.	n/a	Town Board	Continuous
<b>Objective: Provide sufficient parks and recreational facilities to meet the needs of a growing population.</b>			
Develop a Town of Oconto Falls Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan that satisfies the basic outdoor recreation and open space needs of residents in an economical and environmentally sensitive fashion.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2017
Ensure that all current and future parks and recreational areas provide equal access for all residents.	n/a	Plan Commission	2017
Create a diverse park system comprised of "improved" parks and as well as passive recreational areas.	USDA WDNR	Plan Commission Consultant	Continuous
Promote the preservation of wildlife habitat and the protection of surface waters and wetlands.	USDA WDNR	Town Board Plan Commission	Continuous
Work with Oconto County and neighboring communities to create pedestrian and bicycle connections between local and regional parks, recreational areas, and state trails.	WDNR	Town Board Plan Commission Consultant	Continuous
Pursue grants to fund necessary and desired improvements.	USDA WDNR	Plan Commission Consultant	As needed
<b>Objective: Ensure that the Town Hall can adequately meet the needs of the community into the foreseeable future.</b>			
Undertake a Facilities Needs Assessment of the Town Hall and other municipal buildings.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Clerk Consultant	2019

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### Agricultural, Natural, & Cultural Resource Goals, Objectives, and Policies

<b>Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Goal #1: Utilize the Future Land Use Map to guide the development of municipal infrastructure in the Town.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Preserve the natural resource base, environmentally sensitive areas, and surrounding agricultural lands, which contribute to maintaining the ecological balance, natural beauty, economic wellbeing, and quality of life.</b>			
Utilize the Comprehensive Plan, Subdivision Ordinances, and zoning review to guide development away from significant natural resources and productive agricultural lands.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Consultant	Continuous
Utilize the Comprehensive Plan and Subdivision Ordinance to establish a network of green corridors to provide functional open space, link fragmented habitats, and create wildlife migration routes.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Consultant	Continuous
Assist willing landowners in establishing conservation easements to permanently preserve valuable agricultural lands and natural ecosystems.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission	Continuous
<b>Objective: Maintain a sustainable and economically viable agricultural sector for the long-term.</b>			
Utilize the Future Land Use and Agricultural Soils maps to direct residential and commercial development to those areas least suited for farming.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	Continuous
Work with Oconto County to amend the zoning ordinance to add specialty agricultural practices as permitted or conditional uses within agricultural districts.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016-17
Assist interested farm owners in the creation of a Community Supported Agriculture operation.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Consultant	As needed
<b>Objective: Avoid the spread of terrestrial and aquatic invasive plant species.</b>			
Work with Oconto County to amend the zoning ordinance and to prohibit the use of species identified by WDNR as invasive in residential, commercial, and industrial landscaping.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016-17
Distribute information to landowners related to the identification and removal of harmful invasive species.	n/a	Clerk	Continuous

<b>Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Goal #2: Preserve the water resources of the Town.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Protect and enhance groundwater resources.</b>			
Identify those areas within the Town where susceptibility to groundwater contamination is highest and develop plans to ensure that land use within these areas occurs in a manner consistent with protecting groundwater.	WDNR	Plan Commission Consultant	2018
Encouraging or require the use of alternative wastewater treatment systems for future and commercial residential development.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Consultant	2016 Continuous
Consider incorporating restored prairie and native grasslands on Town-owned land and within future parks to reduce runoff and recharge groundwater systems.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission	Continuous
<b>Objective: Reduce the amount of nonpoint resource pollution originating from agricultural operations.</b>			
Work with OCLCD to encourage landowners to establish riparian buffers and incorporate no-till farming practices to reduce soil erosion.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Oconto County	Continuous

<b>Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Goal #3: Preserve the cultural heritage of the Town.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Identify and preserve the cultural and historical resources of Oconto Falls.</b>			
Compile an inventory of historically and culturally significant structures and places within the Town.	n/a	Plan Commission Volunteers Consultant	2017
Incorporate historical preservation procedures into the subdivision ordinance.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
Work with Oconto County to create zoning overlays as a tool to protect important historical and cultural buildings and sites.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant Oconto County	2017

### Economic Development Goals, Objectives, and Policies

<b>Economic Development Goal #1: Retain, Expand, and Diversify the Local Economic Base.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Ensure that the Town is welcoming and helpful to businesses seeking to start, expand, or locate in Oconto Falls.</b>			
Work with County to streamline the zoning review and approval process for commercial development without sacrificing core principles of the Town.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	Continuous
Ensure that adequate infrastructure is available to support desired economic development.	USDA WEDC	Town Board Plan Commission	Continuous
Work with Oconto County to ensure that the zoning ordinance supports home-based businesses.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	Continuous
Connect existing employers with federal, state, and local incentive programs.	n/a	Town Board Clerk	Continuous
Provide assistance to businesses interested in expanding or relocating within the Town, including information related to county, state, and federal funding and grant opportunities.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission Clerk	Continuous
Encourage the development of a Town of Oconto Falls Business Association.	n/a	Town Board	Continuous
<b>Objective: Develop the tools necessary to achieve economic development goals.</b>			
Develop a Town website and utilize social media to promote the community.	n/a	Plan Commission Clerk Consultant	2016
Feature a 'Business of the Week' on the Town website and social media.	n/a	Clerk	Continuous

<b>Economic Development Goal #2: Support Collaborative Efforts that Further the Growth of the Regional Economy.</b>			
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
<b>Objective: Work cooperatively with neighboring municipalities, Oconto County, and other organizations to enhance the economy of northeast Wisconsin.</b>			
Develop partnerships and strategies with other communities, educational and healthcare institutions, utilities, and other organizations to promote local businesses and industries and to develop industry clusters.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission	Continuous
Coordinate local economic development efforts with OCEDC, NEW North,	n/a	Town Board	Continuous

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and other organizations as appropriate.		Plan Commission	
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### Land Use Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Land Use Goal #1: Utilize the Appropriate Land Use Tools to Implement the Comprehensive Plan.			
Policy	Funding	Responsible Party	Milestone Date
<b>Objective: Amend current land use ordinances to achieve the goals identified in the Land Use chapter.</b>			
Work with Oconto County to amend the zoning ordinance as necessary to allow for the land use proposed on the future land use map and meet the consistency requirements of Chapter 66.1001(3)(k). Such amendments will include, but not necessarily be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating avenues for implementing the Transitional Residential land use category.</li> <li>- Creating the flexibility within the ordinance, potentially via a zoning overlay, to accommodate the Alternative residential land use category.</li> <li>- Consider amendments allowing for smaller single-family homes.</li> <li>- Codify the Riparian Corridor within the zoning ordinance.</li> <li>- Allow Gateway features as a permitted use within relevant zoning districts.</li> </ul>	n/a	Plan Commission Oconto County Consultant	2016
Review and, if necessary, amend subdivision ordinance to guide the desired development patterns identified on the future land use map.	n/a	Plan Commission Consultant	2016
<b>Objective: Adopt new land use ordinance and plans to achieve land use goals.</b>			
Develop a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan incorporating the community park and preserved open space features presented on the future land use map.		Plan Commission Consultant	2017
Develop a Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan to incorporate the bicycle and pedestrian facilities identified on the future land use map.		Plan Commission Consultant	2017-18
Pursue grant funding to implement parks & recreation and bicycle & pedestrian goals.		Plan Commission Consultant	2018
Develop and implement a Gateway Features plan.		Plan Commission Consultant	2017-18

### Intergovernmental Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Intergovernmental Goal #1: Continue to pursue opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation with neighboring communities, Oconto County, the school districts, BLRPC, WDNR, and WisDOT.			
Policy	Funding	Responsible Party	Milestone Date
<b>Objective: Explore opportunities to coordinate local land use planning.</b>			
Provide copies of the adopted Comprehensive Plan to all intergovernmental partners.	n/a	Clerk Consultant	2016
Provide notification of any future changes to the comprehensive plan or future land use map to adjoining municipalities.	n/a	Plan Commission	Continuous
Notify the school districts of pending residential development projects within their respective boundaries.	n/a	Clerk	Continuous

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<b>Objective: Increase governmental efficiency and reduce costs for taxpayers.</b>			
Identify opportunities for sharing services, facilities, equipment, and staff with neighboring governments.	n/a	Town Board Plan Commission	Continuous



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