Lincoln County, Wisconsin
Comprehensive Plan
2012-2021

Effective January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2021

Completed December, 2011

Lincoln County Board of Supervisors

Robert Lussow, Chairperson

Daniel Caylor, Vice Chairperson

James Alber	Ronald Mittelsteadt
John Bailey	Donald Nelson
Richard Berndt	Ramona Pampuch
Ray Bloomer	Graham Rankin
David Fox	Greta Rusch
Bruce Giese	Frank Saal
Ronald Krueger	E. Richard Simon
Robert Lee	Robert Weaver
Michael Loka	Patricia (Patsy) Woller
Arlene Meyer	William Zeitz

Prepared under the direction of the

Lincoln County Planning & Zoning Committee

Frank Saal – Chair

Ronald Mittelsteadt – Vice Chair

Greta Rusch - Secretary

Arlene Meyer

Donald Nelson

Prepared by the

Lincoln County Land Services Department

Diane Hanson, Land Services Director

Primary Author

Art Lersch

Community Resource Development Educator

University of Wisconsin – Extension

Lincoln County

Acknowledgements

The Lincoln County Planning & Zoning Department appreciates the involvement of various community stakeholders in the creation of new Transportation, Housing, Agricultural and Natural Resources, and Economic Development plans for the county. The names and organizations of those persons participating in the planning processes are included in the appropriate section of this comprehensive plan.

Also appreciated was the involvement of the Lincoln County Land Services Group consisting of:

- Diane Hanson, Land Services Department Head
- Randy Scholz, Lincoln County Administrative Coordinator
- Kevin Kleinschmidt, Forestry, Land & Parks
- Dan Miller, Solid Waste/Landfill
- Sheila Pudelko, Lincoln County Clerk
- Frank Saal, County Board Supervisor
- Ron Mittelsteadt, County Board Supervisor
- Brian Sladek, Emergency Management
- Nancy Bergstrom, Corporation Council
- Tim Tarras, Lincoln County Land Information & Conservation Department
- Audrey Jensen, Lincoln County Land Information & Conservation Department
- Thomas Cadwallader, University of Wisconsin – Extension, Lincoln County
- Art Lersch, University of Wisconsin – Extension, Lincoln County

Placeholder for
County Board Resolution

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 10

JURISDICTIONAL FRAMEWORK 12

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNTIES 17

PRIMARY FOCUS ELEMENTS 36
- TRANSPORTATION 37
- HOUSING 59
- AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES 78
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 108

SECONDARY FOCUS ELEMENTS 133
- LAND USE 134
- UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES 172
- INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION 186
- IMPLEMENTATION 189

FIGURES

FIGURE 1 County Historical Population by Decade 17
FIGURE 2 Estimated Town Populations 18
FIGURE 3 Population Projections by Age 19
FIGURE 4 Lincoln County Working Age Population 20
FIGURE 5 Lincoln County Senior Population 21
FIGURE 6 Change in Lincoln County Population/Selected Age Groups 22
FIGURE 7 County and State Per Capita Income Comparisons 23
FIGURE 8 Top Reasons for Choosing to Live in Lincoln County 26
FIGURE 9 Household Ratings of Public Facilities and Services 27
FIGURE 10 Ratings of the County's Efforts to Guide New Development.... 28
FIGURE 11 Importance of Rural Character 31
FIGURE 12 TRANSPORTATION PLAN OUTLINE 48
FIGURE 13 Total Housing Units.... 59
FIGURE 14 Lincoln County Housing Types 60
FIGURE 15 Age of Lincoln County Housing Stock.... 62
FIGURE 16 Lincoln County Home Values 63
FIGURE 17 Home Ownership Rates 64
FIGURE 18 Projected Households (2000-2030) 65
FIGURE 19 Lincoln County Zoning Permit History 66
FIGURE 20 HOUSING PLAN OUTLINE.... 69
FIGURE 21 AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, CULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN OUTLINE.... 94
FIGURE 22 Lincoln County Typical & Current Unemployment....108
FIGURE 23 Lincoln County, WI Employment by Industry Sector (NAICS)....110
FIGURE 24 Lincoln County Food Share Caseload recipients 111
FIGURE 25 Pace of Job Growth in Merrill....112

FIGURE 26 **Employment Opportunities** **113**
FIGURE 27 **Average Annual Wages** **114**
FIGURE 28 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN OUTLINE** **120**

MAPS

Map 1 *Jurisdictional Boundaries (Page 16)*

Map 2 *Lincoln County Road Network & Traffic Counts (Page 38)*

Map 3 *Agricultural Suitability (Page 84)*

Map 4 *Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Page 90)*

Map 5 *Community Facilities & Historic Resources (Page 107)*

Map 6 *Current Land Use (Page 135)*

Map 7 *Existing Parks, Open Spaces & Trails (Page 180)*

Map 8 *Aesthetic Management Zones (Page 182)*

I. INTRODUCTION

Lincoln County is a growing, yet predominantly rural community in northern Wisconsin. The County has experienced accelerated growth in lakefront and recreational home development in recent years as more and more people discover the its abundant natural features and attractive communities. Given its unique natural setting and proximity to major metropolitan areas, the County has potential for significant growth in the future. There is concern in Lincoln County, as well as in communities throughout northern Wisconsin, that unplanned and uncoordinated growth could gradually erode the region's quality of life. In this context, planned development in a timely, orderly, and predictable manner is essential to preserve Lincoln County's natural landscape; provide for phased and efficient county services; avoid land use conflicts; protect the environment; provide diverse housing and employment opportunities; and protect and improve the "northwoods" character of the County.

To help guide its growth, the County is preparing this updated *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan, 2012-2021*. The purposes of the updated Comprehensive Plan are, very generally, to:

- Identify areas appropriate for development and preservation over the next 10 years.
- Recommend types of land use for specific areas in the county, and
- Identify needed community facilities to serve future land uses.

This updated version of the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan is being prepared under the State of Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" legislation adopted in 1999 and contained in §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. This same statute also requires each municipality to update their comprehensive plan every 10 years. Portions of the update were copied verbatim from the original plan. This updated Comprehensive Plan, once passed by the Lincoln County Board, will meet statutory requirements.

Early on in this recent planning process, a committee of Lincoln County department heads and staff coordinating this update decided to focus on providing more detail to four of the nine planning elements that received little attention in the original 2001 comprehensive plan. In 2009-2010, stakeholder groups were established to develop more specific Transportation, Housing, Agriculture/Natural Resources, and Economic Development plan frameworks.

No matter the element being discussed, the groups focused their conversations for the most part on economic development related matters (e.g. What kinds of transportation development strategies will promote responsible and beneficial economic development?) This was not surprising considering that the county at that time like most of the nation was still in the grips of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Each group met on average three times to prepare their plans. They were facilitated by University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County staff. Added to those plans are updated versions of the other comprehensive planning elements required by state statute.

In 2004, the County Board passed an updated version of the Lincoln County Zoning Code based on the 2001 county comprehensive plan. Some of the code's basic tenets are discussed in the updated "Land Use" section of this plan. This section will have to be updated again if/when the 2004 zoning code is simplified, something that was seriously being considered at the end of 2011.

Town plans that were developed in the late 1990's are once again being referenced in this plan and still help form the basis of this updated version. Each chapter of this plan also includes an inventory and analysis of existing conditions. General objectives are also contained within the plan's secondary element chapters.

II. JURISDICTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The actions of other counties, different levels of government, and school districts can have a significant impact on Lincoln County's future. Town, city and school district boundaries within Lincoln County, as well as surrounding school district and county boundaries, are shown in Map 1 on page 16. This section briefly describes government jurisdictions in the Lincoln County area.

Background

While this is a county plan, it can still be used by towns within the county as a framework to help them set new goals/priorities. As much as feasible, this plan incorporates goals/tenets of existing plans like the City of Merrill Comprehensive Plan (2007) and the City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan (2006). As mentioned in the introduction, town plans that are currently still in effect but have not been updated are also summarized in the "Land Use" chapter.

To create a more viable county especially in times that will likely be more difficult than in the past, all towns and cities need to partner with the county to pursue and achieve goals they have in common. The broad representation of stakeholders throughout all the planning processes indicates a willingness amongst various jurisdictions to work together in this capacity.

Lincoln County General Description

Nestled in the heart of north central Wisconsin's scenic Northwoods region, Lincoln County is home to an array of recreational resources which promote year around outdoor activities. With a population of nearly 29,000, the county has grown slowly and for the most part steadily over the years, allowing it to maintain its rural character. Growth was interrupted by a reduction of residents between 2000 and 2010.

Many residents take full advantage of local recreational opportunities. Horseback riding, hiking and cross country skiing can be done in the majestic Underdown area. Council Grounds State park, located near the City of Merrill, is a gem that showcases one of the most beautiful sections of the Wisconsin River found in the central part of the state. The river dissects the county's roughly 585,000 acres. Portions of the county's 766 lakes and 246 streams can be found in Merrill and City of Tomahawk parks, affording residents and tourists with prime fishing and boating sites. Several miles of the historic Ice Age Trail are located in the county, highlighting a topography which was shaped

by glaciers during the Pleistocene era. Home to a strong population of prized game animals such as white tail deer, black bear, ruffed grouse, turkey and migrant waterfowl, Lincoln County is also a prime hunting location.

About 15% of the county's land is used for agricultural purposes. According to 2008 figures compiled by UW-Extension and based on the 2007 USDA Census of Agriculture, agriculture contributes nearly $39 million annually to the total income of Lincoln County. This represents about 4% of the county's total income. It is estimated that agriculture generates $142 million, or about 6% of the county's total business sales. Also, approximately 8% of all the jobs in the county are tied to agriculture.

Roughly 70% of the county area, or over 400,000 acres, is covered by forest. Just over 100,000 acres of forest land are managed by the county Forest, Land & Parks Department. Every year, the department conducts a timber harvest and sale. In 2010, it made over $1.3 million in sales, with about 70% of the proceeds going to the County Forestry Fund. About 20% was deposited into the county general fund and the remaining 10% was distributed to towns with county forest lands. Forest management is expected to be a focal point in county government for years to come as the potential for increased revenues from biomass processing grow.

According to American Community Survey statistics, about 27% of the county's jobs are in manufacturing as compared with roughly 19% for the state and 14% for the nation. The emphasis on manufacturing is a legacy of the county's lumbering heritage. Many of the manufacturing jobs are still related to creating products from wood, whether windows and doors for building construction or corrugated paper for packaging. Large wood-based companies include Packaging Corporation of America, Lincoln Wood, and Semling-Menke Corporation. From 2008 to 2009, during the height of the Great Recession, the county lost nearly 550 manufacturing jobs.

The county is also home to such varied companies as the Tomahawk Harley Davidson operation and Church Mutual Insurance, Inc. The latter's corporate headquarters are in Merrill and is the largest employer in the county (600-675 on staff in its Lincoln County operations).

Other Local and State Jurisdictions

Towns and Unincorporated "Villages"

Lincoln County includes 16 towns and 13 unincorporated "villages" within the towns. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county's population in 2010 was 28,743, a decrease of 3% since Census 2000. Eleven of the 16 towns are as of the writing of this comprehensive plan update under Lincoln County Zoning ordinances.

"Villages," or small hamlets exist throughout the county. They include Pine River in the Town of Pine River, Bloomville and Doering in the Town of Schley, Irma in the Town of Birch, Gleason and Dudley in the Town of Russell, Spirit Falls in the Town of Tomahawk,

Tripoli in the Town of Somo, McCord in the Town of Wilson, Bradley and Heafford Junction in the Town of Bradley, and Harrison and Jeffris in the Town of Harrison. A complete list of towns and their populations can be found in Figure 2 on page 18.

City of Merrill

The City of Merrill's most recent comprehensive plan was approved by council in late 2006. The plan emphasizes the need for economic development and tax base growth within the city. Development is to be accomplished within the framework of the city zoning ordinance.

Since 2007, riverfront development and Route 51 corridor plans were developed with heavy community input and approved by council. A referendum suggesting that riverfront development be confined to what is considered the downtown area (yet to be specifically defined) passed by a narrow margin in the fall of 2010. In 2011, volunteers and city government were proceeding based on the results of the advisory referendum. Emphasis was being placed on implementing portions of the 51 corridor plan, including attempting to extend Pine Ridge Road in the north eastern section of the city northward to County Road G. Such an extension would open up that entire area to both residential and commercial development.

City of Tomahawk

Tomahawk's last comprehensive plan was developed and approved in 2006. Protection of natural areas, promotion of tourism, and diverse, responsible economic development are emphasized. The city completed parks and recreation plans in 2010 also emphasizing similar themes.

Public School Districts

Lincoln County includes two public school districts, Merrill Area and Tomahawk. According to Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction statistics, in the 2010-11 school year 3,067 students were enrolled in the Merrill Area Public School District. This figure includes those attending Head Start and the Adult Diploma Academy. This was nearly a 3% increase in the number of students who were enrolled the previous school year. Nearly 1,400 students were enrolled in the Tomahawk School District during the 2010-11 school year. Enrollment in this district declined about 5.4% from the previous year. Because of aging population projected trends and declining populations, it is expected that enrollments will likely trend downward in both districts over the next several years.

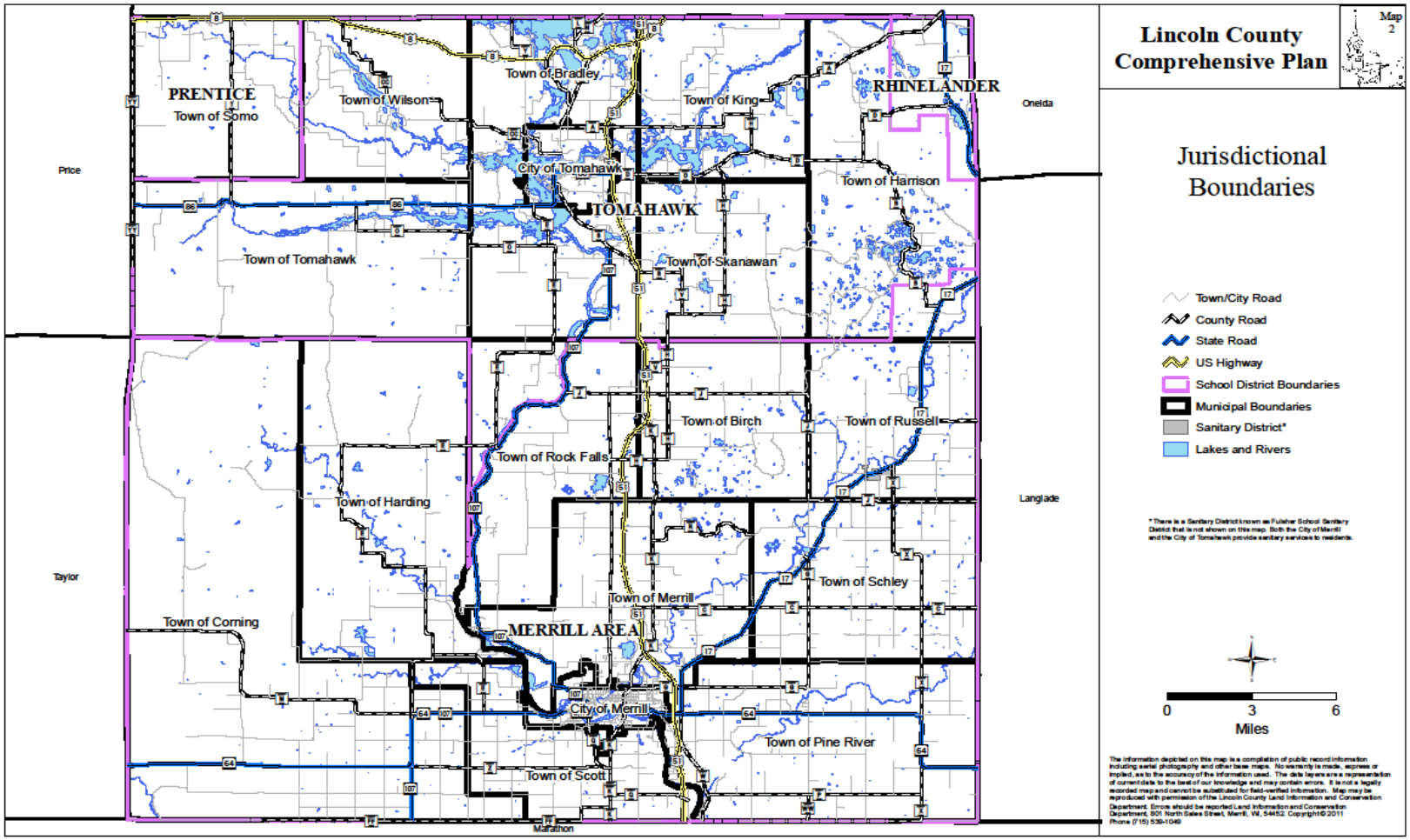
North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC)

Created under Wisconsin statute 66.0309, the commission serves 10 counties in the central Wisconsin area including Lincoln. It is charged with providing professional planning services to local governments that are members. In Lincoln County, NCWRPC has developed outdoor recreation plans, comprehensive plans, road and transportation plans, and other studies relevant to the development of the county.

Neighboring Jurisdictions

Lincoln County is surrounded by Oneida County to the north, Langlade County to the east, Marathon County to the south, and Taylor and Price Counties to the west. Closest out of county metropolitan areas include Wausau (18 miles), Green Bay (110 miles), Madison (160) miles, Milwaukee (205 miles), Minneapolis (195 miles), and Chicago (290 miles). The City of Merrill is often considered for statistical purposes part of the Wausau metropolitan area.

Map 1: Jurisdictional Boundaries



Source: Map prepared by Lincoln County Land Information & Conservation Department, 2011.

III. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNTIES

The *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan* is based upon a foundation of the existing natural and built environment and an understanding of the people and economy of Lincoln County. This section contains background information and maps on existing conditions and projected trends in Lincoln County as required by §66.1001(2) Wisconsin Statutes. It is meant to help guide the policy making of the county over the next 20 years.

County Demographics

Population

According to Figure 1 below, Lincoln County's population growth has for the most part been slow and steady over the past 100 years with the exception of the last decade when the county population experienced a decline. During the entire century, the county's population rose nearly 77%.

Figure 1 **County Historical Population by Decade**

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Population	16,269	19,064	21,084	21,072	22,536	22,235	22,338	23,449	26,555	26,993	29,641	28,743
Previous Decade % Change	-	17%	10%	0%	6%	-1%	1%	5%	11%	2%	10%	-3%

As is depicted in Figure 2 on the next page, over the past decade town populations rose in most towns except in Birch, Bradley, Russell, Somo, and Tomahawk. The largest percentage increases occurred in Scott and Skanawan. The largest decline occurred in Birch. Overall, Lincoln County towns' populations decreased less than 1% between 2000 and January, 2011.

Figure 2 **Estimated Town Populations**

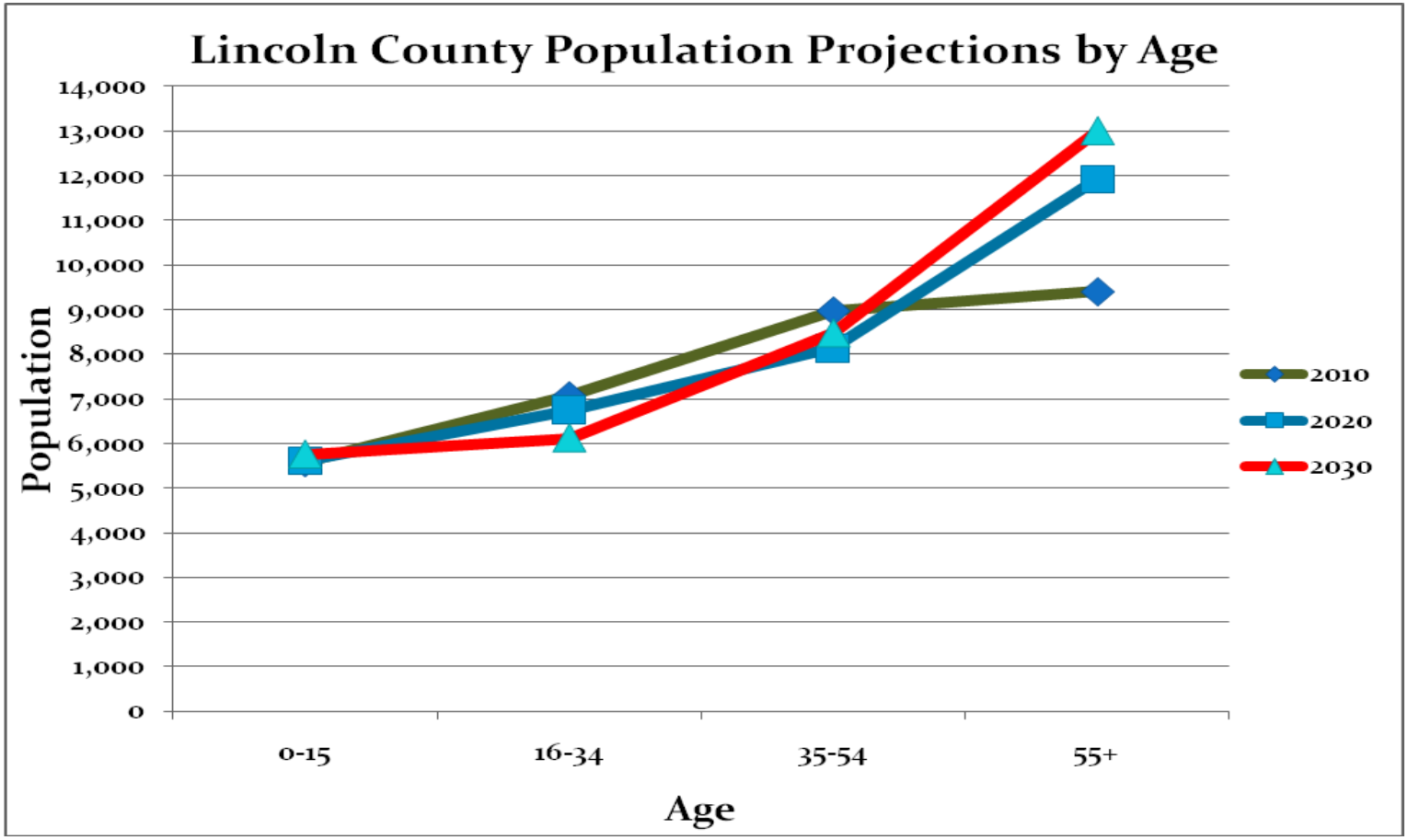
Town	Year 2000 Population (US Census)	Wisconsin Department of Administration (January, 2011 Estimates)	Percent Change
Birch	801	556	-31.0%
Bradley	2,573	2,406	-6.5%
Corning	826	882	+6.8%
Harding	334	373	+1.2%
Harrison	793	835	+5.3%
King	842	854	+1.4%
Merrill	2,979	2,983	Negligible
Pine River	1,877	1,867	Negligible
Rock Falls	598	620	+3.7%
Russell	693	675	-2.6%
Schley	909	927	+2.0%
Scott	1,287	1,439	+11.8%
Skanawan	354	393	+11.0%
Somo	121	114	-5.8%
Tomahawk	439	416	-5.2%
Wilson	299	310	+3.7%

Using U.S. Census 2000 and 2010 data, the City of Merrill's population declined 4.8% to 9,661 during the decade. The City of Tomahawk's population also decreased by about 9% over the same period.

Age Distribution & Race

Based mostly on state Department of Administration data and estimates, Lincoln County's population is projected to age fairly rapidly over the next 20 years. This overall expected aging trend is illustrated best in Figure 3 on the next page.

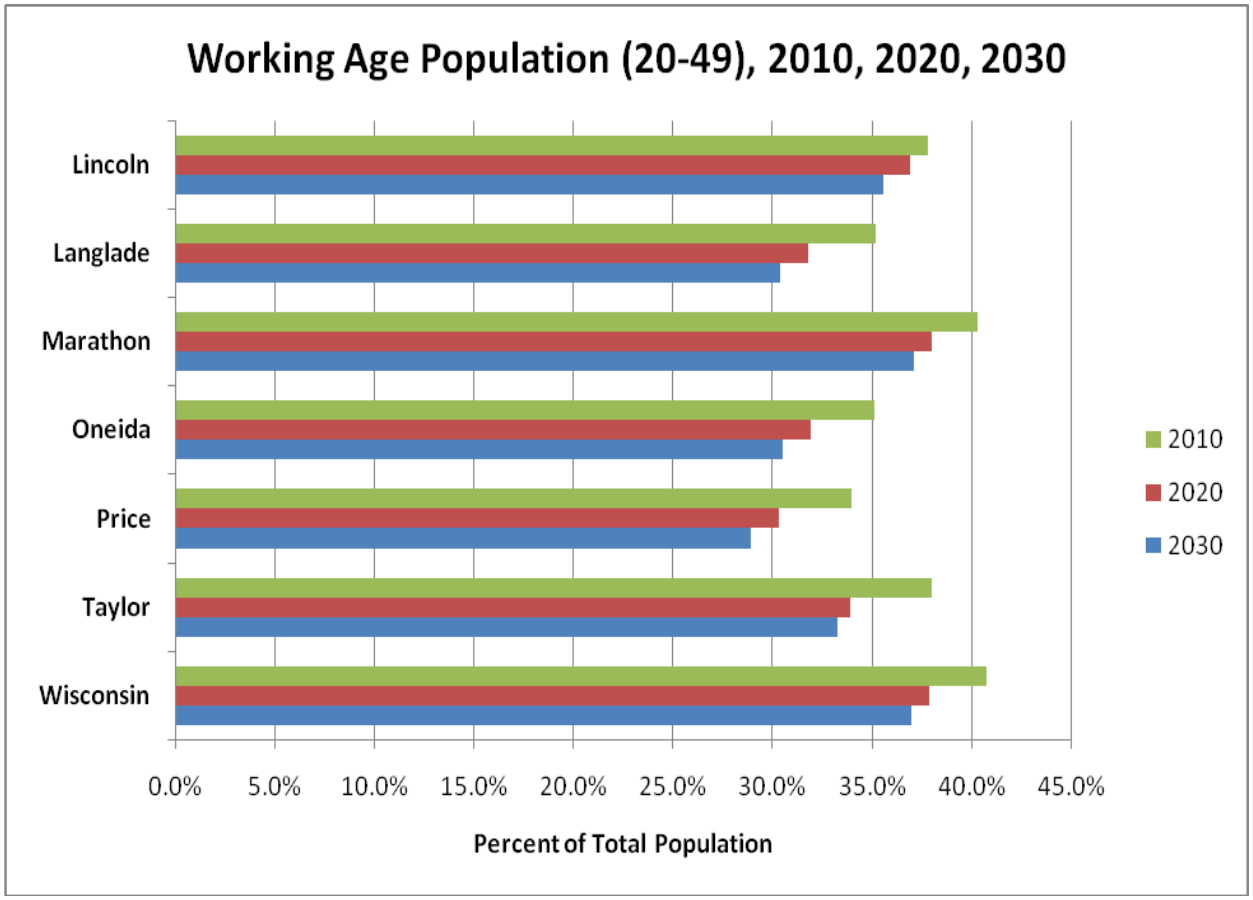
Figure 3



Source: Lincoln County Workforce Profile, January 2008, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

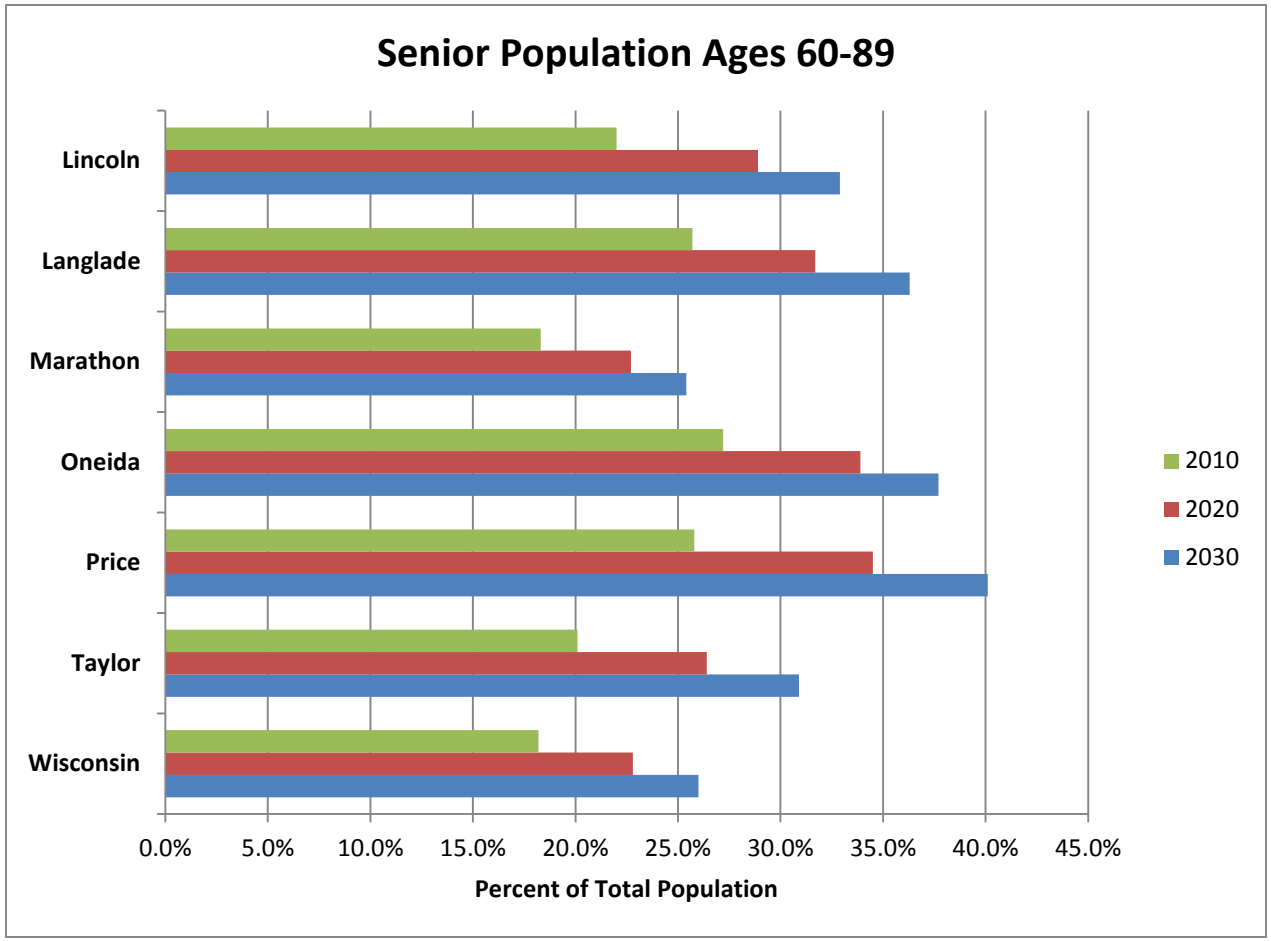
Distributions within the county amongst the 20-49 age range, the primary working ages, and the 60-89 age range are also predicted to change rather dramatically over the next two decades. The following two figures show those projections in percentage terms as compared with surrounding counties and the state.[1]

Figure 4



[1] Charts based on estimates produced in 2008 by the Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographics Services Division.

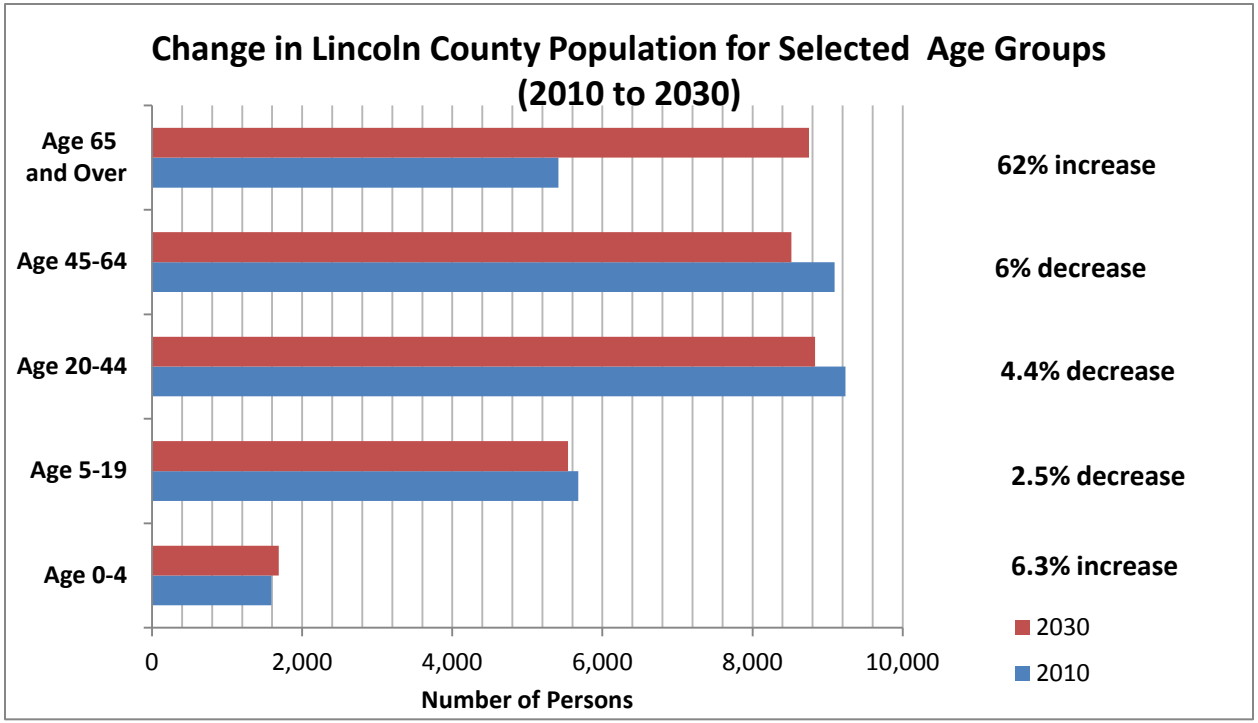
Figure 5



The increasing rural and aging population may force various entities including government to shift their resources so 60-89 year olds receive more services. It may also present challenges on how to deliver services to aging residents who cannot come into the cities to receive them.

Figure 6 on the next page illustrates overall projected aging trends for the county.

Figure 6



Lincoln County's total population is expected to rise about 2 % between 2010 and 2030. In 2010, about 97% of all residents were Caucasian. This is not expected to change much in the coming decades. The largest minority in the county was Hispanic/Latinos. They made up about 1% of the population.

Households

Total number of households in the county in 2010 also according to U.S. Census data was 16,784. Nearly 30% of housing units were unoccupied. More details about household types, etc. can be found in the "Housing" chapter (V) of this comprehensive plan.

Educational Levels

Nearly 87% or all county residents 25 years of age or older are at least high school graduates. Eighty – nine percent of Wisconsin residents 25 years of age or older hold at least a high school diploma. Lincoln County has fewer residents by average percentage than the state who have earned a Bachelors degree or higher. About 14.7% of county residents have a Bachelors, graduate or some professional degree while 25.5% of the state's residents have the same.[2]

Income Levels

Per capita personal income in Lincoln County in 2008, the latest year data is available at the writing of this updated Comprehensive Plan, was $31,355. Below is a table comparing the county's per capita personal income with the income levels of surrounding counties and the state.[3]

Figure 7 **County and State Per Capita Income Comparisons**

Lincoln County	$31,355
Marathon County	$36,536
Langlade County	$31,595
Taylor County	$28,862
Price County	$31,721
Oneida County	$36,519
State of Wisconsin	$37,770
State of Wisconsin (non-metropolitan areas only)	$32,611

[2] American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau 2005-09 average estimates.
[3] Source for per capita personal income: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis Data (http://www.bea.gov/regional/reis/drill.cfm)

Countywide Public Opinion Survey

A major early component of Lincoln County's public participation process began in January 2000, when the County administered written surveys to county homeowners. The survey results served as a starting point for public involvement in the planning process. Although another study such as this has not been completed in recent years, many of the results of the study done in 2000 continue to be relevant to the county and are considered in this updated Comprehensive Plan.

A 26-question public opinion survey focused on demographic information, opinions on existing conditions (year 2000), and attitudes on growth and development. The County mailed 2,000 surveys to a sample of Lincoln County households—meaning that about one out of every six households received a survey. The sample was essentially random, with a distribution assuring that the number of surveys to each town and city in Lincoln County was in proportion to that municipality's share of the county population.

A total of 844 completed surveys were returned to the County, representing a response rate of 42%. This sample size resulted in a margin of error of ±3% on all responses, at a 95% confidence level. Of the 844 surveys returned, 426 were from households living in towns (50%). This was in proportion to the actual percentage of all Lincoln County households that live in the towns. A total of 418 completed surveys were from residents of the cities of Merrill or Tomahawk.

The following is a summary of the results of the survey, broken down into three sections: demographic information, opinions on existing conditions, and attitudes on future growth and development. Unless otherwise indicated, results are from all respondents countywide.

Survey Respondents Information

Each survey included questions requesting basic demographic and statistical information. The following summarizes that data and compares it to demographics of the entire County population:

- The average household size of responding households was 2.64 persons, the same as the 1990 average household size for owner-occupied households (U.S. Census).
- The average number of children in responding households was 0.61.
- Nearly two-thirds of respondents had resided in Lincoln County for at least 25 years. Just over 30% of respondents were aged 65 years or older. In 1997, the State estimated that 33.5% of all Lincoln County residents were at least 65 years old. The second and third most common age groups in the survey were 36 to 45 years old and 46 to 55 years old.
- The distribution of respondents from each of the various towns and cities matched very closely the distribution of all households in Lincoln County, based on 1999 population estimates from the State.
- Over 19 of every 20 households resided in year-round single family residences in Lincoln County (not seasonal homes). In 1990, 76% of all housing units in the County were single family residences and 68% were year-round residences.

- Over one-third of all respondents were retired. Other adults living in the household were less likely to be retired (19%). Of the respondents surveyed, 24% worked in the City of Merrill, 9% worked in the City of Tomahawk, 8% worked in Wausau, and 4% worked in the Town of Bradley.

In summary, the survey sample was generally reflective of the overall adult population in Lincoln County. However, given the sampling technique, the survey sample was obviously over-represented in households that resided in single family housing and owned their home. Seasonal (summer) residents were under-represented. These disparities are not surprising given that the survey was administered to homeowners only, and during the month of January.

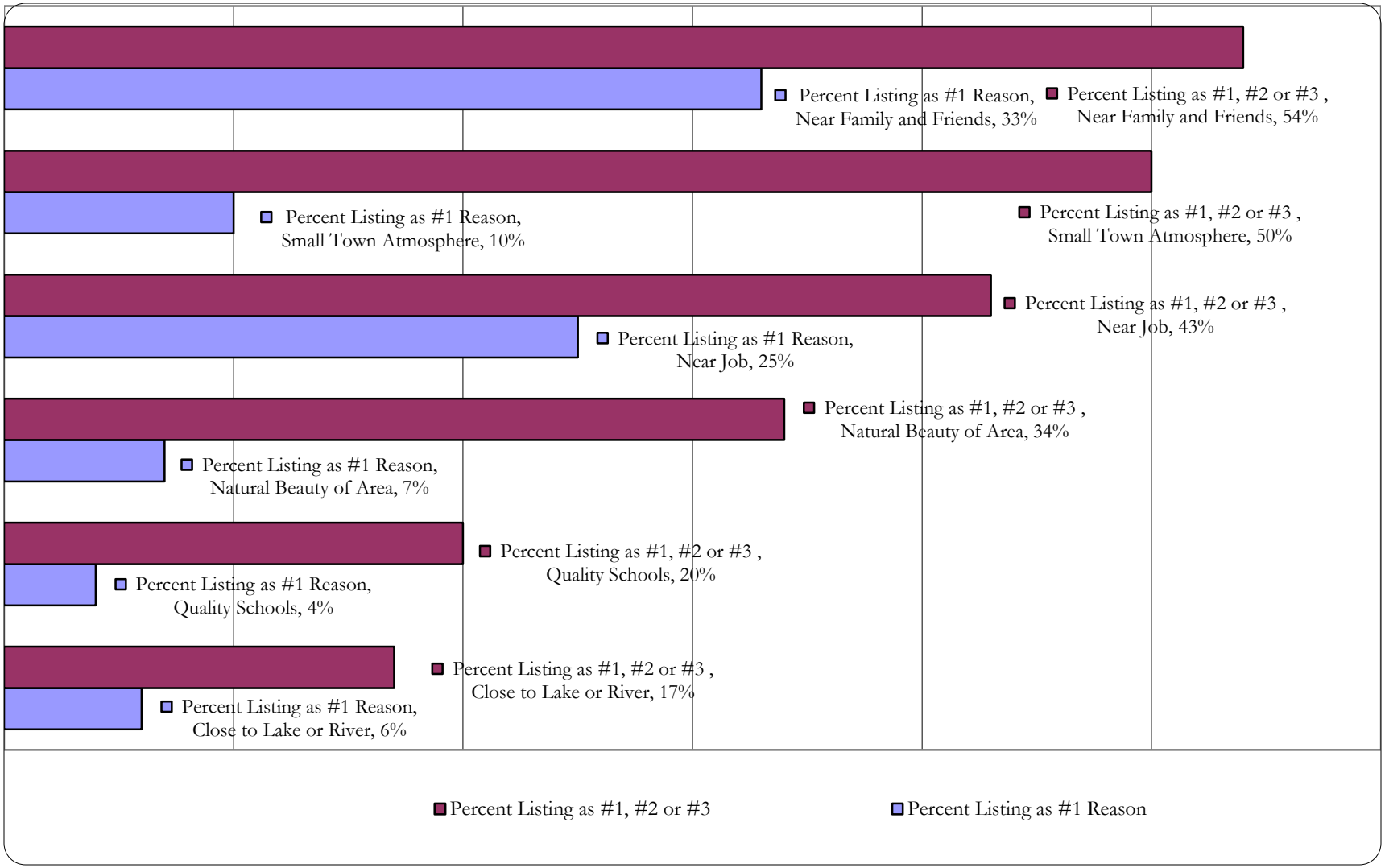
Opinions of Existing Conditions

The survey attempted to get opinions on existing conditions in Lincoln County. Responses to such questions are useful to identify features of the community that its citizens value; attitudes on basic public services and regulations; and opinions on the availability of private services (e.g., shopping).

Reasons for Locating in Lincoln County

From a list of 14 choices, households were asked to identify, in order, the three most important reasons that the household chose Lincoln County as a place to live. Figure 8 on the next page shows the top six responses to that question. "Near family and friends" and "Near job" were two very common responses (particularly as the #1 response). "Small town atmosphere" and "Natural beauty of area" rated highly as second or third choices.

Figure 8 **Top Reasons for Choosing to Live in Lincoln County**



Compared to City respondents, residents of towns in Lincoln County were more likely to rate natural beauty and proximity to recreational opportunities, lakes, and rivers as important reasons. City respondents were more likely to rate quality schools, near job, and small town atmosphere as important reasons.

Public Services

Households were asked to rate 12 public services as either being "good," "fair," or "poor" (see Figure 9). In general, respondents rated public services highly. Services that yielded a fair number of "poor" responses included street maintenance and snow removal. (The survey was administered during a snowy winter.) In general, respondents from towns were less likely to rate facilities and services as "good" and more likely to rate them as "poor," compared to respondents from cities.

Figure 9 **Household Ratings of Public Facilities and Services**

Service/Facility	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Ambulance service	69%	12%	2%	17%
Community events	41%	42%	7%	9%
Drinking water quality	62%	27%	7%	4%
Fire protection	75%	16%	2%	8%
Health services	55%	33%	7%	4%
Library facilities	74%	17%	2%	7%
Park & recreation facilities	73%	21%	2%	4%
Police protection	66%	25%	4%	5%
Public schools	68%	21%	4%	8%
Snow removal	55%	30%	12%	3%
Stormwater management	36%	22%	3%	38%
Street maintenance	32%	44%	14%	10%

When asked an open ended question on the single biggest issue facing Lincoln County, common responses included jail siting and property tax control. Since this study was completed, the county expanded the jail building that existed at the time.

Development Character

The appearance of Lincoln County shapes residents' and visitors' image of the community, and can either enhance or detract from overall quality of life. Understanding what people find attractive also provides guidance on future public and private development decisions.

Respondents were generally satisfied with the appearance of residential areas (neighborhoods). Over 95% of respondents rated the appearance of residential areas as "good" or "average," which a larger percentage of "average" responses. Nearly 80% rated the appearance of existing industrial parks as "good" or "average." Town and city respondents shared similar opinions on these questions.

Respondents were also asked to rate the two newer commercial (shopping) areas in the County—North 4th Street in Tomahawk and the Pine Ridge area in Merrill—on several factors. There was a fair amount of dissatisfaction with the appearance and functionality of these areas. Factors with a significant amount of "fair" and "poor" responses included traffic flow and circulation (77%), landscaping (63%), pedestrian access (62%), and overall design and layout (59%). City respondents were generally more likely to rate commercial areas lower than town respondents. Recent enhancements to the Veterans Memorial Bridge and surrounding North 4th Street area in the City of Tomahawk have improved that business district's aesthetics. Plans have also been made to improve Merrill's Pine Ridge area.

County Efforts to Guide Development

Respondents were asked the following question: "How would you rate efforts by Lincoln County to guide where new development occurs?" Respondents could select from four possible choices. Figure 10 provides the results. Opinions were almost evenly split on the amount of planning and regulation supported.

Figure 10 **Ratings of the County's Efforts to Guide New Development**

RESPONSE	ALL SURVEYS	TOWN SURVEYS	CITY SURVEYS
Too much planning and regulation of development	25%	28%	22%
About the right amount of planning and regulation of development	26%	27%	25%
Not enough planning and regulation of development	26%	24%	28%
No opinion	23%	21%	25%

Attitudes on Growth and Development

Several questions were meant to gather initial impressions on future growth and development in Lincoln County.

Future Directions

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they "strongly agreed," "somewhat agreed," "somewhat disagreed," or "strongly disagreed" with each of 19 statements suggesting future directions for the County. Below is a list of each of those statements, along with the percentage that either "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed." Anecdotal evidence suggests that these attitudes changed very little between 2000 and 2010. Perhaps the only area of difference between the 2000 survey results and the current climate would be a stronger feeling that less government regulation through the zoning code is in order. This attitude seems to be held by government policy makers looking to stretch increasingly limited resources. Attitudes about the need for good paying jobs have also been reinforced due mainly to the 2007-2009 recession and its aftermath. Moreover, many of the priorities identified by the year 2000 survey results have been pursued by and continue to be emphasized in many county departments and the County Board.

Percentage of Respondents Agreeing with Statements on Future Directions

- Lincoln County should be a mostly rural county. 77%
- Lincoln County should promote industrial and business development. 88%
- Lincoln County should promote tourism and recreational development. 86%
- Towns should be allowed to prepare and carry out land use plans without much county involvement. 61%
- Town land use plans should be consistent with a county framework plan. 84%
- Regulations should be relaxed so that developers and land use owners can more easily guide growth. 48%
- Lincoln County should adopt land use policies for local communities to follow. 66%
- Lincoln County should adopt regulations to limit growth in rural areas. 53%

- Cities should develop nearly all land within their existing boundaries before growing into unincorporated areas. 68%
- Most new residential, commercial & industrial development should occur in the cities of Merrill and Tomahawk. 67%
- New growth should be controlled and limited to certain areas of the country. 62%
- The scenic beauty of Lincoln County should be preserved through sign and other appearance regulations. 88%
- Farmers and other rural land owners should be able to sell their land for development. 78%
- Forestry (logging) is an important part of Lincoln County's future. 87%
- Traffic is a growing problem in Lincoln County. 69%
- Lincoln County needs more good paying jobs. 95%
- Farming is an important part of Lincoln County's future. 77%
- Environmental protection is a good reason to limit the rights of property owners. 63%
- Housing affordability is a growing problem in the County. 72%

Statements which resulted in the most "strongly agree" responses included:

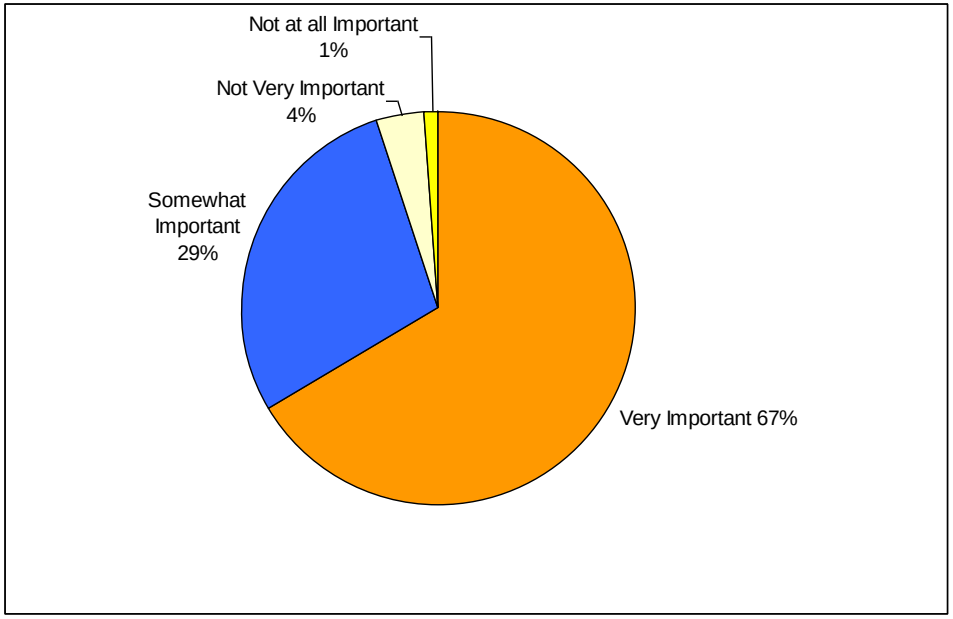
- Lincoln County needs more good paying jobs (69%),
- The scenic beauty of Lincoln County should be preserved through sign and other appearance regulations (59%),
- Lincoln County should promote tourism and recreational development" (53%),
- Forestry (logging) is an important part of Lincoln County's future (50%), and
- Lincoln County should promote industrial and business development (48%).

The statement "Regulations should be relaxed so that developers and land owners can more easily guide growth" resulted in the most "strongly disagree" responses (24%). Respondents from towns were at least 10% more likely to agree with the following statements than respondents from cities. (Because the error margin was ±5% for both the town respondent and city respondent samples, any smaller difference is not statistically significant.)

- Lincoln County should be a mostly rural county (83% town respondents agreed vs. 72% city respondents agreed).
- Towns should be allowed to prepare and carry out land use plans without much county involvement (66% vs. 55%).
- Cities should develop nearly all land within their existing city limits before growing into unincorporated towns (74% vs. 63%).

Survey respondents were asked the following question on the character of Lincoln County: "Much of Lincoln County has a rural character today, including many forests, natural lakes and rivers, farmland, outdoor recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat. Development remains fairly limited and is mainly focused in and near cities and some lakes and rivers. How important is it to retain the County's rural character in the future?" Figure 11 shows overall responses, which did not vary significantly between town and city respondents.

Figure 11 **Importance of Rural Character**



Amount, Type, and Location of Future Development

Survey respondents were asked to select their "ideal" year 2020 population for Lincoln County from four possible population ranges. While roughly 1/4 wanted no change in population, 61% desired a population of between 29,000 and 35,000. In 2010, the county's population was close to 29,000.

Households had the following opinions on the types and locations of new development desired in Lincoln County.

- *Residential*: When asked about the *types* of new housing desired, and allowed to choose more than one of several possible answers, 76% of households selected "medium-sized single family houses (3 bedrooms)" and 53% selected elderly housing. Other responses trailed by a large amount. Respondents were also asked to select from four possible statements gauging opinions on new housing development in the rural parts of Lincoln County. The statement that received the most support was "Lincoln County and the towns should try to limit the amount of new housing development that occurs in the rural parts of Lincoln County" (39%), followed by "The private market alone should decide how much new housing development occurs in the rural parts of Lincoln County" (25%). For questions related to residential development desires, the difference in responses from town versus city residents was not statistically significant.

- *Non-residential*: Four of every ten of responding households supported attracting more restaurants and larger-scale shopping and services (e.g., department stores, supermarkets) to Lincoln County. Town respondents were significantly less likely to support restaurants than city respondents (33% versus 46%). There was also some interest among all respondents in traditional industrial parks (30% supported them) and recreational and tourism related development, not including casinos (29%). Very little support was voiced for casinos (5%) or for mining and quarrying (3%). When asked open ended questions on the biggest issues facing Lincoln County and their particular communities, respondents commonly listed the need for more business/industrial development and better jobs. Throughout the 2000 to 2010 period, City of Merrill leaders were attempting to determine the best location for a second industrial park. Some were arguing for a complex as near to highway 39/51 as possible while others felt that a site closer to Merrill's airport and perhaps its existing industrial park – which was essentially filled to capacity in 2010 – makes more sense.

Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources

When asked which of nine different types of parks and recreational facilities were needed (more than one could be selected), the most common responses were "multi-use trails for bicyclists, pedestrians, skiers, and snowmobilers…" (43%) and "natural areas such as nature trails, wildlife viewing areas, [and] interpretive centers…" (40%). These were followed by waterfront parks (31%) and campgrounds (23%). Just under 31% percent of respondents believed that no additional parks or recreational facilities were needed. Responses from town and city residents were not significantly different. Toward the end of 2010, significant progress was being made to link trails and to promote bike and pedestrian traffic. The most visible of these enhancements occurred when a bike lane was installed along the entire North 4th Street corridor in Tomahawk.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with several statements related to the use of lakes, rivers, flowages, shorelines, and shoreland areas in Lincoln County. Each of those statements are listed below along with the percentage that either "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed."

Percentage Agreeing with Statements on Water and Shoreland Issues

- All lakes, rivers, and flowages should be open to all recreational users at all times.* 39%
- There should be restrictions on times/days that different recreational users may use lakes, rivers and flowages.* 71%
- Types of water based recreational uses allowed should be guided by quality of the lake, river, or flowage.* 71%
- Types of water based recreational uses allowed should be guided by types of uses in the shoreland area.* 85%
- The County should regulate the type, location, and density of development near lakes, rivers, and flowages. 85%
- The level of development regulation should be greater on mainly undeveloped lakes, rivers, and flowages. 67%
- Lincoln County is doing enough to protect surface water quality. 62%
- The County should provide guidelines for shoreline protection and restoration to shoreland owners. 85%
- Lincoln County should require natural shoreline protection and restoration when development occurs. 83%

NOTE: * Fishing, boating, and jet skiing were listed as possible "recreational uses."

Town respondents were slightly more likely to "strongly agree" to restrictions on water based recreational activities, and to "strongly disagree" that "all lakes, rivers, and flowages should be open to all recreational users (e.g., fishing, boaters, jet skis, etc.) at all times."

Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with several statements related to the use of publicly owned forest lands in Lincoln County. Each of those statements are listed below along with the percentage who either "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed."

Percentage Agreeing with Statements on Publicly-owned Forest Lands

- The primary use of public forest lands should be for forest product (log, pulp) production. 42%
- The primary use of public forest lands should be for recreational uses. 67%
- The County should promote multiple uses of public forests, including forest products, recreation, and fish and wildlife projects. 96%
- Timber harvest methods should be managed to protect the quality of the land and wildlife habitat. 98%
- All roads and trails in public forests in Lincoln County should be open to general public vehicle travel. 62%

Shoreland Poperty Owners Survey

In May 2000, a written survey was mailed to a random sample of 1,300 shoreland property owners in Lincoln County. The purpose of this survey was to gather property owner input on various aspects of waterfront development and preservation. A total of 655 surveys were returned to the County (a 50% response rate). This sample size results in a margin of error of 3% on all responses.

Most survey respondents with an opinion felt that at that time there was about the right amount of regulation of waterfront development in the County. The top three problems on or around lakes identified in the survey were too many motorized vehicles on the water, a lack of sport fish, and shoreline erosion. Respondents identified lake water quality protection, shoreline erosion prevention, and wildlife habitat protection as the main reasons to protect shoreland areas. Other key findings from the survey include:

- 72% of respondents agreed that the 75 foot setback from the waterline for new homes is "about right";
- 83% of respondents felt boathouse setbacks from the waterline should be somewhere between zero and 19 feet;
- 70% of respondents felt the County should require a plan to minimize soil erosion before any proposed grading activities occur within the "buffer zone";
- A majority of respondents agreed to considering stricter development standards around more sensitive lakes, but there is little agreement on what those standards should be;
- A majority of respondents feel the County should provide shoreland owners with guidelines for natural restoration of shorelines with native plantings.

Farmland Owners Survey

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Lincoln County Office administered a land use survey to all farm operations in Lincoln County in December 1999. Some pertinent results are as follows: of the 323 respondents to this survey, about 43% agreed that local governments should play more of a role in land use planning. Over 55% of the respondents supported zoning laws to enforce a town land use plan. About 53% of the respondents did not support government purchase of agricultural lands to preserve rural aesthetic character. Over 64% agreed that it is a fundamental right to use one's property as one wishes. About 42% agreed that, in general, land use planning most benefits developers. Nearly 57% of the respondents felt that land use planning should promote smaller family farms as opposed to large corporate farms.

Youth Vision Forums

One important component of Lincoln County's public participation process when the initial comprehensive plan was being developed was soliciting input from the County's youth population. A survey and two focus group discussions with high school students sought to capture this input. Students were asked what aspects of their community were important to them and what features they would like to see preserved for the future. The survey and focus group discussions involved 131 students ages 14 to 18 from the Merrill and Tomahawk high schools during the Spring of 2000.

The features that give Lincoln County the character that youth cherish include its vast natural resources, the wilderness, forests, wildlife, rivers, lakes and streams. These outdoor recreation resources and the activities that those natural resources provide was what the youth were proud of. Things such as fishing, snowmobiling, hunting, hiking, boating, water-skiing, snow skiing, camping, and swimming in the county and state parks, in the natural areas and on the trail systems are very important to the youth. The schools and school related activities also appeared on their list of things that they were proud of. The youth also valued their history by ranking historic places and traditional activities high on their list of things they would like to preserve.

But Lincoln County isn't perfect and the youth noted several things they'd like to change to make the county a better place to live, work and shop. They would like to see an increase in job opportunities in the future in areas such as industry, agriculture and tourism. Some of their most important concerns are a lack of safe, enjoyable places for youth to visit and recreate as well as a lack of shopping opportunities. This appeared to be still of some concern as this updated Comprehensive Plan was being developed. They would also like to see renovations in the downtown areas and some of the run-down homes, a reduction in the number of bars and gas stations, and the removal of garbage from yards and roadways throughout the county. In general, the youth of Lincoln County like the community that they've been raised in and they wish to preserve many of the very same things that their parents and grandparents have said are important to them as well.

PRIMARY FOCUS ELEMENTS

IV. TRANSPORTATION

Rural transportation development, including the maintenance of what already exits and the consideration and eventual development of new modes that make it easier for people and goods to move throughout a given region, is an essential part of any community driven comprehensive plan. As was determined during three planning sessions by a group of stakeholders intimately familiar with transportation issues and needs in Lincoln County, meaningful economic development and all that comes with it such as an increase in tax base cannot take place without an adequate, well maintained transportation infrastructure.

Also emphasized during planning sessions was that any effective transportation plan must include objectives related to the county's various modes including but not limited to all terrain vehicles (ATV), utility terrain vehicles (UTV), freight railroad, motor and peddle biking, air travel, horseback riding, snowmobiles, automobiles, trucks, and walking/running. A central theme of the discussion that took place during the planning sessions revolved around how to connect these modes into a rural transportation network that enhances quality of life and promotes responsible business growth. Another primary discussion theme was that many groups are working on transportation issues in the county but for the most part are not coordinating their efforts.

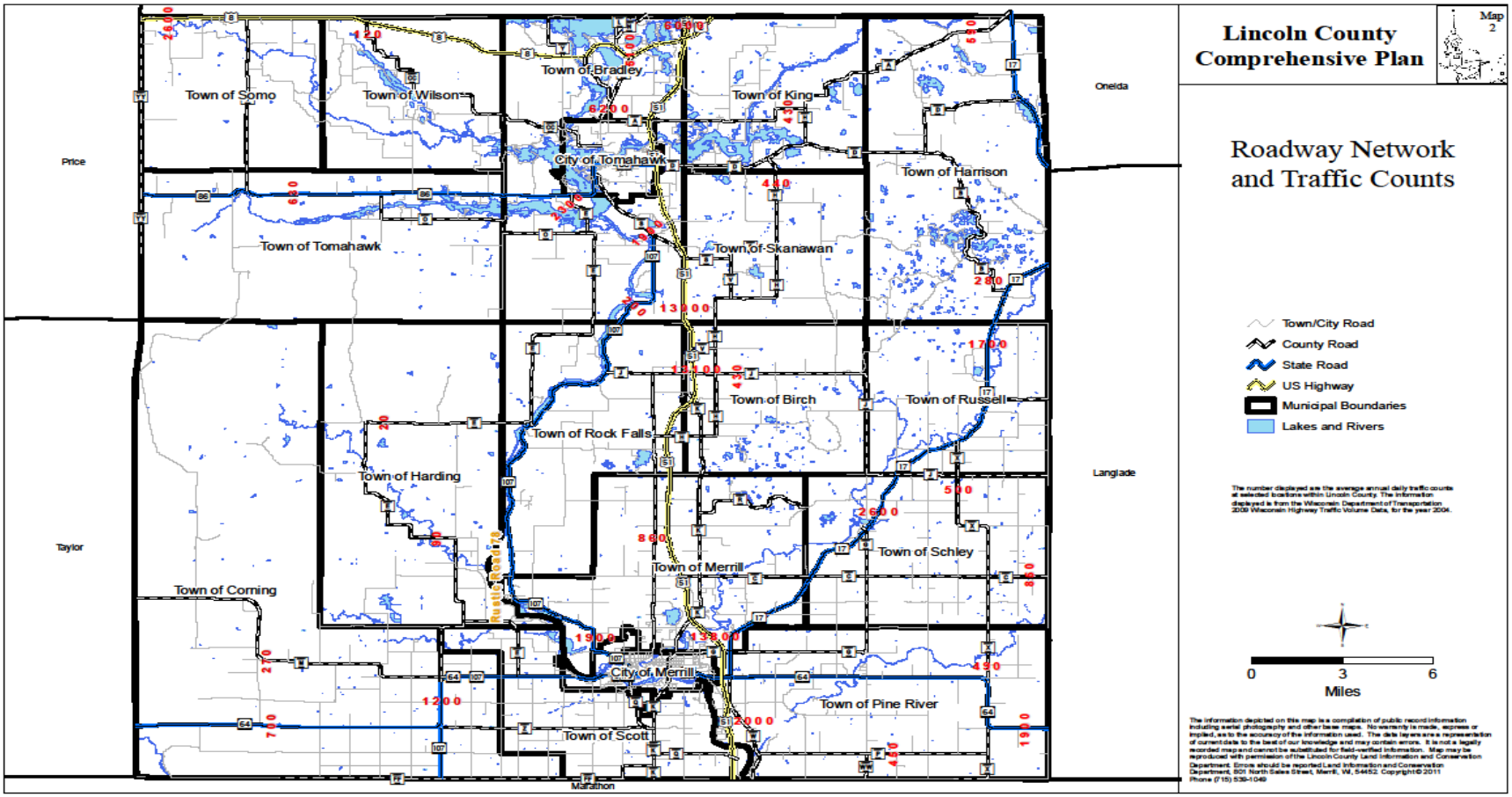
Lincoln County Road System

Lincoln County's road system includes numerous state and county highways as well as U.S. Highway 51 which runs north and south from near the Wisconsin/Michigan border to just west of New Orleans, Louisiana. U.S. Highway Route 8 located in the northern part of the county runs east and west from Forest Lake, Minnesota to near Norway in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Route 17, originating near Merrill at Route 64, provides access to Rhinelander, Eagle River and other points north into the Upper Peninsula. Originating at the Stillwater Bridge near the Wisconsin/Minnesota state line, Route 64 runs east/west for approximately 275 miles through the heart of Central Wisconsin and the City of Merrill. It ends at U.S. Highway 41 in downtown Marinette, Wisconsin. Highway 86 also runs east/west. A portion of it serves as a primary entryway from the east into the City of Tomahawk. State highway Route 107 runs north/south from Bonduel to Cecil, Wisconsin. In Lincoln County, it runs somewhat parallel to U.S Highway 51 and connects the City of Merrill to the City of Tomahawk area.

The Lincoln County Highway Department maintains about 271 miles of roads. Primary county highways include K, which used to be the main north/south road running through the county until U.S. 39/51 was extended; County Highway A, which runs east/west through the Tomahawk area; and County Road D running east/west through the northern and eastern part of the county. County Roads M, W, FF, C, G, and Q, along with County K, are important linkages to the City of Merrill area.

Besides U.S. 51, major roads experiencing the heaviest traffic in recent years as the map below indicates were County K, Routes 8, 64, 17 and 86 in that order. Map 2 below shows Lincoln County traffic counts in 2010.

Map 2 Lincoln County Road Network & Traffic Counts



Source: Map developed by Lincoln County Land Information & Conservation Department, 2011.

Rising costs and dwindling resources placed unprecedented pressures on the Lincoln County Highway Department budget at the beginning of this plan implementation period. This new reality will likely affect, but not necessarily eliminate, the department's ability to implement many of the strategies outlined under Goal #1 in the Transportation Plan Table beginning on page 48.

At the start of 2010, the department asserted that its paving cycle was at a 98 year rotation, meaning that it was expecting to pave only about 1.25 miles of road per year for the foreseeable future. A normal cycle would be about a 20 year rotation, meaning that on average the department would pave about 13 or 14 miles per year. A primary goal, although seemingly unrealistic to achieve in the early part of the decade of 2010 to 2019 was to get back to the 20 year rotation standard. As of 2011, the department was maintaining 271 miles of county centerline road and 418 lane miles of state highway.

Deteriorating roads may lead to an inconvenience of moving goods efficiently that may contribute to businesses either shying away from locating here or deciding not to expand. Employing temporary measures such as patching or chipping and sealing may prolong the average life of a road beyond its normal 20 years but not for much longer. These approaches will not, in most cases, delay the inevitable: either the road will eventually have to be paved or it will, according to the county highway department, revert back to dirt or gravel. Many county roads are fast becoming similar to the section of pavement depicted below.

Measures taken by the department at the beginning of the plan period as listed below may, however, help to slow down the rapid deterioration of roads, buying the county enough time to plan and develop alternative road maintenance strategies.

- Paving 22' wide (not the normal width of 24 feet)
- Using only plastic culverts
- Pulverizing only the worst sections of roads
- Reconstructing roads only when the county can utilize outside funding (LRIP,STP)
- Implementing a long term chip sealing plan
- Reducing winter plowing

At the beginning of the plan period, the department was in the process of also:

- submitting a long range plan to be approved by the County Board that would turn some county roads to gravel.
- submitting a long range plan to be approved by the County Board to continue what cost cutting measures already implemented.
- submitting a long range plan to be approved by the County Board to keep roads blacktopped, a step that would likely have to entail funding increases.[4]

None of the county Highway Department's budget difficulties will likely impact the state's plans to work on several routes in the coming years that go through the county. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's primary planned projects for state roads located in the county from 2012 through 2015 include:

- Route 51, North Star Road intersection upgrade with possible overpass. (2013).

- Route 51 between Merrill and Tomahawk: Repair joints and cracks in the concrete on both north and south lanes. (2012-2015)

[4] Information about the Lincoln County Highway Department was provided in a presentation to the County Board made by Commissioner Randy Scholz in mid-2010.

The City of Merrill 2007 Comprehensive Plan called for an extension of Pine Ridge Avenue north to County Road G with the aim of promoting economic development throughout that corridor. A feasibility study based largely on this concept was completed in 2010. Also that year, a warehousing/distribution business was established on the corner of Pine Ridge and Thielman streets where Pine Ridge originally dead ended further promoting the idea that development will take place in the area. The City of Merrill maintains about 65 miles of roadway.

In Tomahawk, which maintains about 40 miles of roads, the primary focus during the 2010 and 2011 was completing a reconstruction of the entire North 4th Street corridor, including a bridge that spans the Wisconsin River. The project was completed in the summer/late fall of 2011. Home to numerous businesses, the corridor serves as a primary entryway from the north (Rhinelander) to the downtown. According to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, in the first half of 2010 about 12,000 cars on average per day crossed over the North 4th Street Bridge (Veterans Memorial) going in and out of town.

Lincoln County ATV and Snowmobile Trails

Over the past several years, ATV and snowmobile usage has increased throughout the county. In 2010, there was just over 1,000 miles of groomed ATV and snowmobile trails in the county. Near the beginning of this county plan implementation cycle, the City of Tomahawk approved an ordinance to open city roads to ATV traffic, with a 10 mile per hour maximum speed limit. The primary purposes for doing so were to increase ATV rider access to local businesses and to make travel from one rural trail to another shorter.

In 2009, the Lincoln County Forestry Department maintained about 43 miles of winter and nearly 45 miles of summer ATV trails. For the department, this was an increase in maintenance of about 12 miles of winter and 30 miles of summer ATV trails since 2000. Snowmobile clubs maintained about 153 miles of winter ATV trails. In Lincoln County, the winter ATV trails are also used by snowmobiles. Winter ATV and snowmobile trails link Tomahawk and Harrison, Tomahawk and Tripoli, and Tomahawk and Irma. Also linked are Spirit Falls and Harrison, Harrison and Merrill (city), Merrill and Spirit Falls, and Merrill and Irma. About 315 miles of funded and 100 miles of non-funded snowmobile trails existed in the county, with roughly 52 miles of them being maintained by the department. The remaining miles were maintained by local snowmobile clubs.

In 2010, Lincoln County was participating in a UTV pilot program which makes it legal for these vehicles to utilize the summer ATV trail system on county forest and ATV routes within participating townships until June 30, 2012. The pilot program was being used as guidance to possibly develop a permanent UTV program in the state.[5] In 2010, the County Board also designated 31 county highway miles as ATV routes.

[5] Lincoln County Forestry Department 2009 Annual Report. Statistics verified by Kevin Kleinschmidt, Director.

Knowledgeable about these statistics and trends, the planning group felt that there is an opportunity for additional businesses to open near or along trails to provide more services to ATV and snowmobile enthusiasts. Business opportunities will be reinforced by efforts to allow wherever feasible more snowmobile and especially ATV traffic on regular roads, helping to create the linkages that were emphasized during planning session discussions.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

For several years, various groups throughout the county have been working to promote bike and pedestrian friendly routes. Lincoln County's 2001 Comprehensive Plan recommended that density type development, or concentrating new development in areas that are already developed, take place. This kind of approach creates a need to make it easier for people to get around in alternative, "non-car" ways in especially the cities of Merrill and Tomahawk.

Although very little progress toward creating pedestrian and bike friendly areas and linkages of those modes took place over the last 10 years, much more discussion and planning around the issue of connecting/lengthening existing pedestrian and bike trails and developing new ones occurred toward the end of that period. Entities as varied as the Merrill Area Healthy Lifestyles Network - a group of health care professionals and citizens interested in promoting exercise - to both city governments located in the county were pretty consistently involved in discussions to extend and link pedestrian and bike trails. New bike lanes were installed as part of the aforementioned North 4th Street project in Tomahawk. Lincoln County, with the assistance of the Wisconsin North Central Regional Planning Commission was, in mid- 2010, getting ready to develop a Bicycle Facilities Network Plan. In late 2011, a rails to trails group was established in the City of Merrill to develop a bike trail in the western end of the city out to the MARC Complex/Smith Center approaching Council Grounds State Park. By that time, Canadian National Railroad had already removed the rails and ties along that section of the abandoned track. These efforts make it likely that additional work on developing pedestrian and bike lanes in the county will occur in the coming years.

In 2010, the City of Tomahawk completed park improvement plans which called for linking trails throughout the park system and extending them into the city. Bradley Park was designated the city's primary silent sports park where much of the work to promote pedestrian friendly, non-motorized travel would begin. Some specific steps that were suggested to help promote these linkages in Tomahawk were:

- Extend the river walk.
- Construct an underpass at 4th Street and Memorial Bridge (to coincide with the reconstruction of the road). Note: This goal was completed in the summer of 2011.
- Link Bradley Park with the natural geologic trail behind the park where old ski jump and snowmobile trails are located.
- Improve trailheads, installing amenities (water fountains, bathrooms, etc.) in those locations to help encourage trail usage.

In addition, the State Trails Network Plan (2001, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources) recommended an extension of Tomahawk's Bearskin/Hiawatha Trail through Merrill along Highway 107. Tomahawk's 2006 Comprehensive Plan along with the State Trails Network Plan developed five years before also called for the development of a trail using abandoned railroad corridor from Tomahawk northeast to Crandon and a joining of the Bearskin/Hiawatha Trail going north from Tomahawk to County K in Oneida County. The North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle Facilities Network Plan (2004) also endorsed similar extensions in the effort to create a regional trail system throughout north central Wisconsin.[6] In early 2011, Tomahawk obtained a $626,000 Federal Transportation Enhancement grant to help with the myriad of trail connectivity projects.

Also, in 2009 the City of Merrill commissioned a river development study which called for a trail to be installed along the north bank of the Wisconsin River of just over a mile long from near Big Eddy Road on the east side of town to the Business 51 Bridge near the city's central retail district. It was proposed that the trail would be multi-purpose in nature, including the possibility that it could be used by snowmobilers seeking to travel to downtown retail and service destinations.[7] The planned rail to trail development in the western part of town could also help to jump start this initiative.

The river walk would also be linked, it was proposed by the city's Parks and Recreation Department, to a city wide network of interconnected trails using primarily existing road arteries. Main routes would be accessible from residential, park and business areas across the city. Starting on Highway 64 near Pine Ridge Road at the east end of town, the network would utilize newly designated bike lanes and pedestrian walkways on Merrill's main arteries including Center Avenue (County K), Memorial Drive, 6th Street, and 3rd Street. Trails and lanes would run across the nearly seven miles that the city spans from east to west. North/south arteries would also be developed allowing pedestrians and bikers to easily access various points across the city. Accessibility using alternative, non-motorized forms of transportation was the chief goal of the proposed system.[8]

These plans/efforts are consistent with and must be considered a part of the county's basic transportation plan as outlined later in this section. County transportation goals as they are summarized in this community plan support city and town initiatives that make it easier to move people and goods as long as the strong natural character of the county remains intact.

County highways in 2010 did not have designated bike lanes. According to the City of Merrill 2007 Comprehensive Plan, county highways G, K, Q and State Highways 64 and 107 in the city and leading out of the city are not recommended for bicycle travel. County Highways A, S and 86 are also not recommended for bike travel in or near the City of Tomahawk. But, there continue to be opportunities primarily

[6] "Tomahawk Parks & Recreation Plan by North Central," Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. For more specific details about proposed park projects see the report "Tomahawk Parks Improvement Plan," University of Wisconsin – Extension, Lincoln County (Art Lersch), June 2010.
[7] City of Merrill Eastside Waterfront Initiative, Riverfront Revitalization Plan; JJR and Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, Nov. 2009.
[8] Concept overview provided by Dan Wendorf, City of Merrill Parks & Recreation Director, July 2010.

along rural byways and other less busy county highways to promote bike lanes. A Bicycles Facilities Network Plan will help clarify the best places to install lanes.

Issues with the pedestrian network in the City of Merrill include but are not limited to missing sidewalk sections (i.e. discontinuation of sidewalks in unlikely and inconvenient places), sidewalks in poor condition, and the lack of sidewalks in areas that should have them to promote pedestrian safety. Similar challenges were present in Tomahawk.

Public Transportation

The City of Merrill is one of the few cities of its size in Wisconsin that has a public bus operation. The Merrill – Go Round service receives most of its funding (65%) through the state and federal governments. About 22% of its support comes from fares. Another 13% is provided by the city. During the summer, when school is not in session, all pickups are arranged by patrons. A primary focus of the service is to transport students to and from school. Another is to provide easy to use, very affordable transportation for seniors. Ridership rose from 2006 to 2008, with an average of 75,000 + patrons using the system each year in 2007 and 2008. Ridership declined 4% from 2008 to 2009 during the latter part of the Great Recession, a likely effect of the county's poor economy and chronically high unemployment during the period.[9]

According to the operation's director, the Merrill – Go - Round over the next several years seeks to:

- Extend its service hours (earlier morning, later evenings, and weekends)
- Expand service areas
- Increase fleet and number of employees to accommodate longer schedules and greater territory covered

The desire to develop a bus service that serves a wider geographical area is consistent with the county's concern about helping an aging population, especially in the rural areas, access services that are found mostly in the cities of Merrill and Tomahawk. The overriding county goal of linking various modes of transportation should include, it is recommended, creating connections that promote public transportation. From land use and community standpoints, an increased use of public transportation will foster a more sustainable and efficient model of moving people and goods throughout the county.

[9] Statistics provided by Rich Grenfell, Director, Merrill Go-Round, July 2010.

Also part of this equation should be the increased availability and use of senior transport vans such as the one that is currently in operation in the Tomahawk area. This van, supported by Tomahawk Community Bank, has been an effective transporter of seniors throughout that area and shows how much can be done when just one private, non-government community entity, with the help of a local foundation, takes the lead in providing a much needed service. With government budgets tightening, this kind of private/corporate sponsorship of transportation options will likely be in greater demand over the next decade.

Airports

In April, 2009, the Merrill Airport received just over $2 million from the FAA to extend water main and sanitary sewer to the terminal area. Other improvements that were either taking place to the airport, were completed as the decade ended, or were being planned included an upgrade of the main runway providing access to larger cargo planes and jets, an addition of a security fence and apron improvements, parallel (to runway) taxiway construction, installation of a Jet –A fuel farm, a new ramp area, and a new terminal complex. Total costs for both completed and in progress projects were estimated to be nearly $8.4 million. It was also estimated that another $3 million would be needed for planned projects. By mid-2010, the City of Merrill had contributed roughly $345,000 and the state $106,000 toward the completion of these projects, meaning most of the capital came from federal and state grants. Dollars that help fund some of the state grants are contributed by pilots who are required to pay a tax on fuel. Construction efforts were hampered by a tornado that ripped through the area in April 2011. The Tomahawk Airport also received federal dollars to help expand its runway system in the effort to attract more business related clients.[10]

Many of the planning group's members expressed that county government, especially the zoning office, should do what it could to foster responsible growth of the county's two formal air facilities and various rural landing strips. (See Goal #4, page 53). When possible, the county should also consider providing financial support for airport improvements that have the potential of helping to promote business growth and to broaden the county's tax base. Also emphasized during airport related discussions was the idea that local airports could not become more effective catalysts for economic development unless the infrastructures surrounding them, especially roads, were made to be more accepting of trucks that move freight to and from them. It was recognized that the close proximity of Merrill's industrial park to the airport is an asset that could be taken advantage of even more in coming years.

[10] Merrill statistics are based on overview provided by airport management personnel to the City of Merrill Council, June 2010.

Truck Transportation

Although Lincoln County lost nearly 20% (about 200)[11] of its wood product manufacturing jobs during the first part of the December 2007 to September 2009 recession, a great deal of lumber, raw materials, and finished goods are still transported from and through the county by truck. Much of this truck traffic flows through the county on state Highway 39/51. Between 2000 and 2010, several product distribution businesses located in Merrill in close proximity to the route as a way to help them minimize transportation costs. Russ Davis Wholesale, a food distribution center, and Zastrow the Beer Man, were just two of these successful operations.

Because of its proximity to 39/51, it is recommended that the county do all it can to foster the development of what seems to be a growing niche: distribution centers. Route 107 near the City of Merrill industrial park, with its expanded width, is already set up to accept heavy truck traffic in the Merrill area. Talk of building another industrial park near 39/51 in the city was ongoing at the end of the decade.

The Town of Merrill began building its own business park in 2010. It is expected that this operation will generate more traffic along County Highways K and C, thus making the maintenance of those roads more crucial. K is ready to accept the additional traffic. In many places C is not, meaning that much more could and should be done, despite budget constraints, to improve that road. Improvements to that same road in adjacent Langlade County were for the most part already completed by the beginning of 2010.

Potential areas of development, including those that encourage more truck traffic, must be encouraged by the county in such a way that will preserve and possibly even enhance quality of life and the county's rural character.

[11] Lincoln County Workforce Development Profile 2008-20009, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

Lincoln County Transportation Plan: Goals and Objectives

As has been the case in numerous community meetings held throughout the county in recent years, and as is also evidenced in data gathered by various local organizations,[12] many residents and elected officials are concerned about anemic job growth in the county. The issue is constantly mentioned as being the most important one to address in the coming years. A stagnating local economy has contributed to a lack of diverse employment choices, depressed equalized values, and perceptions that, whether justified or not, Lincoln County depends too heavily on an economic niche (wood based industry) that is tied to an increasingly unpredictable housing/building construction market. The belief that job creation is too slow has had many key stakeholders asking the question "What should be Lincoln County's overall economic vision?" Recent positive attempts to answer this question, such as fostering things like biomass development, have been somewhat successful but more work is needed.

Like the suggested strategies and action steps developed for the other concentration areas highlighted in this updated Comprehensive Plan, proposed initiatives related to transportation infrastructure reflect the desire of many in the community to create a much more viable economic future for Lincoln County. Similar to what was voiced over 10 years ago when the original county comprehensive plan was being developed,[13] it is clear that stakeholders still want to see economic development accomplished without damaging the county's rural character. This attitude also applies to transportation improvements that may contribute to that economic growth.

The table that begins on the next page outlines transportation priorities that if done correctly should maintain rural character while increasing transportation efficiency. Some of the proposed objectives if carried out will help address more than one goal. The group of stakeholders attending the planning sessions - who are listed following this paragraph - also agreed that exploring and monitoring funding opportunities must be the initial objective/strategy to be carried out within each prioritized goal.

Those who took part in the transportation planning meetings were:

- Dan Miller – Lincoln County Planning & Zoning
- Randy Scholz – Lincoln County Highway Department
- Mike Tolvstad – Tomahawk Public Works
- Herb Schotz – Trails and silent sport uses
- Karen Olson – Town of Skanawan
- Rick Dorn – Town of Schley

[12] See for example "The National Citizen Survey Report, City of Merrill;" UW-Extension, Lincoln County Tomahawk and Merrill market/retail studies; synopses of Merrill community economic development meetings; and the Merrill Marketing Plan.
[13] See "Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan Volume 1: Inventory and Analysis Report," pages 74 – 87.

- Gerald Plamann – Town of Schley
- John Bailey – Town of Harrison and Lincoln County Board
- Dan Adamec – ATV and trails
- Norm Hodgson – Town of Russell
- Jonn Miller – Merrill Airport
- Gary Schwartz – Merrill Airport
- Jack Sroka – Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation
- Kevin Koth – Town of Bradley

Their discussions were facilitated by the University of Wisconsin – Extension, Lincoln County Community Resource Development Educator.

Figure 12 **Transportation Plan Outline**

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Group/Agency	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[14]
Goal #1: Road systems will be upgraded to keep current business establishments and their jobs in Lincoln County and to attract additional businesses and new employment opportunities to the area.	Federal Highways Department of Transportation Department of Natural Resources Army Corps of Engineers (depending on project) Lincoln County Private developers Towns in county Cities in county County Forestry Department (help locating funding sources) (In most cases, the DOT and	Depends on the project, but in most cases it will have to be the county Highway Department	**Objective A:** Explore and take advantage of when feasible revenue programs and grants that will improve different modes of transportation and our ability to link them Monitor and apply for federal transportation stimulus dollars. Monitor and apply for non – federal dollars that are project specific. **Objective B:** Upgrade bridges. A county inventory posting bridges was completed in mid-2009. Bridge work has been prioritized based on that inventory. Projects will be done in order when necessary funding is obtained.	Ongoing over the course of the 10 year plan period. Timing of bridge and road construction depends on priority order and available funding.

[14] Some of the action steps mentioned in this plan will occur at the most opportune time (when it most makes sense) so it is difficult to assign them timelines.

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Group/Agency	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[14]
	the county partner to take the lead on bridge projects. Federal highway department creates bridge repair and development priority list.)		**Objective C:** Upgrade roads. By mid – 2009, the county completed an inventory and a priority list for road upgrades. The list is based on a primary goal of reconstructing roads to a standard so that they do not have to be posted. This will help keep heavy truck traffic on them, which is important for the efficient transport of goods and business growth. ***(Note: Action steps for the first three strategies under Goal #1 will be determined by the Lincoln County Highway Department with appropriate partners and in consideration of specific project requirements.)*** **Objective D:** Create and implement plan that separates truck routes from regular traffic routes. County Highway Department to identify stakeholders. Develop plan using stakeholder input. (Meetings to be facilitated by UW-Extension). The plan should address how truck traffic should be routed as more firms relocate to and existing businesses grow throughout the county. Use of zoning districts to determine where economic growth is being encouraged should be a main criterion used to determine truck routes.	
Goal #2: Trails of various types (e.g. ATV, snowmobile, walking, biking, horse, etc.) will be joined together and linked with other transportation modes such as roads both inside and outside the county to support greater regional	Public/private sector partnerships (Private sector partners may sponsor portions of the trails.) Approach businesses that benefit from the trail infrastructure). User groups and clubs. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Lincoln County and surrounding counties'	Highway and Forestry Departments (Impetus could also come from clubs or volunteer groups. However, it is likely that the two county departments	**Objective A:** Explore and take advantage of when feasible revenue programs and grants that will improve different modes of transportation and our ability to link them Lead county agencies work with trail volunteers and clubs (ATV, snowmobile, silent sports) to develop a database of possible grant making organizations and what initiatives they will support. Database housing grant possibilities is maintained by lead agencies. Lead agencies stay in constant communication with volunteer groups and clubs to both convey and collect information about	Ongoing Inventory should be completed by the end of 2011 Most other tasks to be completed during the first

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Group/Agency	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[14]
economic activity.	forestry departments. Lincoln County Zoning Department. Lincoln County and surrounding counties' land conservation/information departments. Parks and Recreation Departments (city departments in the county and where practical outside of the county.) Groups promoting healthy living (e.g. Merrill Area Health Lifestyles Network; Free Clinic; Regular clinics and hospitals, etc.). City of Merrill (possible riverfront project) City of Tomahawk river walk. Area chambers of commerce.	would be the most heavily involved stakeholders from beginning to end.)	grant making institutions. A committee of stakeholders is established to identify which grant opportunities should be pursued and who should do the writing. Ongoing exploration and implementation when feasible of user fees to help support linkage efforts. **Objective B:** <u>Plan and promote multiple modes of transportation as part of road repair and construction</u>. Create an inventory of what trails to connect and where (County Zoning with Forestry, City of Merrill and City of Tomahawk Parks and Recreation Departments, user groups.) Seek greater assistance from and cooperation with volunteer groups and clubs that currently maintain the trails. (County Forestry and Highway Departments with the assistance of UW-Extension will likely have to take the initiative to gather stakeholders for discussion.) Widen road shoulders wherever feasible to make walking and biking more enjoyable and safe. Make this an automatic part of road construction planning. Plan for and create a walking/biking path between Merrill and Tomahawk (possibly along Route 107.) Expand cross country skiing and snowshoeing on existing trails where possible. Promote multiple uses of selected trails (e.g. Horse and ATV coexist as long as both follow rules and common sense). Explore connecting the county's portions of the Ice Age Trail.	five years following community plan adoption. First two years of community plan implementation.

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Group/Agency	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[14]
			Objective C: <u>Create snowmobile connectivity east to west and north to south in Merrill so snowmobilers don't have to cross the Wisconsin River (create similar connectivity in Tomahawk)</u> Coordinate efforts with City of Merrill proposed riverfront and Highway 51 development projects. (Feasibility studies completed fall/winter 2009) Coordinate efforts with Tomahawk Parks and Recreation Plan that was completed during the fall (?) of 2009. Develop and implement plan with town officials that will allow snowmobiles to more easily access downtown areas by using town roads and paths. Develop and make available accurate information about silent modes of transportation and sports to potential visitors and local users. (The county will coordinate this effort by first creating an inventory of the information that already exists and then by convening the stakeholders who put the information together to discuss how a more uniformed, countywide marketing effective approach can be taken.)	
<u>Goal #3</u>: County departments will coordinate the development of a plan that effectively promotes Lincoln County trail systems.	Chambers and their members including hotels and motels Towns County Forestry Department Cities Economic development corporations Volunteer groups and clubs (ATV and snowmobile) Businesses and franchisees (group to strategize cooperative advertising opportunities) Tomahawk Main Street	County Forestry Department along with Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation. Work in conjunction with Tomahawk and Merrill chambers of commerce.	**Objective A:** <u>Explore and take advantage of when feasible revenue programs and grants that will improve different modes of transportation and our ability to link them</u> Focus on finding a way to privately fund trail maps so that businesses can advertise in them. Acquire financial sponsors for marketing materials. **Objective B:** <u>Develop inventory of existing trail systems to determine what is most important and feasible to market</u>	Objectives to be completed within one year following community plan adoption.

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Group/Agency	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[14]
	University of Wisconsin – Extension State of Wisconsin Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wisconsin Public Service (owners of river shoreline) Groups enforcing American Disabilities Act		Gather all materials produced by County Forestry, chambers of commerce, and other entities. Inventoried data will be compiled within a database that is consistently maintained by the county Zoning Departments. Coordinate efforts with City of Merrill proposed riverfront and Highway 51 development projects (feasibility studies completed fall/winter 2009) Coordinate efforts with Tomahawk Parks and Recreation Plan that was completed during the summer and fall of 2009. **Objective C:** <u>Organize and begin discussing with stakeholders how to market tourism on a countywide level</u> Gather and summarize relevant information that is already out there. Communicate what is already there during the first stakeholder meetings. Identify county role in helping to coordinate tourism efforts already underway. (It is possible that part of the first meeting agenda will be a discussion about the county's potential role.) Identify and contact stakeholders for discussion forum. Develop focused meeting agenda, one that includes articulating where county may fit in and asking stakeholders where they think the county can assist (non-financial at least to begin with.) Meeting agenda(s) should also include where and how to advertise (identification and analysis of target audiences). Devise next steps in the conversation. (What additional planning will be needed, etc.?) Develop marketing materials based on the discussions. Plan and implement additional events that will showcase the county's numerous silent sports, snowmobile and ATV	

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Group/Agency	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[14]
			opportunities. (Perhaps an Ice Age Trail walk.) **Objective D:** <u>Establish a Lincoln County welcome or visitors' center near a county entrance</u> Develop and implement a plan to establish the center. As part of the plan, identify location (existing building, land, etc.), how this center will be different from what the chambers already offer, building design, and what marketing materials should be placed in the center. (Staffing)	
<u>Goal #4</u>: Infrastructural development of the Merrill, Tomahawk and local private airports will be strengthened to foster more long-term economic growth.	Federal Aviation Administration Local airport managers Businesses (who currently or would like to utilize more air transport for freight and people) Local elected officials Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Army Corps of Engineers Towns (impact of airport expansion on and how to mitigate those things)	Economic development corporations County zoning, land use and forest departments	**Objective A:** <u>County stakeholders, including those departments involved in land use issues, learn more about how existing airports need to more effectively promote local, intelligent economic development and future plans, including expansion</u> Administrators from the city and local private airports attend an informational forum where they educate interested local government stakeholders on airport expansion plans. (Forum to be arranged by UW-Extension.) Discussion will also take place about how the county can help promote economic development through airport expansion and improvement. Develop and conduct sessions that educates the public about the economic development benefits of expanding and upgrading local airports. As part of these sessions, discussions will be held on what other infrastructural developments (e.g. road upgrades) will be needed to compliment airport improvements and expansion. **Objective B:** <u>Explore and take advantage of when feasible revenue programs and grants that will improve different modes of transportation and our ability to link them</u>	To be completed within the first two years of the 10 year community plan period. To be completed within the first three years of the 10 year community plan period.

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Group/Agency	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[14]
			Monitor specific funding opportunities (federal stimulus, state, etc.) that will facilitate airport expansion to attract more use by business. **Objective C:** <u>Determine what land use and zoning changes are needed to help accommodate airport growth</u> Investigate the positives and negatives of creating such zoning changes. Continually revise existing airport plans and change expansion strategies to better accommodate business needs **Objective D:** <u>Study the feasibility of lengthening runways to accommodate passenger service.</u> Reports will include potential costs, estimated levels of use, impacts on surrounding land, and zoning issues.	To be completed within the first year of plan adoption.

Policies

- Work with local and regional transportation entities such as the Merrill - Go Round, Tomahawk Senior Shuttle, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, zoning and land offices, town boards, and planning organizations like North Central Regional Planning Commission and the University of Wisconsin – Extension Community Development department to coordinate the development of transportation modes that are interconnected.

- Consider potential economic development needs and strategies while conducting transportation planning and project implementation. A primary aim of improving transportation networks throughout the county will be to enhance economic development in such a way as to not threaten Lincoln County's natural scenic beauty and rural character.

- Seek and obtain whenever possible non-tax levy funding for transportation planning and project implementation.

- Install bike and pedestrian lanes wherever feasible to encourage a more sustainable approach to community and economic development. These amenities will also be developed in such a way as to promote quality of life and healthy lifestyle practices. Work with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to create economical, safe, and efficient designs of bike and pedestrian lanes that also improve the flow of traffic.

- Encourage the further development of transportation choices that serve the aging population, especially those seniors who live in rural areas but need to obtain services from entities in Merrill or Tomahawk. Make existing modes of transportation more user friendly for the aged, the disabled, and children.

- Carefully plan new development to minimize extensive road construction and avoid maintenance burdens for towns. Consider implementing town road impact fees for new development projects that place a burden on or require the upgrading of town roads (Carry over from previous county comprehensive plan.)

- Enhance signage to bring people into the cities off of Route 39/51. The route's corridors near both Tomahawk and Merrill are well traveled. Attracting people off of the route to visit both cities is consistent with the City of Merrill 51 Corridor Feasibility Study and Tomahawk Main Street initiatives.

Possible Funding Sources

A variety of state and federal funding sources for road construction and maintenance exist and are known to the county's highway commissioner and the cities' street department administrators. This section primarily describes funding sources to help develop and/or maintain alternative modes of transportation including but not limited to biking, walking, and ATV travel. Although this is an extensive list, it by no means is exhaustive. Grant opportunities are current as of the writing of this community plan. Stakeholders are encouraged to supplement what is here with their own research.

- *Wisconsin Department of Transportation - Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program (BPFP):* Grant dollars can be used to construct or plan for bicycle or bicycle facility projects. Local governments with taxing authority are eligible to apply. The work must be completed and then the project sponsor can seek reimbursement through the program to cover up to 80% of the costs. Solicitation of projects is typically done every two years. Consult http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/bike-ped-facilities.htm for more information.

- *Wisconsin Department of Transportation - Local Transportation Enhancements (TE) Program:* The program funds projects that promote multi-modal transportation activities and enhance traditional highway facilities. Dollars are used to support the development of innovative transportation features that go "above and beyond" what is typically done. Local governments with taxing authority may apply. Money from this program, like the BPFP grant, is used to reimburse up to 80% of completed project costs. This program as administered in conjunction with the BPFP. Go to http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/te.htm for more information.

- *Wisconsin Department of Transportation - Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program:* Federal dollars are passed through the state to support efforts that encourage children (K-8) to walk and ride bikes to schools, improve the safety of such transportation alternatives for children, and reduce traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution near schools. An additional purpose of these grants is to support modes of transportation that have the potential of promoting healthier lifestyles in children. More information about the program may be found at http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/saferoutes.htm.

- *Wisconsin Department of Transportation – Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) Program:* Eligible grantees include private businesses, government bodies, and consortiums. Fifty-percent state grants are provided for road, rail, harbor and airport projects that promote business development and create jobs. Local match dollars may come from a variety of sources including federal, local, or private funds and in-kind services. Consult http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/tea.htm for more details.

- *Wisconsin Department of Transportation – Surface Transportation Rural Program (STP – Rural, STP – R):* Dollars are targeted toward improving primarily county trunk highways. Eligible roads must be major collectors or higher. Applications are solicited by

WISDOT in the spring of odd numbered years. For more information go to http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/stp-rural.htm.

- *Wisconsin Department of Transportation – Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP):* Most program dollars are used to improve the safety of documented, high crash areas. Pedestrian and bicycle projects are eligible. A 10% match is required. Program information is located at http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/hsip.htm.

- *Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – ATV Trails Grants:* Grants are made to counties, towns, cities, villages and tribes to acquire, insure, develop and maintain ATV trails, areas and routes. The Department of Natural Resources allocates funds based on the following ranked priorities: (1) Trail maintenance; (2) Acquisition of liability insurance; (3) Acquisition of easements; (4) Major rehabilitation of bridge structures or trails; (5) Land acquisition and other costs related to the development of new ATV trails and areas. For more information go to http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cfa/lr/atv/atvtrails.html.

- *Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Snowmobile Trail Aids:* Eligible projects include maintenance of trails, trail development, and rehabilitation projects. Counties are eligible to apply. More information can be found at http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cfa/lr/snowmobile/snow.html.

- *Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Recreational Trails Program (RTP):* Cities, counties, villages, towns, school districts and incorporation organizations may receive reimbursement through the program for the maintenance and restoration of existing trails, development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages, development of new trails, and acquisition of easements. Support for rehabilitation of existing trails is top priority. Consult http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cfa/LR/section/rectrails.html for more information.

- *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Climate Showcase Communities Grants:* Grants are made to communities interested in developing and implementing programs/methods that promote sustainability by the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions while improving public health and social conditions in a cost-effective manner. The development and production of energy efficient modes of transportation may be eligible. More information can be located at http://www.epa.gov/statelocalclimate/local/showcase/.

- *U.S. Department of Transportation Nation Scenic Byways Program:* Funds may be used for "construction along a scenic byway of a facility for pedestrians and bicyclists." Consult http://www.bywaysonline.org/grants/ for more information.

- *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:* Grants are made to communities that seek to promote active lifestyles that have the potential to help reverse bad health trends such as obesity. Programs/projects should help to integrate physical activity into daily routines.

Neighborhood and transportation design geared toward promoting these objectives is supported. Consortiums are encouraged to apply. For more information go to http://www.rwjf.org/.

V. HOUSING

Lincoln and Surrounding Counties' Total Housing Units

Figure 13 below shows that Lincoln County housing unit growth from 2000 to 2008 was similar to surrounding counties with the exception of Marathon County and to a smaller degree Taylor County. It is estimated that just over 13,000 of the county's housing units were occupied in 2008.

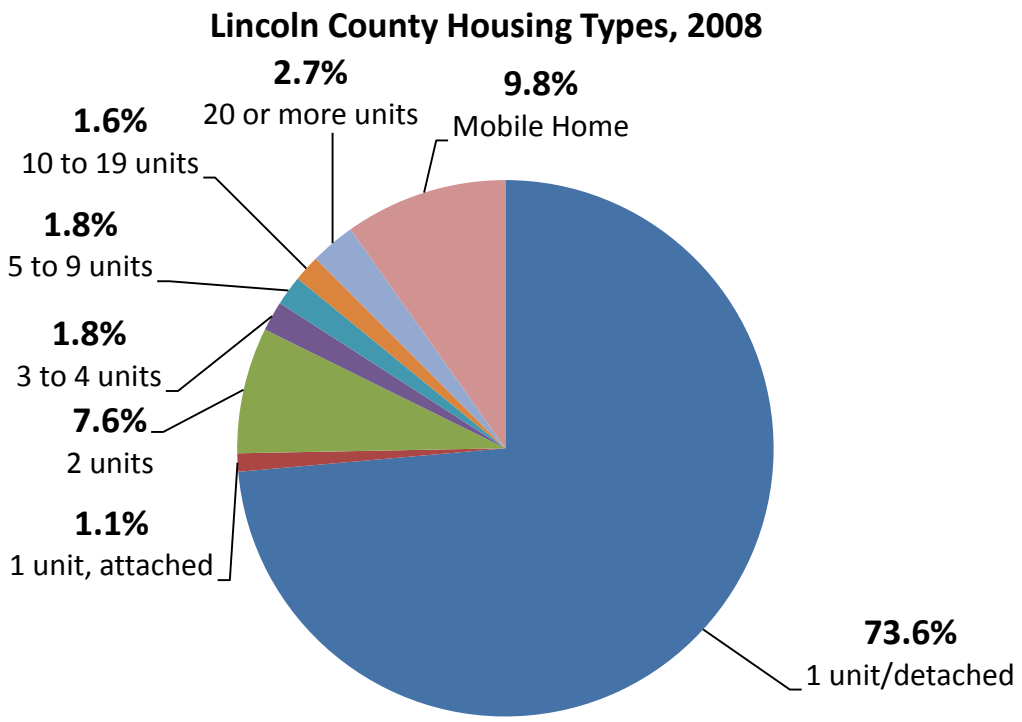
Figure 13 **Total Housing Units**

County/State	Census 2000	ACS Data*	Number Increase	Percent Increase
Lincoln	14,681	16,005	1,324	9.0%
Langlade	11,187	12,105	918	8.2%
Marathon	50,360	57,117	6,757	13.4%
Oneida	26,627	29,030	2,403	9.0%
Price	9,574	10,267	693	10.4%
Taylor	8,595	9,188	593	6.9%
Wisconsin	2,321,157	2,548,132	226,975	9.8%

Lincoln County Housing Types

The makeup of Lincoln County housing as is depicted below in Figure 14 changed little over the past couple decades. As was the case with the 1990 census data used by Vandewalle and Associates in the 2001 Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan, the vast majority of Lincoln County housing units in 2008 were still classified under "one unit, detached" meaning that most (73.6%) were single family homes. By comparison, 66.6% of Wisconsin's housing in 2008 was classified as "one unit, detached." The percentage for the state as a whole is lower because it includes urban counties that have many apartment and condominium complexes.

Figure 14



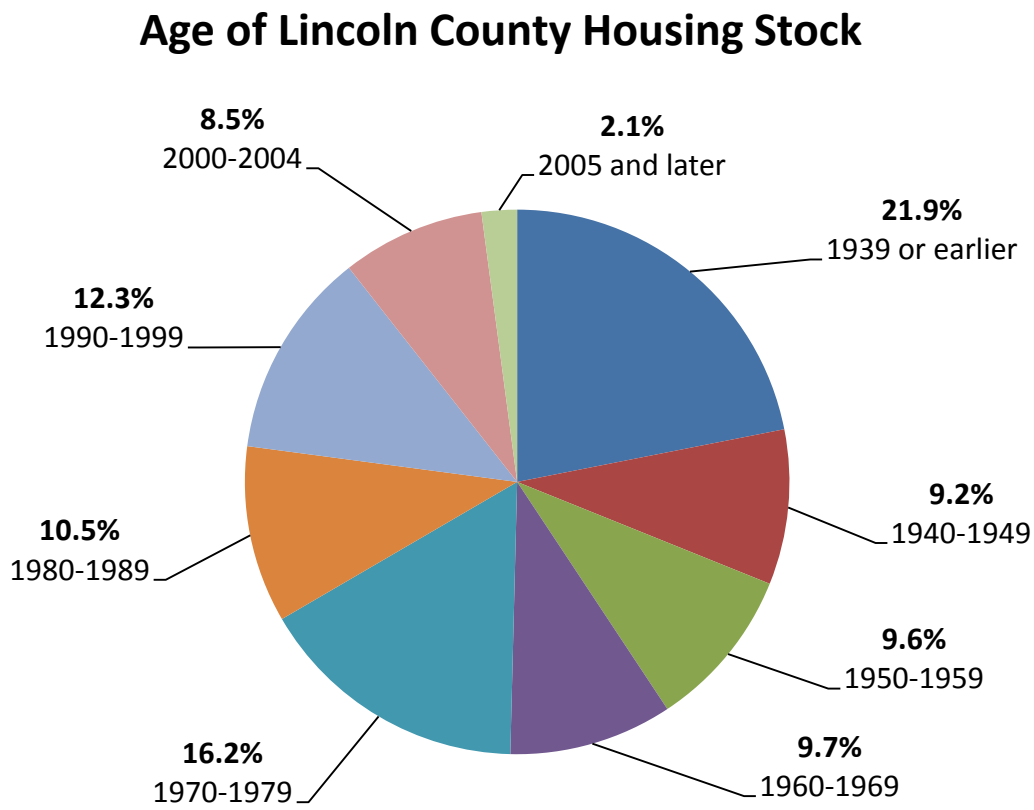
Nearly 10% of Lincoln County housing units in 2008 were mobile homes, approximately the same percentage as in 2000 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Slightly under 4% of all dwellings in the state were classified in 2008 as "mobile home." It is also worth noting that about 74.5% of all housing units in the county in that same year were considered "owner occupied." The remaining were rental units.

Back in 2000, the latest known data from the Census Bureau, about 22% of the total housing stock, excluding the cities, was classified "seasonal, recreational or occasional use dwellings." Most of these units in both 1990 and 2000 were located along the numerous lake and river shores throughout the county but primarily in the northern half. The percentage of dwellings under this classification declined 10% between 1990 and 2000. A major reason for the decrease in percentage during the decade was that far fewer units were classified under this category of dwellings in Bradley Township (34% decrease) and in Harrison Township (33% decrease). Another of many possible factors leading to the decline of units classified under this category may have been changes in residency status. In 2000, the towns having the highest percentages of "seasonal, recreational or occasional use dwellings" out of the total number of units were Wilson (59%), Tomahawk (48%) and Harrison (43%).

Age of Housing Units in Lincoln County (based on year built)

Figure 15 on the next page shows that nearly 67% of the county's housing stock in 2008 was 30 or more years old, a slightly higher percentage than the state as a whole. Over 30% of the county's housing was built before 1950. In comparison, nearly 40% of housing units in Wisconsin were built before 1950.

Figure 15

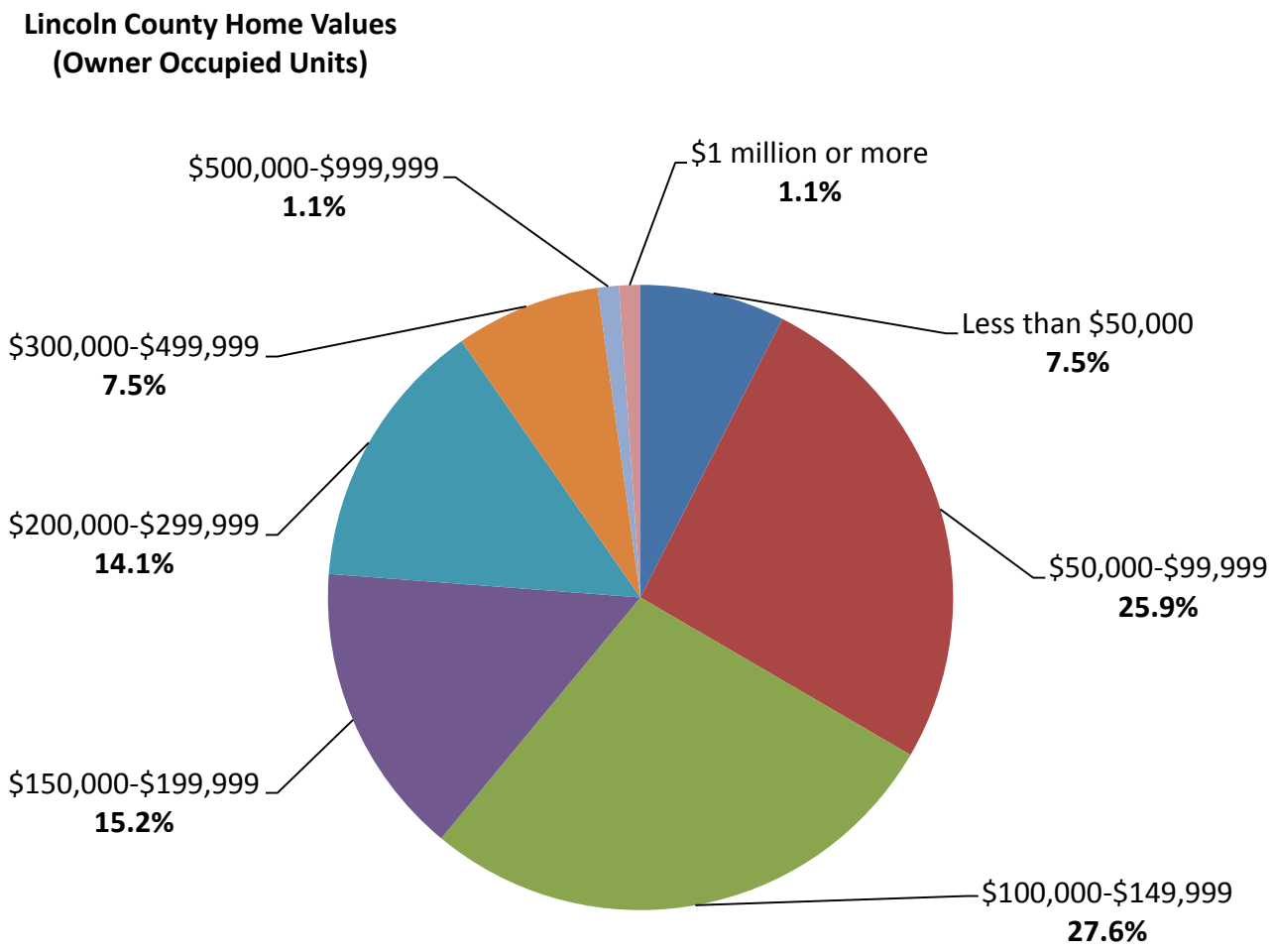


Of the estimated 13,026 occupied housing units in the county in 2008, 53% were heated primarily by utility gas, 22% by bottled, tank or LP gas, and nearly 12% by wood. Since 1990, utility gas heating has gone up by about 8% while wood heating has gone down by roughly 7%.

Value of Owner Occupied Units

Most occupied housing units in the county, as is shown in Figure 16 below, range in value from $50,000 to $149,000.

Figure 16



Home Ownership Rates

Figure 17 below shows the home ownership rates of central Wisconsin counties and the state.[15] As the table shows, home ownership rates declined in Lincoln County by nearly 4% over the 2000 to 2008 period. Oneida County also experienced a decline in home ownership during the same period (nearly 5%). The state ownership rate has steadily increased since 1990. County data showing changes in ownership rates as a result of the 2007 through 2009 Great Recession and its aftermath were not yet available in late 2009 and the first half of 2010 when this section of this updated Comprehensive Plan was developed and written.

Figure 17 **Home Ownership Rates**

County/State	Home Ownership Rate (1990)	Home Ownership Rate (2000)	Home Ownership Rate (2008)
Lincoln	76.3%	78.2%	74.5%
Langlade	77.5%	79%	81%
Marathon	74.7%	75.7%	75.6%
Oneida	77.4%	79.7%	75%
Wisconsin	66.7%	68.4%	70.3%

Lincoln County Projected Households

Households are the number of occupied units countywide. Figure 18 on the following page, developed from Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center data (May 2008), shows that growth of Lincoln County occupied housing units from 2000 to 2030 is projected to be less on a percentage basis than the state and in Oneida, Langlade, and Marathon counties. Only Price and Taylor counties in the immediate central Wisconsin region are projected to have slower household growth.

[15] Data not available for Price and Taylor counties.

Figure 18 **Projected Households (2000-2030)**

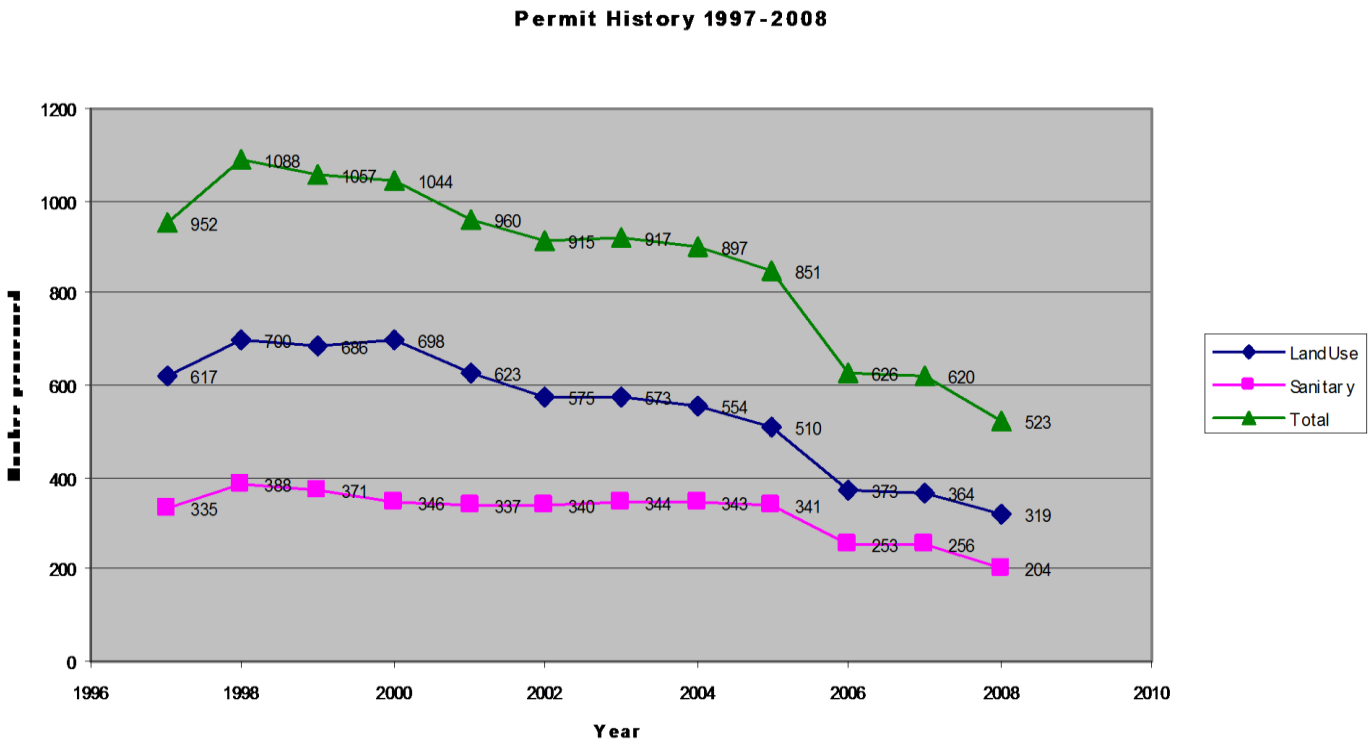
County/ State	Census 2000	Estimated 2008	Projected 2015	Projected 2030	Difference (2000 to 2030)	Percent Change (2000 to 2030)
Lincoln	11,721	13,026	13,452	14,610	2,889	24.6%
Langlade	8,452	8,787	9,865	10,754	2,302	27.2%
Marathon	47,702	53,162	57,113	65,325	17,623	36.9%
Oneida	15,333	17,659	18,068	19,631	4,298	28.0%
Price	6,564	NA	7,371	7,720	1,156	17.6%
Taylor	7,529	NA	8,283	8,712	1,183	15.7%
Wisconsin	2,084,556	2,236,518	2,442,354	2,738,477	653,921	31.4%

Zoning Permit History

According to the Lincoln County Zoning Department between 2000 and 2008 land use permits by town ranged from 18 issued in Birch to 905 issued in Bradley. Besides Bradley, the only other town that issued over 500 permits was Merrill (576). King (416), Harrison (393) and Pine River (327) had the next most permits issued. Permit activity represented significant but concentrated growth in just a few rural portions of the county. Permits authorizing structural changes to homes, most commonly garage additions or other types of add-ons, were the most common.

As Figure 19 on the next page shows the total number of land use permits issued by the county zoning department from 1997 through 2008 steadily declined. Sharper declines were experienced during the recession years later in the period, reflecting substantial decreases in local construction projects. Following the Merrill area tornado of April 2011, permit issuance rose temporarily as most homeowners with significant damage or who completely lost their dwellings sought to rebuild.

Figure 19 **Lincoln County Zoning Permit History**



In late 2004, the county created and passed a new zoning code that was meant to be consistent with its 2001 comprehensive plan. Although five townships decided not to be governed by the code (the cities have their own codes) the rest of rural Lincoln County has embraced it. The code has been an effective tool in helping to ensure that most development whether residential, commercial, or industrial take place where development has already occurred. This, along with the recent modifications to eliminate inconsistencies as part of this Comprehensive Plan update that arose in land use zoning classifications from 2001 to 2010 in all eleven towns under county zoning has reinforced a value held by many residents that Lincoln County's natural beauty be maintained. However, as county government is forced

to shrink due mostly to the economic downturn, there has recently been talk of simplifying the code while maintaining its most important basic tenets.

Housing Plan

This plan was developed by key stakeholders familiar with Lincoln County housing issues and needs. They met three times in late 2009. Meetings were facilitated by the University of Wisconsin – Extension, Lincoln County Community Resource Development Educator. The stakeholders involved in the process were:

- Shari Wicke, City of Merrill Community Development
- Wayne Zimmerman, City of Merrill Housing Authority
- Chris Malm: Park Street Properties
- Larry Peeters: Merrill Area Landlord's Association
- Charlotte Peters: (landlord)
- Karen Karow: (landlord)
- Kim Brixius: Town and Country Reality/ReMax Properties
- Mayor Doug Williams (City of Merrill)
- Kevin Koth, Wisconsin Towns Association Representative
- Bill Burgener, Wisconsin Towns Association, Town of Merrill
- Bob Roe: Lincoln Community Bank
- Rosalie Wiedow, Lincoln County Housing Authority (this authority is not associated with Lincoln County
- Harry Gladwin, Lincoln County Housing Authority
- Lynn Zentner, director, Merrill Area United Way, (Community Care Center, 401 W. Main Street, Merrill, 54452)
- Glenda Kummerow, Lincoln County Social Services
- Sister Mary Thomas Reichel, Holy Cross Sisters and Salvation Army, 1600 O'Day St, Merrill

Figure 20 **Housing Plan Outline**

Priority/Goal	Lead Groups/Agencies	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
***Goal #1*: Promote collaboration amongst housing agencies located throughout the county and use those strong ties to free up the exchange of housing related information.**	Lincoln County Zoning Department University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County Possibly both area chambers of commerce	Aging and Disability Resources Center (benefit specialist and deferred real estate benefits) Merrill and Tomahawk senior centers Commission on Aging (already has housing placement and other services (also provides information) Realtors (Woodland Lakes Association). Both for sales and rentals) Merrill Area United Way Lincoln County Board Home Inspectors Association Appraisers Builders associations	**Objective A:** Develop "one stop shopping" type documents/methods communicating to people available housing assistance options Compile resource list (similar to Linc-on) of housing agencies, what they are offering, and their contact information (UW-Extension to gather the information from various agencies and to put it into a format that can be easily used) Recruit volunteers (perhaps youth/4-H ambassadors) to create a webpage or website listing housing related resources and contact information. (Tim Meehean, county administrative coordinator, mentioned that the page or site can be part of the county website). Local renter's association currently compiles and maintains its own list of what is available. This will be added to the other resource information. Develop housing phone assistance center similar to 211.	All of these things will start to be pursed during the first year of the plan. Most of the strategies will be ongoing. A planning subcommittee will be formed and will meet for the first time in January or February 2010. The intent is to plan for a spring 2010 event.

Priority/Goal	Lead Groups/Agencies	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
			Use housing agency job descriptions as the basis for the information that is conveyed. (Note: It may be possible to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars to help develop at least some of these resources such as the phone service and website). **Objective B:** <u>Create regular networking opportunities for local organization and agency representatives dealing with housing issues.</u> Planning for an initial housing fair, or more accurately an information exchange forum, will begin even before the Lincoln County Community Plan is adopted. (Lincoln County Zoning, Merrill Housing Authority, and UW-Extension to take the lead) **Objective C:** <u>Explore and take advantage of collaborative funding opportunities with agencies such as United Way, WHEDA, local CDBG housing dollars administrators, etc.</u> Agency use of the networking	

Priority/Goal	Lead Groups/Agencies	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
			opportunities and "one- stop shopping" information will help facilitate these collaborations. Lincoln County Zoning, the City of Merrill Housing Authority, and UW-Extension will work early in the plan implementation stages to develop a CDBG proposal for the zoning department to administer housing renovation/repair dollars (subject to Zoning Committee and probably County Board approval).	
Goal #2: Improve older homes to increase affordable housing and so especially the aging can remain in them (Notes: The planning group emphasized concentrating on upgrading what we have. It is also worth mentioning that this particular priority is consistent with the need for Lincoln County to develop an Aging and Disabilities Resource Center by winter of 2010 and Family Care by the winter of 2011).	Lincoln County Zoning Department University of Wisconsin-Extension City of Merrill Housing Authority	Merrill Area Development Corporation Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation Tomahawk Area Development Lincoln County Social Services North Central Community Action Program (CAP) Realtors Bankers Lincoln County Housing Authority (entity administering two senior housing complexes in	**Objective A:** Determine which older homes in the county (20+ years) are in need of repair and/or renovation Develop an extensive inventory of homes in need of repair using primarily exterior maintenance inspection (City of Merrill, Lincoln County Zoning with other qualified entities to conduct the inspections) (Note: The City of Merrill already has a partial list of such structures existing within city boundaries. Grant proposals will likely have to be written to obtain dollars to increase staff that can administer the funds	Ongoing, but preliminary work will be completed during the first two years of the plan implementation period.

Priority/Goal	Lead Groups/Agencies	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
		Tomahawk) Pine Crest Nursing Home Habitat for Humanity Rural Housing Authority Community Action Program (funding for affordable housing) Nonprofit agencies that serve low income families and individuals (e.g. HAVEN, Salvation Army, St. Vincent DePaul, etc.)	county-wide. CDBG may be a possibility here as well). **Objective B:** Use the compiled housing resource information to educate owners of homes on the inventory lists how they might be able to fund and make repairs and renovations (geared toward primarily low-income or fixed income home owners) Accomplish this at home events/forums and through direct contact with homeowners **Objective C:** Approach builders associations and other similar stakeholder organizations to promote affordable housing by using primarily the existing, renovated older home base (promoters should be realtors, renters, etc.) Identify organizations/associations to approach Use home renovation and repair inventory lists and other data to educate those organizations about the true state of affordable housing in the county.	

Priority/Goal	Lead Groups/Agencies	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
			Hold mini home makeover demonstration projects to show the value of renovating older homes and how some of them could become affordable housing (done by volunteers). **Objective D:** Develop a collaborative system of agencies to administer any funds that are obtained to further the priorities of improving older homes and increasing affordable housing. (Note: Many of the items used to foster collaboration and compile information about housing resources will also help to achieve this strategy).	
Goal #3: Develop much more specialized senior housing (Note: Much of what was discussed by the planning group related to the need for transitional housing. Seniors need places that they do not have to maintain but can still enjoy.)	As of late December 2009, no specific lead agencies had been identified. Group members are concerned that this may hinder progress toward achieving the priority. (Note: It is likely that private developers will have to take a substantial role. Lead agencies for this priority may be those that help to	Commission on Aging Aging Resource Development Center Pine Crest Banks Realtors Lincoln County Zoning City of Merrill Housing Authority	**Objective A:** Build specialized senior housing units. Plan where in the county it would be most feasible and desirable for these kinds of units to be built. Develop a strategy to entice private developers to invest. Facilitate the obtaining of proper permits, licenses, etc. by those parties interested in	Planning group members stated that this priority should be addressed during the second half of the decade. Thus, most of the action items related to the priority will be determined just after five years of the ten year plan has elapsed.

Priority/Goal	Lead Groups/Agencies	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
	persuade/recruit developers to take on projects).		building (make this process go as easily as possible). Develop creative designs that will encourage seniors to mingle and to stay active while maintaining their privacy. **Objective B:** Renovate older, larger existing buildings in senior housing. (e.g. Franklin School, old St. Mary's in Tomahawk. Old Wausau Hospital renovation). Create inventory of large older buildings that might be suitable for this development Create a list of potential developers experienced in renovating larger buildings into regular or senior housing. Forward that list to potential developers. Identify people to go discuss with these developers the benefits of doing senior housing projects in Lincoln County (growing again population, etc.)	

Policies

- Create centralized mechanisms to deal with housing issues on a county wide basis.

- Look for and take advantage of opportunities to collaborate or partner with existing housing related agencies to further community plan housing goals.

- Promote sustainable community concepts through subdivision development. When possible, local ordinances should be modified or created to reflect the community's desire that open spaces be maintained or, if new residential development is taking place, to create open spaces that incorporate sustainable concepts.

- Maintain policies that allow home owners and developers to freely choose how homes will be designed within parameters of current accepted zoning practices and other relevant local ordinances. (See accompanying land use map outlining current residential areas and potential "build out" locations).

- Promote rural character by "hiding" development from main roads through natural topography, vegetation and setbacks.

- Work with various entities on a consistent basis to locate and apply for funding to support home rehabilitation and maintenance.

- Strive to achieve housing related goals so that they are consistent with the primary objective of the county's Family Care program to support elderly citizens' desires to remain in their own homes for as long as is practicable.

Potential Housing Related Funding Resources

Further information about the potential funding sources listed below can be located on various websites/web pages by doing key word searches based on program titles. The nearest United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regional office to Lincoln County is located in Shawano, Wisconsin (715-524-8522).

- *Wisconsin Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) – Small Cities Housing Program:* This grant program, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Housing, provides dollars to local governments for housing programs (repairs, homebuyer assistance, etc.) meant to benefit low and moderate income individuals and families. CDBG dollars are typically distributed by local governments to individuals and families through revolving loan funds at below market interest rates. Money that is paid back is then leant out to other qualifying individuals or families. Both the City of Merrill and the City of Tomahawk receive CDBG funds from the Small Cities Housing Program. Most counties, including Lincoln County, are eligible to apply. The county should consider applying in partnership with one or both cities.

- *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Repair Loans and Grants:* These home improvement loans and grants are for individuals/households making less than 50% of the county median income (approximately $23,000 or less in 2010). Eligible individuals/families must also be living in small rural communities of less than 10,000 residents. Those eligible for grants must be at least 62 years old. If projections come to fruition, about 31% of the county's total population will be between the ages of 60 and 89 by the year 2030. This represents an increase in that population of about 8% to 10% from 2010 to 2030.

- *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loans:* This program is for individuals and families seeking affordable housing in rural Wisconsin. In order to be eligible for the program, families or individuals must be of moderate income, a United States citizen, and show ability to regularly make loan payments. Eligible properties include new or existing stick built or modular homes, new manufactured homes on permanent foundations, non-income producing dwellings that are owner occupied, and homes located in a rural area. Loans are made through local banks and are usually established as 30 year fixed mortgages.

- *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Housing Preservation Grants:* For rural homeowners considered low or very low income, these grants support efforts to repair and rehabilitate homes. Grants are made only to organizations that have experience administering housing programs for low/very low income individuals and families. Organizations must provide matching funds in support of the program and demonstrate that the area in question has need for a housing repair/rehabilitation program.

- *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Single Family Housing Direct Loans:* These loans are for families looking to purchase (new or existing), repair or improve a home. Loans are typically made to assist with down payments, enabling homes to be

purchased through a private lending source or as a sole source of assistance for purchase, repair or improvement. Eligible families can make no more than 80% of the county's household median income. Loans are made at market rates, but subsidies are provided to reduce effective interest rates to as low as 1%.

- *Wisconsin Housing & Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) – Home Improvement Advantage Loans:* Loans of up to $10,000 are made to current WHEDA homeowners who have made mortgage payments consistently on time for at least a year. Money is leant for home repair, remodeling projects, and additions, energy updates (permanent in nature), and for the purchase and installation of Energy Star rated appliances.

- *United States Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program:* According to the Notice of Funding Availability, "the goal of the program is to support multi-jurisdictional regional planning efforts that integrate housing, economic development, and transportation decision-making in a manner that empowers jurisdiction to consider the interdependent challenges of economic growth, social equity, and environmental impact simultaneously." Multiple jurisdictions in rural areas with populations under 500,000 are eligible. Matching dollars are required. Applications are due in June of 2010.

VI. AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

This chapter satisfies the required "agricultural, natural and cultural resources" comprehensive plan element described in Section 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. This chapter only indirectly addresses the use of natural resources for recreational purposes as they may apply to their economic and environmental aspects. These issues are addressed more directly in "Chapter IX – Utilities and Community Facilities Plan."

This chapter is not intended to replace but only to coordinate with more detailed planning documents covering the County's natural resources such as the *2010 Lincoln County Land and Water Resource Management Plan*, *2010 Lincoln County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, and 2004 *Farmland Preservation Guidelines*. These detailed planning documents, and subsequent updates, are incorporated into the *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan* by reference. However, suggestions included in this chapter will likely identify emerging issues and community desires that should be considered in subsequent updates to these detailed plans.

Agricultural Resources

Farming in Lincoln County and much of the northern third of Wisconsin occurred at the beginning of the 20th Century in the wake of the region's first large scale economic activity – timber production. Most of the agricultural land in this region is located on previously forested tracts that were cleared for farming often by the same people that came to the area in search of work in one of the many lumber camps. As the virgin timber was cleared away stumps were pulled and farms sprouted up throughout the county. Eventually Lincoln County's short growing season, irregular topography, and relatively poor soil productivity limited the type of intensive agriculture production found in the southern portions of the state and many of the new farms failed. The farming that remains a significant land use activity is located in the southern one-third of the County and is an important component of the local economy. The character, location, and viability of farming in the County are described below:

Character of Farming

Lincoln County farmers produce a variety of agricultural commodities including dairy, beef, mink, cash crops, ginseng, strawberries, cranberries and apples. Between the 1987 and 2007 US Censuses of Agriculture the County dropped from 109,031 acres in agriculture to 86,770 while the number of farm operations increased from 507 to 575. The average farm size went from 215 acres per farm in 1987 to 151 acres in 2007.

Reflecting trends throughout the nation, the number of farms where farming was the principle occupation of the operator has steadily declined and farmers have gotten slightly older. Lincoln County went from 320 farmers who claimed farming was their principle occupation in 1987 to 245 in 2007. During that same period the percentage of farms earning less than $25,000 in gross farm income increased from 53% in 1987 to 78% in 2007. The average age of farmers in the County went up slightly, from 51 to 54 years of age. Over that 20 year period of time Lincoln County saw fewer full-time farmers producing a larger percentage of the agricultural commodities with more part-time farmers producing a greater diversity of products.

Since 1987 Lincoln County has seen a steady decline in the number of dairy farms even though those farms produce a majority of the agricultural income in the county. In 1987 there were 255 dairy farms in the county and by 2007 there were 69. At the same time there was only a 10 percentage point drop in the contribution of dairy to the gross farm income in the county, from 61% to 51%. The remainder of the County's farm income is somewhat balanced between fruits and vegetables, Christmas trees, and other livestock species, such as beef cattle, sheep, swine and some mink. The largest percentage increase of particular types of farm operations were nursery and greenhouse farms, going from 4 in 1987 to 16 in 2007, with a peak of 34 in 1997. Recent interest in eating locally may increase that amount over the next few years but there is a great deal of competition for supplying started garden and bedding plants from many retailers in the area. This competitive environment may partially explain the high number of 34 such farms in 1997 declining to 16 in 2007.

Although dairy and livestock farms have decreased, there has been an increasing emphasis in the county on using what are commonly thought of as "sustainable" agricultural practices, such as Managed Grazing (MG). Both new livestock and dairy farms and existing ones are increasing their use of MG to improve their land and increase their profitability. The farmers utilizing the MG system have planted their cropland to highly productive grass-legume pastures that are then allowed to be grazed by their livestock under controlled situations. These farmers can graze their animals for seven to nine months of the year, while saving on operating costs, maintaining productive farms and virtually eliminating soil erosion. The use of grazing systems also makes it easier for the dairy farmer to tap into the fastest growing segment of the food market, organic milk and dairy products. Even with the economic recession that began in 2007 the organic dairy market has been growing by about 20% per year. The Central Wisconsin River Grazers Farmer Network, along with local land conservation departments and UW-Extension, has been promoting grazing-based livestock agriculture in Lincoln County since the mid-1990s.

Besides the shifting demography of the farming community and agricultural markets, since 2000 there has been a major change in state policy when it comes to farmland preservation which could impact the direction agriculture heads over the next 20 years. In 2009 the State of Wisconsin began to phase out their Farmland Preservation Program in favor of the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative (WWLI). One of the key features of the WWLI is the creation of Agricultural Enterprise Zones as a way to guide farmland preservation incentive programs to what is deemed key agricultural areas of the state. To date, Lincoln County's agricultural areas would not have the contiguous agricultural land base that would favor the creation of such a zone. This may change however. For a number of reasons, including the changes in the state program, there were only nine Farmland Preservation Program contracts in the County in 2010 compared to 38 in

2000. With the reductions in the Farmland Preservation Program the only other public policy that encourages keeping farmland open and productive is the agricultural use-value assessment which sets property taxes on farmland at a very low level. Farmers also have access to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Managed Forest Program that provides some economic incentive in the way of reduced property taxes for preserving larger blocks of farm woodlots.

Locations of Farmland and Farms

As shown in Map 3 (page 84) and Map 6 (page 135), agricultural land covers approximately a quarter of Lincoln County's land area. Most of this agricultural land is located in the southern and eastern portions of the county, south of the City of Merrill and southeast of Highway 17. Map 3 suggests that lands in the west central parts of the county contain prime farmland soils. However, much of this area is too wet to farm.

Nearly 25% of all farms operating in the County in 2007 were located in the Town of Pine River. The adjacent Town of Scott had the second largest concentration of farms in the County. The Town of Pine River also contained the largest number of dairy farms operating in 2007 but the largest concentration of dairy cows is actually in the Town of Scott, particularly along Joe Snow Road just south of Merrill.

Current Lincoln County Zoning maps indicate that only 16% (13,928 acres) of the agricultural lands in the County were put into the Agriculture Zone that was created in the 2004 comprehensive Zoning Code Revision. When given a choice between the Agriculture Zone that allowed more rights for livestock and dairy farms to expand, but limited their development opportunities to one house per 35 acres, and less restrictive density standards of 2 houses per 40 acres in the Rural Lands-2 district and 4 per 40 in a Rural Lands-4 district, the vast majority of the farmers chose housing development opportunities over farm expansion. One of the major agricultural townships, Pine River chose to not take part in County Zoning but did pass their own zoning code which also leaned toward more development opportunities for landowners.

Assessment of Farmland Viability

The U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service rates farmland based on soil capabilities related to other soils in the nation. Map 3 shows that much of southeastern Lincoln County is covered by "prime" agricultural soils – the highest rating. Some of these soils are wet, and are considered prime only when drained or not flooded. Many of these "prime (where drained)" soils would likely revert to wetlands if drainage systems were removed.

An assessment of Map 3 suggests that farming remains a viable economic activity in Lincoln County's southern tier of townships. However, many of these areas are also subject to significant development pressure and even though surveys conducted prior to the 2000 Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan indicated a desire to see farming continue in the county, actions by landowners when given a choice between preserving farmland and allowing increased housing development clearly showed a desire to "keep their options open".

Natural Resources

Understanding Lincoln County's natural features can provide a framework for analysis and suggest possible locational advantages for particular land uses. It is also essential to understand the location of environmentally sensitive areas to make responsible land use decisions. This will prevent severe developmental and environmental problems that may be difficult and costly to correct in the future. Maintenance of sensitive natural features is also important for the visual attractiveness of the County and for the functions they perform as natural communities.

Landforms/Geology

The terrain of Lincoln County is a direct result of glaciation. Glacial activity left a landscape of hilly, morainic areas composed of glacial till and pockmarked with small kettle lakes in the northern part of the County. Glacial landforms in this area include drumlins, outwash fans and terraces, eskers and recessional moraines. The southern portion of the County contains areas of outwash plains, drumlins, and glacial ground moraine deposits consisting of gravel, sand, silt, clay and boulders. Lincoln County lies within the Canadian Precambrian Shield, which consists of granite and metamorphic rocks.

Topography

In general, the topography of Lincoln County is gently rolling. Elevations range from 1,357 feet above sea level in the City of Merrill to over 1,800 feet in the Town of Harrison. The northeast and east-central portions of the county contain hilly areas with steep slopes and many small lakes (especially in the Harrison Hills area). The western part is relatively level with few hills and lakes, more gentle slopes, and numerous areas of water at or near the surface. The northwestern portion is generally flat with large swamp and marshy areas. The southern portion contains gently rolling hills and a "branch-like" stream pattern.

Watersheds

Lincoln County is located in the Upper Wisconsin River drainage basin. There are thirteen watersheds contained completely or partially within the County, with the Somo, Spirit, Newwood, Copper, Pine and Prairie Rivers as the major tributary basins. Surface waters generally flow in a southerly direction. The Wisconsin River drains south through the center of the County, and its tributaries enter from the northeast and northwest.

General Soils Information[16]

Magnor-Freeon-Capitola soil association underlies most of the The county consists of eleven general soil units and fifty detailed soil map units. Most soils in Lincoln County are part of the Magnor-Freeon-Capitola Association (~20% of the land area of the county), much of it is located in the most intensively farmed areas of the county; Ossmer-Minocqua-Sconsin Association (~16% of the county), much of it used for farming; Magnor-Lupton-Capitola Association (~13% of the county), much of it in woodland and Sarona-Keweenaw-Goodman Association (~12% of the county), most of it in forest. Following are brief descriptions of the eleven general soil units: southern and western portion of the county (Towns of Somo, Corning, Harding, Scott, Pine River, and Schley). This association is characterized in nearly level to sloping topography with moderately well-drained silty soils on moraines. Bedrock is close to the surface on slopes that are adjacent to major river valleys. Most of the areas in Lincoln County with this soil association are used for farming and are some of the most intensively farmed areas in the county. Septic systems, building sites, and roadways are generally limited due to wetness, ponding, slope and restricted permeability.

Ossmer-Minocqua-Sconsin soil association underlies much of the eastern part of the county within the Prairie River and Pine River drainage basins, and in the western portion of the county within the Copper River and Newwood River drainage basins. This association is characterized by moderately well-drained silty and mucky soils on outwash plains. Most of the acreage in Lincoln County with this soil association is used for permanent pasture. Woodlands, including wooded swamps, are found in this soil association. The use of these soils for septic systems, building sites and roadways is generally limited due to wetness or ponding.

Magnor-Lupton-Capitola soil association underlies most of the west central and northwestern portion of the county (Towns of Somo, Tomahawk and northern Harding). This association is characterized in nearly level to gently sloping topography with somewhat poorly drained silty and mucky soils on moraines and drumlins. Most of the areas in Lincoln County with this soil association are woodlands including many wooded swamps.

[16] Most of this section copied verbatim from the LC Land and Water Resources Management Plan 2010, Diane Hanson, Lincoln County Land Services Director.

Sarona-Keweenaw-Goodman soil association underlies much of the Harrison Hills area of the county and is characterized by steep topography with loamy and silty soils on moraines. This well drained soil association also covers much of the central part of the county, especially the Towns of Rock Falls and Birch. Most of the acreage with this soil association is wooded, interspersed with many small kettles and lakes that contain bogs or swamps. Generally, these soils have few limitations affecting septic systems or building site development, except for slope. This soil association has more potential sites for landfills than the other associations in the County.

Newood-Magnor-Freeon soil association underlies much of the west-central part of the county in the Towns of Harding and Corning and is characterized by moderately well drained loamy and silty soils on glacial moraines. Most of the acreage in Lincoln County with this soil association is wooded. Septic systems, building sites, and roadways are generally limited in most areas by wetness, slope, and restricted permeability.

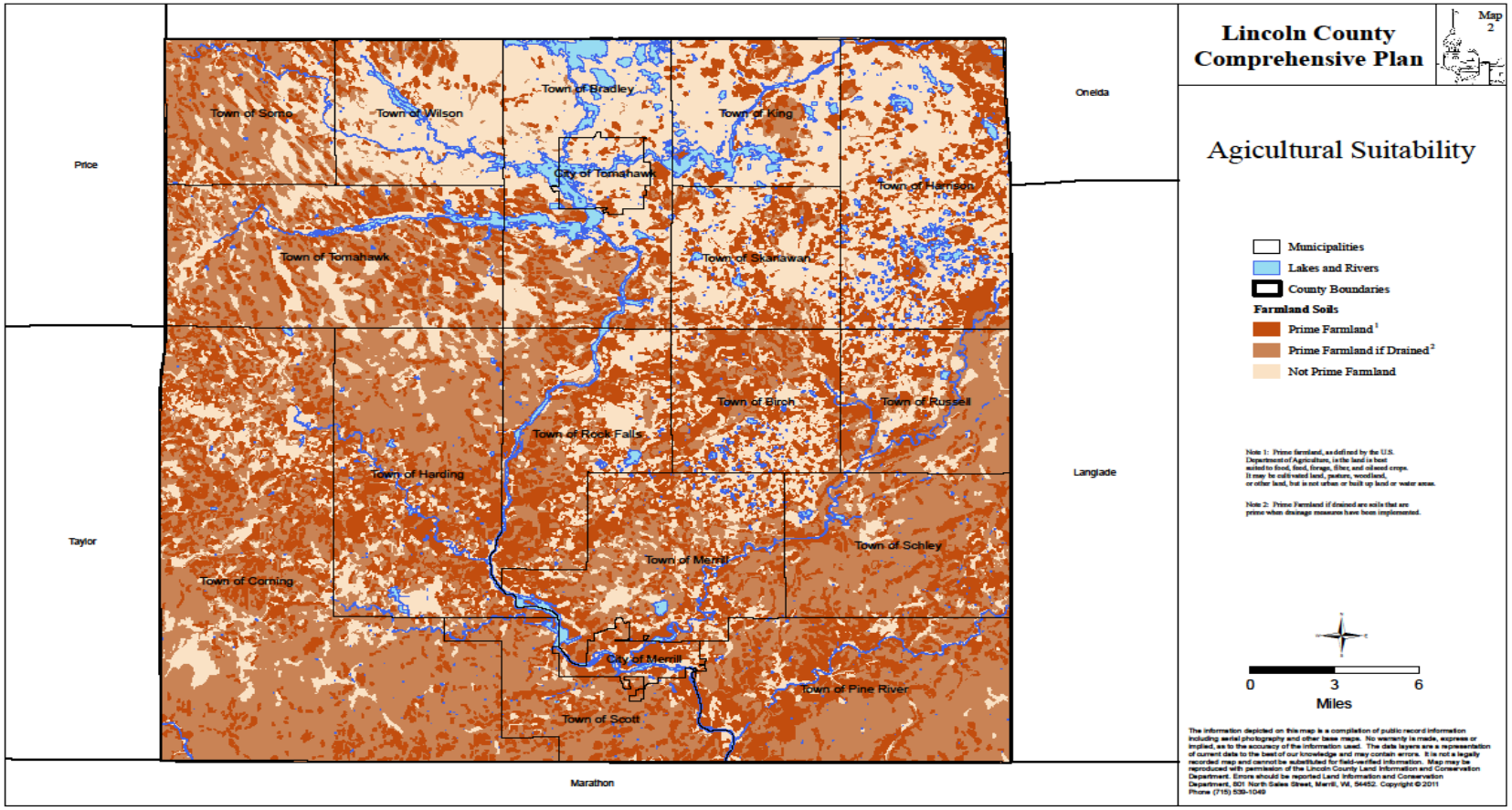
Sarwet-Moodig-Lupton soil association underlies part of the northwest-northcentral part of the county in the Towns of Bradley, Tomahawk and Somo and is characterized by moderately well drained, somewhat poorly drained loamy and mucky soils on glacial moraines and drumlins. Most of the acreage in Lincoln County with this soil association is wooded with many wooded swamps.

Vilas-Croswell-Markey soil association underlies much of the Town of Bradley, the Wisconsin River drainage basin in the Town of King, and the Somo River drainage basin in the Town of Wilson. This association is characterized by moderately well drained to very poorly drained sandy and mucky soils on outwash plains. Most acreage in Lincoln County with this soil association is wooded, particularly used for pine plantations. The use of these soils for septic systems, building sites, and roadways are generally limited due to ponding and wetness. Lupton-Padwet-Minocqua soil association underlies a small area in the north central part of county in the Towns of Bradley, Skanawan and King. This association is characterized by very poorly drained and moderately well drained mucky and loamy soils on outwash plains. Most acreage in Lincoln County with this soil association is wooded, with many wooded swamps. Pence-Padus-Antigo soil association underlies a small area in the northeastern area of the county and is characterized by nearly level to very steep topography with well drained loamy and silty soils on outwash plains. Most of the acreage with this soil association is wooded with a few wooded swamps.

Vilas-Sayner-Keweenaw soil association underlies a small area in the northeastern area of the county and is characterized by rolling to very steep topography with excessively drained to well drained sandy and loamy soils on outwash plains and moraines. Most of the acreage with this soil association is wooded, with a few wooded swamps.

Croswood-Lupton-Augwood soil association underlies a small area in the north central/northwestern area of the county and is characterized by nearly level and gently sloping sandy and mucky soils on outwash moraines and drumlins. This moderately well drained, very poorly drained to somewhat poorly drained soil association covers about half of the Town of Wilson. Most of the acreage with this soil association is wooded, with a few wooded swamps. For more detailed soils information, please refer for the Soil Survey of Lincoln County Wisconsin.

Map 3 Agricultural Suitability



Source: Map provided by Lincoln County Land Information & Conservation Department, 2011

Groundwater

Groundwater resources are plentiful in Lincoln County, furnished by the glacial drift aquifer that underlies the region at depths of 20 to 50 feet. Most private wells draw from this aquifer. Groundwater is generally considered to be of good quality in the County, though it varies somewhat by area. Groundwater in the sand and gravel (upper) aquifer is higher in iron and more easily polluted than groundwater in the (lower) bedrock aquifer. Water hardness varies from mostly soft to moderately hard in both the sand and gravel and bedrock aquifers.

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designates floodplain areas. These are areas predicted to be inundated with flood waters in the 100-year storm event (e.g., a storm that has a 1% chance of happening in any given year). Local studies have been undertaken to refine floodplain boundaries. The State requires local regulation of development in floodplains. Development is strongly discouraged in flood plains to avoid both on-site and downstream property damage.

Floodplain areas within Lincoln County are generally located along the Wisconsin River drainage basin and along several of its major tributaries (see Map 4, page 90). The National Flood Insurance Program maps produced by FEMA should be referenced for official delineation and elevation of floodplain boundaries.

Wetlands

As shown in Map 4, wetlands are scattered throughout the County. These areas are important for aquifer recharge, groundwater and surface water quality improvement, and wildlife habitat. These wetlands have been identified and mapped by the WisDNR through its Wisconsin Wetlands Inventory. Local studies may be undertaken to refine these areas. Generally, local zoning does not permit development in these areas. Wetland communities are dominated by cattails and bulrushes in shallow water, and alder, sedges and grasses in the saturated areas.

Lincoln County regulates development in all "shoreland" wetlands of five acres in area or larger. The "shoreland" area is within 300 feet of navigable streams and within 1,000 feet of lakes, ponds and flowages. The County also regulates development in all other mapped wetlands larger than 5 acres outside the shoreland area. The state and federal government also regulate the filling of wetlands regardless of where they are shown on the WisDNR maps.

Shorelands

During the development of Lincoln County's shoreland development standards, Applied Ecological Services, Inc.—an ecological planning and design firm—conducted an inventory of existing shoreland conditions in Spring 2000. The following is a summary of this inventory:

- There are many forested, undeveloped waterfronts in the County.
- There are several roads along river and lake shorelines in the County, sometimes with little vegetation buffer. Run-off from roads too close to the shore can pollute the water.
- There are unmanaged construction sites at the shoreline, which can cause serious erosion problems.
- Many home sites along lake and river shorelines in the County have lawn planted down to the shoreline.
- Many waterfront properties had rip-rap or "sea walls" intended to protect the shoreline. However, these techniques provide little habitat, filtering, or visual buffer.
- Several waterfront properties are pasturelands. Open livestock access to shoreline areas can pollute water and result in non-native vegetation in trampled areas.

Forests and Woodlands

About 70 percent of Lincoln County's land area is wooded or forest land. Prior to settlement, most of the forest cover in the County was a mixture of hemlock, northern hardwood, and pine species. Most of the white pine in Lincoln County and the entire northern Wisconsin region was logged in the 1800s and early 1900s. In later years, the region's hardwood and hemlock were logged. Aspen trees now cover much of the forestland in the County. About 40% of the County Forest is currently covered with Aspen.

Applied Ecological Services conducted a field inventory of Lincoln County in 1999 to identify and characterize selected natural resources and dominant vegetative systems in the county. This inventory identified large tracts of conifer plantations (red pine and white pine) throughout the County, with the greatest concentration occurring in the north central portion. Younger stands of aspen trees are most prominent on previously logged forestlands. Mixed hardwood forests are located throughout the County in well-drained soils and include sugar maple, red maple, red oak, aspen, birch, ironwood, and blue beech. Many of these mixed hardwood forestlands are third generation stands, with most trees averaging 20 to 50 years of age. The Harrison Hills region is a representative area featuring a mixed forest community. The smaller woodlots interspersed with agricultural land typically contain stands of deciduous trees such as oak, basswood and ash.

Several areas in the County were identified as "lowland shrub", comprising of woody vegetation and stunted trees along stream and river courses; and "forest wetlands", comprising of black spruce, white cedar, tamarack, willow, speckled alder and balsam fir. Coniferous forest wetlands comprised of stunted black spruce—known as muskegs—typically occur in bogs and swamps and were identified in the central and northwestern portion of the County.

The Lincoln County Forest contains 100,845 acres of public forestland and is located primarily in the northern portions of the county. The amount of forestland owned by town, county and state government expanded in the County throughout the 20th century and into the early 21st century. There are no large tracts of federally-owned forestland in the County.

Between 1998 and 2000, the State of Wisconsin purchased over 1,700 acres of privately-owned forestland to create the Menard Island Resource Area along the Wisconsin River in the Town of King. They also purchased the 1500 acre former Bill Cross property along the Wisconsin River in the Towns of Harding and Rock Falls, 2,000 acres in the Town of Corning expanding the Newwood Wildlife Area, 480 acres in the Town of Tomahawk, and 300 acres in the Town of Bradley.

As of September 2010, there were 31,941 acres of privately-owned forestland in Lincoln County enrolled in the Forest Crop Law (FCL) program, which was enacted in 1927. New enrollment in the program closed in 1986. The FCL program allows private landowners to defer tax payment on timber until after the harvest, or when the contract is terminated. It was designed to encourage long-term investment in private forestland and promote sound forest management practices. Parcels enrolled in the FCL program contain at least 40 acres of contiguous land and are open to the public for hunting and fishing. Permanent houses are not allowed on these parcels.

The WisDNR's Managed Forest Law (MFL) Program, designed to supersede the FCL program, was enacted in 1987. This program is available to landowners with 10 or more contiguous acres of forestland. Eighty percent of the acreage in a parcel that a landowner enrolls in the MFL must be productive forest land. Participating landowners must agree to a management plan that may include timber harvesting and the length of the agreement can be for 25 or 50 years. In exchange, their land is taxed at a rate below the state average. As of September 2010, there were 123,901 acres of private forestland in Lincoln County enrolled in the MFL Program. About 37% of the total MFL acreage is open to the public for hunting, fishing, hiking, sight-seeing, and cross-country skiing. Access for motor vehicle, all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles is open on some of these parcels, with landowner permission.

Steep Slopes

Areas with steep slopes (exceeding 15%) are scattered throughout Lincoln County, but are especially concentrated in the Harrison Hills and Underdown Recreational Areas in the eastern portion of the County. Steep slopes are generally associated with either directly adjacent waterways or drumlin systems. Map 4 shows the general location of soils in areas that exceed a 15% slope.

Surface Waters

The largest river in Lincoln County is the Wisconsin River, which flows in a southerly direction through the center of the County and eventually empties into the Mississippi River. Major tributaries to the Wisconsin River include the Somo, Spirit, Newwood, Copper, Pine, Prairie, and Tomahawk Rivers. There are 246 rivers and streams totaling 668 miles in the County, and over half of these miles are designated trout streams.

The Prairie River in the eastern part of the county (Towns of Russell and Harrison) is especially known for its trout fishery. The Prairie River Fishery Area, created by the Wisconsin Conservation Commission in 1959, encompasses approximately 1,666 acres of land on both sides of the Prairie River in Lincoln and Langlade Counties. Nearly 70 percent of the land within the Fishery Area has been acquired

through land purchases, with the remainder acquired through perpetual easements and leases. A master plan for the Prairie River Fishery Area prepared in 1980 by WisDNR recommended expanding the fishery area boundary to encompass 3,300 acres. The expanded boundary would include lands on both sides of the Prairie River from CTH CCC downstream to CTH J and lands on both sides of the North Branch of the Prairie River from its junction with the main branch of the Prairie River upstream to the current Alta Springs Fishery Area. This proposed boundary expansion would include lands in the Towns of Skanawan, Harrison and Birch. The master plan recommends that all new land in the expanded fishery area be acquired through land purchases or permanent easements.

Lincoln County contains approximately 16,800 acres of surface water. Surface water resources include 766 lakes and 246 rivers and streams. Artificial impoundments on the Wisconsin River comprise more than half of the County's total lake area and include Lake Mohawksin (the largest at 1,909 acres), Lake Nokomis, Lake Alice, Somo Lake and the Spirit River Flowage. Most of the lakes in Lincoln County are less than ten acres in size. Popular sport fish found in these lakes include walleye, bass, panfish, and muskellunge. Surface waters are shown on Map 4 in blue.

Wildlife Resources and Rare Species Occurrences

Lincoln County provides habitat for wildlife common in much of northern Wisconsin, including white-tailed deer, black bear, migratory waterfowl, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, sharptail grouse, raccoon, red fox, bobcat, coyote and other fur bearing animals.

The County contains several federal and state listed endangered, threatened, or rare wildlife species. These include bald eagles, osprey and the Eastern Timber Wolf. At least two wolf packs inhabit the County Forest: the Averill Creek pack in the Towns of Harding and Corning and the Ranger Island pack in the west central part of the County.

WisDNR's Natural Heritage Inventory program maintains data on the general location and status of rare, threatened, or endangered species, natural communities, and other significant natural features in the state. More specific information about these endangered resources is available from the state's Bureau of Endangered Resources.

State Natural Areas

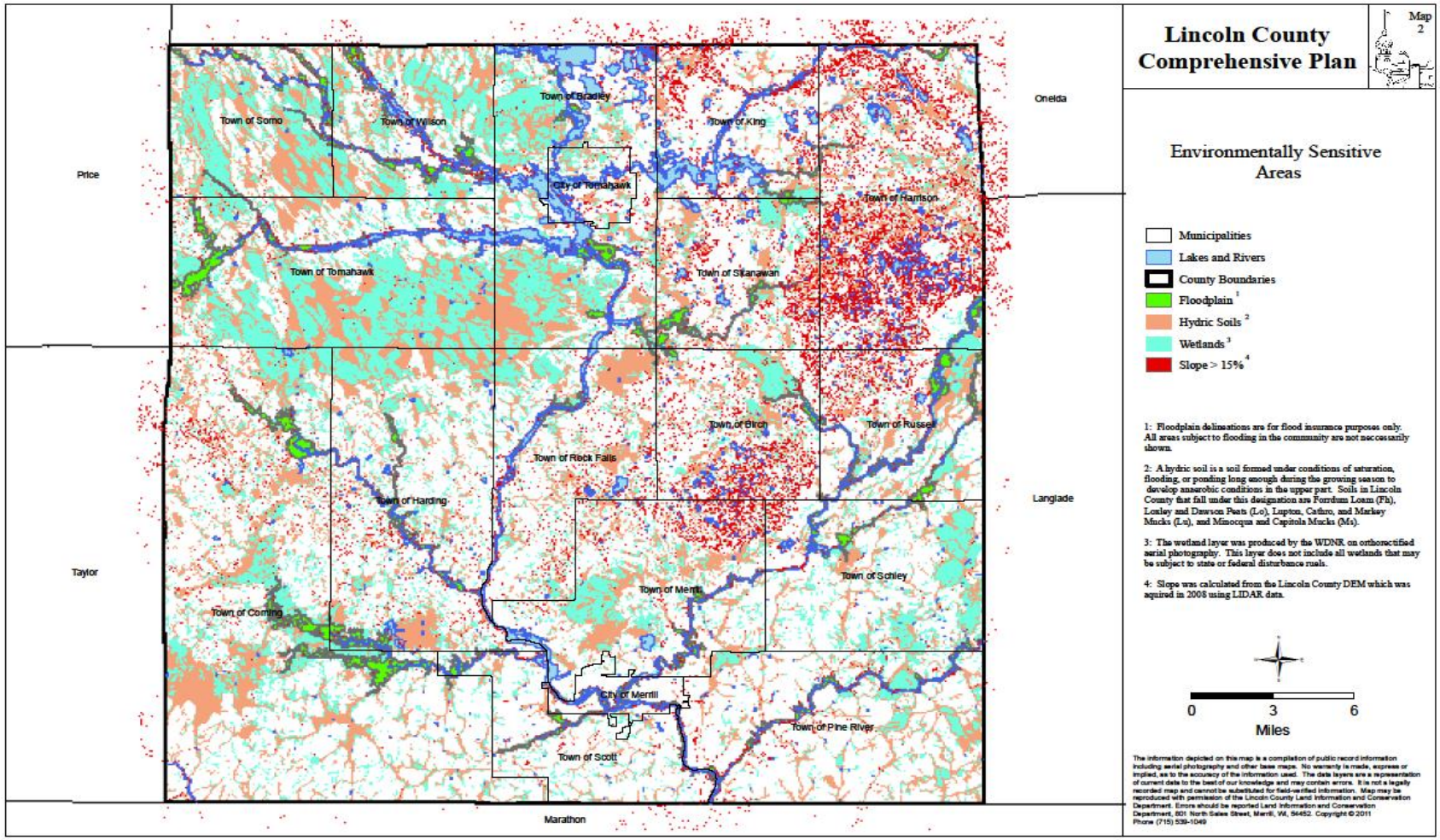
WisDNR's State Natural Areas are formally designated sites devoted to scientific research and education. This statewide system contains all types of biotic communities, rare species, and other significant natural features native to Wisconsin. There is one State Natural Area in Lincoln County: the Krueger Pines site located within Council Grounds State Park. The site was designated in 1953 and features a large old-growth stand of white pine, red pine, paper birch and aspen. The site contains groundlayer features such as large-leafed aster, wild sarsaparilla, Canada mayflower, starflower, and bracken fern. Canopy birds typical to northern dry-mesic forest environment are also present at this site.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Map 4 also shows a composite view of the most important individual elements of the natural resource base that have immeasurable environmental and ecological value. This map will be an important base used in the updating of detailed Town Land Use Plans. Protection of environmentally sensitive areas from additional intrusion by incompatible land uses, and thereby from degradation and destruction, should be an essential planning objective for the preservation of open natural spaces. Such protection is also a key component in the protection of rural community character.

Three regions in Lincoln County were identified by Applied Ecological Services as possessing unique environmental features. The upland forest and wetland region in the northwestern portion of the County is a significant ecological resource, with undulating ridges of upland hardwoods and conifers. This region includes mid- to old-growth forest systems that have become increasingly rare in both Lincoln County and the entire state. The Harrison Hills/Underdown region in the northeastern part of the County is one of the most unique glacial geological features in the world. This region is dominated by steep forested hills and ridges of glacial sands and gravel, with intervening kettle lakes, wetlands, and stream valleys. The County's large, contiguous blocks of forestland is the third region identified as possessing unique environmental features. These forested blocks are under both public and private ownership.

Map 4: Environmentally Sensitive Areas



Source: Map provided by Lincoln County Land Information & Conservation Department, 2011.

Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources Plan: Developing a Vision for the Future

The first decade of the 21st century saw an extremely diverse set of pressures on farmers, foresters and the lands they manage. During the first half of the decade development pressure, both in terms of residential and commercial development, and land values on all working lands in the county increased at double digit rates as a national housing bubble continued to expand. Not only did the housing bubble increase the development pressure on farm and forest lands, the demand for building materials also increased for the timber and manufactured wood products industries in the County. All that began crashing down in 2007 when the housing bubble finally burst, stopping the diversion of open lands to development almost dead in its tracks.

While the housing bubble may have burst in 2007, sending residential and commercial development pressure rapidly downward, agricultural commodity prices began to spike in 2008 when rapidly rising energy prices and government incentives for alternative fuel production began to influence farm and forest commodities that would serve not only to feed and house the world but fuel it as well. Those sectors of the economy also fell dramatically by the beginning of 2009 as market fundamentals rather than speculation brought prices back into line with supply and demand. By 2009 the county was feeling the economic slowdown on all economic fronts. It was in that environment in 2009 that the Lincoln County Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Advisory group of 13 farmers, foresters and public and private support industry professionals met to discuss the future of Lincoln County and outline some actions that could be taken to position it for positive growth and development.

In a series of four meetings the ANR Advisory group was led through discussions that uncovered how they would like to see Lincoln County's agricultural and natural resources develop over the next decade, develop an overall goal in guiding community decisions, list some actions items to achieve their desired future and list the people and organizations who need to be involved in order to make the efforts successful. What follows are the results of the groups work.

Ag and Natural Resources Advisory Group

- Stacy Petit — Lincoln County Towns Association
- Bill Burgener — Lincoln County Towns Association
- Joe Polak — Maple Syrup & Town of Schley Land Use Committee
- Ed Sabey — Cranberry Grower
- Dave Pagoria — Direct Marketing of Fruits, Vegetables and Locally Made Baked Goods
- Hans Breitenmoser, Jr. — Dairy Farmer
- Bill Wengeler — Forestry Consultant

- Darrell Pierson — Packaging Corporation of America – Tomahawk
- Rich LeValley — Forester – Wisconsin DNR – Tomahawk
- Bill Millis — Forester – Wisconsin DNR – Merrill
- Rick Weide — Wildlife Biologist – Wisconsin DNR
- A.J. Theiler — Lincoln County Lakes and River Association
- Marty Sosnovske — Dairy Farmer
- Diane Hanson — Lincoln County Land Information & Conservation – Ex – Officio
- Kevin Kleinschmidt — Lincoln County Forestry Land & Parks – Ex – Officio
- Dan Miller — Lincoln County Planning & Zoning – Ex – Officio
- Dan Bowers — Lincoln County Planning & Zoning – Ex – Officio
- Tom Cadwallader — UW-Extension, Lincoln & Marathon Counties - Facilitator

Desired Ten Year Outcomes

The Lincoln County ANR Advisory Group members were asked to complete the statement – "In ten years, Lincoln County's Agriculture and Natural Resources will continue to be an important and vital part of the County's growth and development because _____". Using a nominal group process each committee member shared their responses and where ideas were similar the statements were combined and refined. The responses were then divided up into three main categories: Economic Development, Resource Management and Education, Communication and the Community.

<u>Economic Development</u>

- Both the urban and rural economic viability of the county will be strengthened.
- The industries that add value and capitalize on our natural resources will become more diverse.
- The relative economic contribution of the county's forestry and agricultural resources will not only be maintained but expanded by accessing new and more diverse markets.
- We will attract more tourists because of enhanced recreational trail corridors
- Public recreation resources will be improved through the encouragement of accessibility to public and private lands, further enhancing our recreational trail corridors.
- People will be provided opportunities to explore economically viable ideas that will sustain individuals, small farms and businesses.

- The county will be more engaged in marketing its wealth of naturally grown biomass while adhering to sound ecological principles that assure sustainable production for generations to come.
- Our forests and natural areas will be managed for multiple uses, optimizing their income potential while using best management practices that assure their productivity and environmental benefits for generations to come.
- There will be more equitable balance between the income opportunities for our natural resources and their conservation and preservation.
- Economic development initiatives will focus on creating enterprises and businesses that are economically viable without having to perpetually seek grants to keep them going.

Resource Management

- The preservation of large, contiguous parcels of land will be encouraged in order to support the sustainable development of the county's agricultural, forestry, recreation and wildlife resources.
- Housing and Development will be guided away from agriculture and forestry areas so they can continue to operate.
- The county's water resources will be protected so residents and tourists can be ensured a high quality of life and enjoy the environmental benefits.
- There will be better balance between wildlife preservation and the controls needed to reduce their negative impacts on agricultural and forest crops.
- Resource conservation ideas and tools that are already present in local codes need to be refined and promoted, such as conservation subdivisions.
- The county will have programs in place to continually monitor and manage threats from invasive species.
- Unique and culturally important natural areas will be carefully selected and preserved.
- More decisions that impact our local resources will be made at the county and town level.
- New housing and business development will be sensitive to environmental features, such as surface water flow in storm events, which might threaten their physical and financial sustainability.

Education, Communication and the Community

- We will maintain and promote the development of a highly educated workforce that will add value to our local resources using innovative approaches.
- Our secondary and post-secondary schools will continue to provide technical education, as it relates to agriculture and forestry, in our communities.

- The community will promote more educational opportunities between farmers, foresters and new rural residents that may have come from urban areas to learn about common production practices and the economic and environmental principles they are based on.
- Greater cross-cooperation and communication between agencies, county departments, businesses, farms and organizations on issues that affect our resources.
- The county will provide opportunities for balanced discussions on sound, science based wildlife management practices while keeping in mind potential economic impacts and opportunities for farmers and woodland owners and managers.
- There will be regular opportunities for the community to have discussions that:
- Explore wildlife management strategies that balance the interests of people to watch and harvest them with the scientifically based management practices encouraged by wildlife managers charged with the care of those populations and their environments.
- Allow foresters, farmers and county citizens to evaluate production practices that balance the economic needs of producing and marketing agricultural and forestry commodities with the food and environmental safety concerns of all citizens

Goal for the Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element

To sustainably manage and develop for current and future generations the rich yet finite agricultural, natural and cultural resources which are the cornerstone of Lincoln County's economic vitality and cultural heritage. The multiple functions those resources have and will continue to provide include, but are not limited to, rural economic viability and lifestyles, conservation and enhancement of rural character, scenic beauty, forest, farmlands, wildlife habitat, rare natural communities, shore land areas, ground and surface water quality, public health, real property values, connections with our past, and public and private recreational activities that respect the value of those resources to the community.

Figure 21 **Agricultural, Natural, Cultural Resources Plan Outline**

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	County Departments	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
Goal #1: Economic Development	Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association Timber Producers Association Wisconsin County Forest Association Farm Bureau	▪ Planning and Zoning ▪ Land Information and Conservation ▪ Forestry	**Objective A:** Develop a business assistance network to aid in dealing efficiently and effectively with government agencies and organizations that can help rural economic development. Identify government regulations and grant	Begin in 2010 or 2011 and become an ongoing activity.

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	County Departments	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
	USDA Farm Service Agency USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Elected Officials at all Levels of Government Chambers of Commerce in Tomahawk and Merrill Lincoln County, Tomahawk and Merrill Economic Development Organizations Wisconsin Town Association where appropriate.	UW-Extension	programs that can improve the success rate of innovative ideas, such as biomass, sustainable energy concepts and tools; such as conservation subdivisions and development concepts. Monitor state and federal regulations that may limit local innovation. Keep abreast of tax credit programs for producers who use non-traditional fuels and/or credits given for developing more efficient use of traditional resources. **Objective B:** <u>Improve the coordination of agencies that are intended to either regulate and/or assist in the development new and established businesses.</u> Coordinate local sign regulations with the state. Streamline bureaucratic processes to improve access to state and federal programs to meet local business and environmental goals: such as Focus on Energy and various economic development grant programs. Monitor environmental regulations that indirectly impact agriculture and forestry. Improve the balance between promoting agriculture with the environmental demands that are put on businesses; such as viable environmental mitigation tools used by cranberry growers. Help "Right to Farm/Forest" remain viable by implementing and enforcing policies that protect farms and forest related businesses. **Objective C:** <u>Improve the promotion of local rural businesses,</u>	Ongoing effort Ongoing Effort

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	County Departments	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
			cooperatives, etc, by doing such things as: Easing up on sign regulations so customers can find rural businesses. Improving the linkage between local businesses/farms through either the Chambers of Commerce or other organizations whose role it is to advertise and promote businesses.	
			Objective D: Engage in the development and implementation of the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative reflecting the County's desire to keep farming in the community by expanding the potential to create agricultural enterprise zones in areas of mixed uses more typical of the county.	Begin in 2014 when County Farmland Preservation Plan is updated.
			Objective E: Involve local, state and federal elected officials in the County's activities to develop its rural economy. Bring townships up-to-speed on opportunities for their citizens and the role they can play. Show townships how they can take a more proactive role in helping existing and new businesses/farms access resources in other units of government.	Ongoing
			Contact legislators and keep them engaged in understanding the County's needs and any barriers to meeting those needs; such as loss of the Forest Stewardship program, reduction in highway funds and mandates that have been unfunded since inception and those that have lost funding.	Ongoing

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	County Departments	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
Goal #2: Resource Management	Wisconsin Lakes Association North Central Land Trust Wisconsin Lakes Partnership Gathering Waters Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service	▪ Planning and Zoning ▪ Land Information and Conservation ▪ Forestry ▪ UW-Extension	**Objective A:** The land needed for supporting the sustainable development of the county's agricultural, forestry, recreation and wildlife resources will be carefully conserved, and preserved where appropriate. The current zoning standard for rural areas will be enforced in an attempt to guide housing and development away from agricultural and forestry areas. Improve the knowledge of landowners, realtors, auctioneers and developers on the negative consequences of poorly planned parceling of rural lands and encourage the use of conservation subdivision concepts. Increase the awareness of open land preservation tools; such as purchase of development rights and conservation easements and procedures. Develop an educational initiative on the economic and social value of having agriculture and forestry in the community and the need for preserving the resources. Develop an educational initiative on the economic and cultural value of the county forest land and the importance of developing a long range plan for improving how it is blocked in and/or perhaps expanding it when the opportunity arises. **Objective B:** The County's water resources will be protected so residents and tourists can be ensured a high quality	Ongoing Ongoing on a daily basis through individual discussions. Begin in 2011 Begin in 2011

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	County Departments	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
			of life and enjoy the environmental benefits. Develop water quality and environmental monitoring systems for farmers and forest products industries that help them to better manage their operations, protect the environment and keep the public informed about the benefits of their activities. Maintain the high standards Lincoln County already has in place along the County's streams and shorelines in residential development areas. Develop a list of best management practices (BMP's) for any farming and extraction activities that occur in floodplains. Provide for flexibility in instituting agricultural and forestry practices meant to protect the shorelines and stream banks in the County so land owners are more easily encouraged to comply. **Objective C:** Maintain the balance between wildlife preservation, for maintaining the ecosystem and providing recreational opportunities, and the controls needed to reduce their negative impacts on agricultural and forest crops. Develop coordinated and sustained educational efforts on the science behind baiting and feeding wildlife, particularly deer, and ecologically sound alternatives to baiting, such as land management practices that promote diversity and wildlife. More decisions that impact our local resources will be made at the county level.	Ongoing and in the revision of NR 115. Ongoing and when revising Floodplain Zoning in 2011.

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	County Departments	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
			A communication system will be put into place to improve the communication between local, state and federal governments on potential policy changes that could have negative impacts on farmers and foresters with no clear benefit to the community. Encourage farmers, foresters and rural businesses/landowners to become more involved in agricultural and forestry associations that can educate and influence policy at the state and federal levels. Local officials and leaders prioritize their community's key agricultural, forestry and natural resource issues allowing them to express and exercise their political will. Local resources and county staff will be more effectively used in adapting and implementing resource management practices and policies.	Ongoing
***Goal #3:* Education, Communication and the Community**	North Central Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission Merrill and Tomahawk Public Schools Technical College System Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Lincoln County Economic Development	• UW-Extension • Zoning • Land Information and Conservation • Forestry Solid Waste	**Objective A:** Help citizens sort through the rapidly increasing amount of information on issues that are critical to the management of the County's agricultural, forestry and cultural resources. Increase the use of both public service announcements and press releases through a variety of formats and delivery methods to reach the general public. Develop a community blog that can link the media, citizens, county departments and perhaps educational institutions with news about rural issues. Create community forums sponsored by the towns	

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	County Departments	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
			and county to discuss evolving agriculture, natural and cultural resource issues impacting the community and community trends and issues impacting those same resources. Create educational environments and opportunities that promote critical thinking. Reestablish county tours to foster discussion and understanding. **Objective B:** Develop and maintain an effective and efficient method of disseminating and sharing information between the county, towns, cities and community groups on topics that impact the County's agricultural, natural and cultural resources. Create documents that explain the basis for codes that are developed in order to provide continuity once advisory committees and those who create those documents move on. Develop and maintain a directory of clubs and organizations that are important in bringing the community together. Coordinate efforts with City of Merrill proposed riverfront and Highway 51 development projects (feasibility studies completed fall/winter 2009) Coordinate efforts with Tomahawk Parks and Recreation Plan that was completed during the summer and fall of 2009. **Objective C:** Citizens will have opportunities to learn about the	

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	County Departments	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline
			common practices and legal codes associated with living and working in rural areas. Provide new rural residents with information on the differences between urban and rural living. Establish a process to personally connect with new rural residents. Expand information to excavators and builders who establish new development and put in driveways, roads and culverts.	

Policies

Economic Development

- Continue to adequately support the Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation so that it can meet the economic development needs expressed in the plan objectives.
- Maintain the cost sharing arrangement with the University of Wisconsin System in order to provide for the business management educational needs of farmers, foresters and rural businesses offered through Extension and the two and four year campuses.

Resource Management

1) Agriculture

- Conserve productive farmland to ensure long term protection of the agricultural economy and rural character of Lincoln County.
- Promote agricultural practices that protect and conserve ground and surface water quality, such as proper erosion control and manure management and recognize them in local regulations.

2) Forestry

- Promote the use of the most current "Best Management Practices" as minimum standards in forest and recreational management and recognize them in local regulations.
- Support efforts to logically expand the County Forest when properties become available on the market that enhance its contiguous integrity.
- Preserve public forestland in the county to provide for maximum benefits of the multiple use concepts to our community and to maintain a steady and reliable source of raw materials to the forest products inventory.
- Maintain soil productivity on forested stands by implementing rutting standards and biomass harvesting guidelines.
- Support the use of appropriate silviculture systems in the proper locations, such as in the use of gaps in uneven aged Northern Hardwood management schemes and clearcutting to regenerate early successional species like aspen, in order to maintain a variety of diverse timber types on the landscape and perpetuate species of major importance to the economic future of our local forest products industries and as critical habitat types for various forms of wildlife.
- Provide for a balance of legitimate recreational opportunities to a wide variety of diverse groups and reduce user conflict by keeping incompatible uses separate from one another while sustainably protecting the natural resources of the County.
- When managing timber types in our region, be cognizant of the possible effects that climate change could have on forest communities and wildlife habitat.
- Encourage the use of forest certification systems in land management efforts to ensure that social, economic and ecological needs are being addressed on a sustainable basis and to support our local forest products markets and allow them to remain competitive on a global scale.

- When conducting management activities identify and protect geological, archeological and historical sites as well as rare, threatened and endangered plant, animal and community resources in the county.
- Promote efforts to monitor terrestrial invasive species.
- Minimize losses to resources by invasive species or other forest pests through an integrated pest management scheme that includes the harvesting of timber stands to keep them healthy and vigorous with special emphasis put on training field staff and user groups to help detect these problems in the early stages so that control measures are still feasible.

3) Water

Water quality is recognized as paramount in Lincoln County; both in our surface water and groundwater resources. Preservation of this fragile resource resultant from preventing its impairment is recognized to be a smart economic investment versus the costs associated with remediation efforts. Pristine water quality is recognized as a major draw for individuals that relocate to Lincoln County to enjoy the many benefits afforded by surface waterways. Thus a vital economy is also dependent upon good water quality. The following policies which support the protection of our water quality are hereby instituted:

- Stormwater and erosion control performance measures will be effectuated when certain soil disturbance activities are initiated so as to prevent degradation of surface waters.
- Seek the restoration and preservation of riparian vegetative buffers to trap sediments and nutrients associated with storm water and snowmelt runoff.
- Use mitigation strategies within shoreland zoning regulations and development standards to offset potential harms that may result from land development in riparian areas.
- Recognize that all surface waters are not the same and that some are more sensitive to pressures from development as a result of their physical and chemical makeup. Regulatory standards will be based upon a scoring and classification of surface waters into three sensitivity classes to help ensure their integrity.
- Undertake concerted efforts to protect and improve water quality through voluntary programs and if necessary, regulatory programs such as the agricultural and non-agricultural performance standards.
- Promote efforts to monitor and manage for aquatic invasives.
- Plan for development, with sustainable communities as an ultimate goal, to ensure demands upon surface and groundwater resources do not become overbearing.

Education, Communication and the Community

- Allow and encourage County Departments to hold community forums to discuss issues that will impact the County's agricultural and natural resources.
- Support investments in educating youth and urban populations about agricultural and forestry practices and income opportunities.
- Work with the University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Technical College System to maintain the current level of educational support for the County's rural citizen's.

Current and Potential Funding Sources

The sources in the following list are not all inclusive and many can be used to support educational, economic development and/or resource management needs.

a. US Department of Agriculture
   - Rural Housing Program
   - Environmental Quality Incentive Program
   - Rural Economic Development

b. Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Traded and Consumer Protection
   - Soil and Water Resource Management
   - Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (In concert with US Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service)
   - Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative
   - Nutrient Management

c. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
   - Targeted Runoff Management Grants
   - Aquatic Invasive Grants
   - Lake Protection and Planning Grants
   - Managed Forest Law Program

d. Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
   - The Wisconsin Fund for private wastewater treatment system replacement

- Milk Volume Program
- Dairy 2020 Early Planning Grants

e. Lincoln County Communities
    - Merrill Area Development Corporation
    - Tomahawk Area Development Corporation

f. Private and Non-Profits
    - Lumberjack Resource Conservation and Development Council
    - Gathering Waters Conservancy
    - The Nature Conservancy

g. Miscellaneous
    - User fees, penalties/fines

Cultural Resources

Preservation of historic and cultural resources fosters a sense of pride, improves quality of life, and provides and important feeling of social and cultural continuity between the past, present and future. Lincoln County was created in 1874 by the Legislature, and its present boundaries were set in 1885. The present site of the City of Merrill was originally a fur- trading center in the 1850s and developed into a major sawmill town during the 1890s and 1900s. The City of Tomahawk's history is also traced to lumbering in the 1880s and 1890s.

Historic Resources

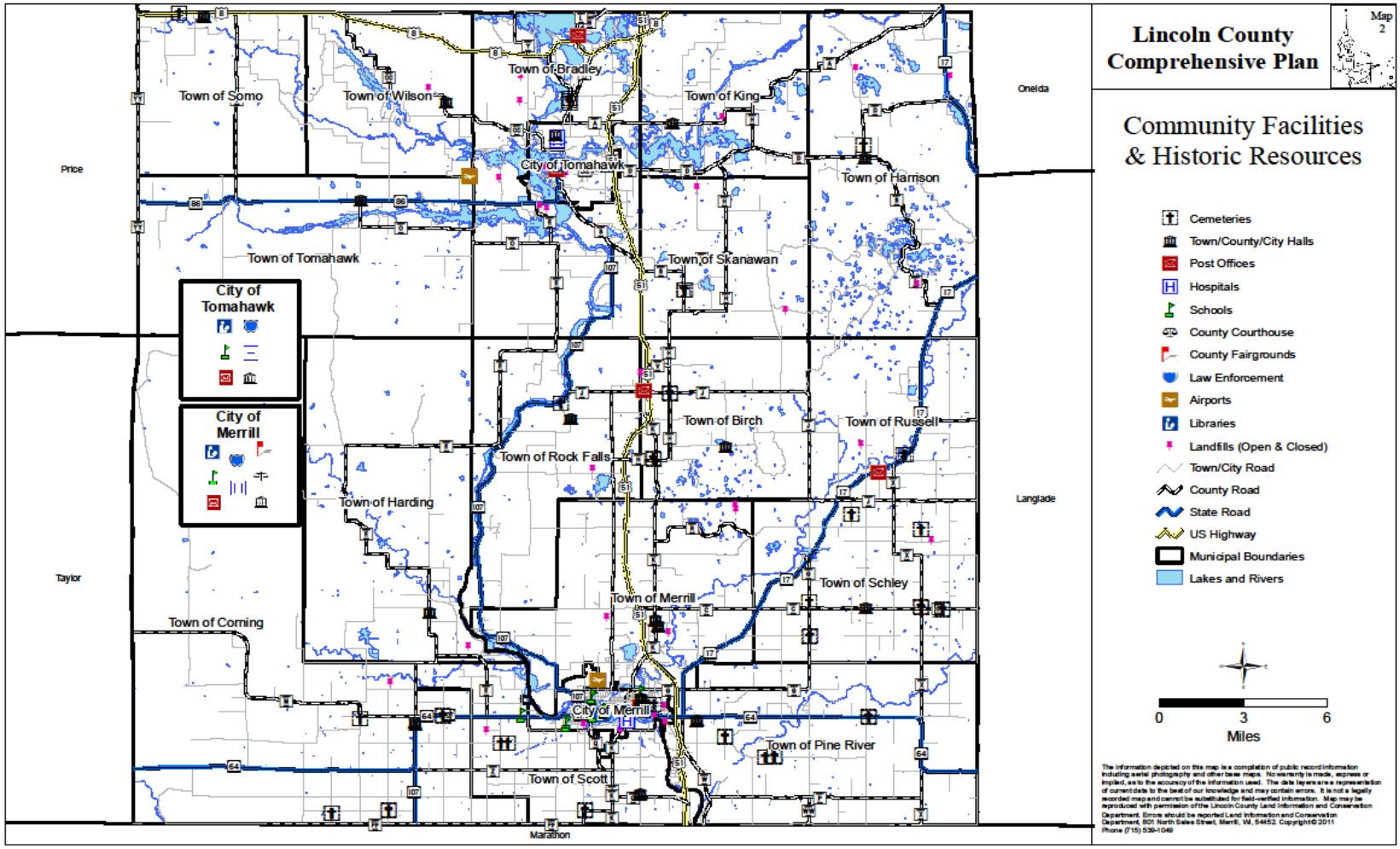
All of the properties in Lincoln County listed in the State or National Register of Historic Places are located in the City of Merrill. These sites include:

- *Center Avenue Historic District* (ca. 1855-1930/period of significance)
- *First Street Bridge* (built 1904)
- *Lincoln County Courthouse* (built in 1903)
- *Merrill Post Office* (built in 1915)
- *Merrill City Hall; former* (built in1889)
- *T. B. Scott Free Library* (built in 1911)

The fact that these are the only sites listed should not be interpreted to mean that Lincoln County does not have a fine collection of historic buildings. It only means that no comprehensive survey of the community has been taken.

Map 5 on the next page shows the general location of cemeteries, community facilities such as hospitals and schools, town halls and other county landmarks. As the County continues to grow, it will be important for the public, planners, and officials to have a clear understanding of the location and significance of historic resources and other important community and government facilities so that these buildings or places are not lost or damaged with development.

Map 5: Community Facilities & Historic Resources



Source: Map developed by Lincoln County Land Information & Conservation Department, 2011

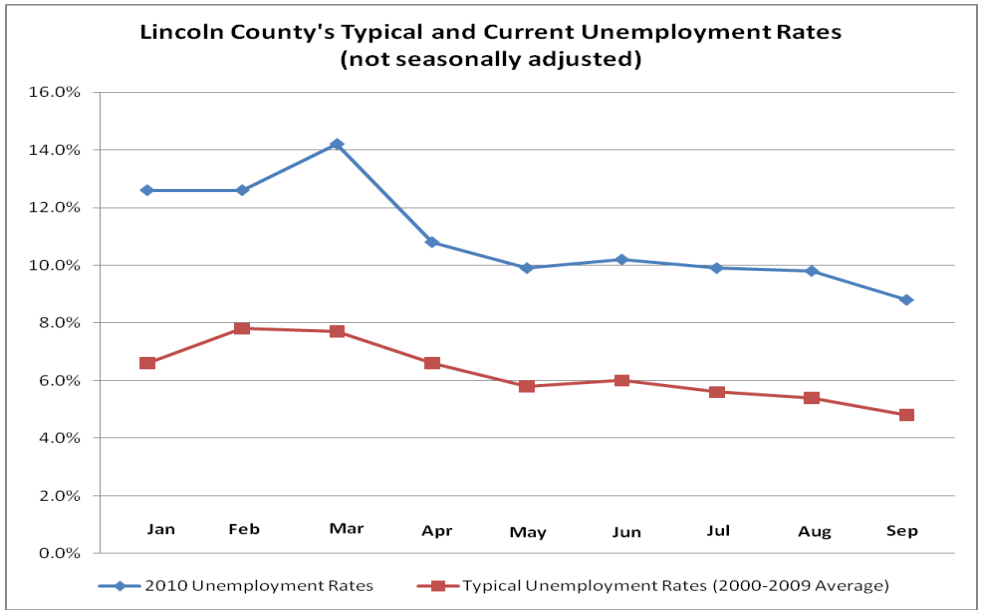
VII. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

General Economic Conditions of Lincoln County (existing conditions)

Economic Base

As the end of 2010 approached, Lincoln County was still struggling to recover from the Great Recession (Figure 22). Its unemployment rate stood at 8.8%, (September 2010) less than the nation's, and a full percent higher than the state's, and the fifth highest county rate in Wisconsin. The county experienced over 14% unemployment as recently as March 2009 and has consistently had county monthly rates that ranked in the top ten highest in the state over the course of the recession and its aftermath. The graph below shows a comparison of 2010 January through September county unemployment rates with typical unemployment rates for the same months from 2000-2009.[17] The average unemployment for the latter years was skewed slightly by high unemployment in 2009.

Figure 22



[17] Source: WI DWD, Bureau of Workforce Training, LAUS 2010.

Reasons for this discouraging recent unemployment history are numerous. But, the most important seems to be heavy dependence on the manufacturing and construction sectors. Before the recession, about 30% of the county's jobs were in manufacturing as compared with roughly 10% for the nation as a whole and 18% for Wisconsin.[18] In the 19th century, the county prospered from the logging industry. The Wisconsin River flows through its heart, which made for easy transport of timber at the time. Since at least the mid-20th century, Lincoln County's economy was largely built on the window and door manufacturing industries, taking advantage of still abundant forested acres.

As home construction slowed during the recent housing bubble crisis so too did the demand for windows, doors and other home related wood products. Of the roughly 600 jobs lost in the county between 2003 and the end of 2007, even before the recession, 370 were in manufacturing. The bulk of layoffs in the county since the recession began have come from window and door companies. Most of the job losses are likely permanent. Another indication of a significant slowdown in construction is that the Lincoln County Zoning Office processed only 17 home construction permits in the first six months of 2009 in the middle of the economic downturn as compared to 51 over the same period in 2007 and 30 in 2008.[19] As previously stated, issuance of permits rose in the aftermath of the April 2011 Merrill area twister.

Figure 23 on the next page shows employment change and industry sector growth in Lincoln County from 2000 to 2009. During the period, there was a 12.6% reduction in the total number employed. Between 2008 and 2009, in the midst of the Great Recession, the number employed declined 5.8%, with the bulk of that loss coming in the construction and manufacturing sectors.

Although the number employed in the Financial Activities sector declined slightly during the recent recession, the sector experienced by far the most robust growth during the entire period (243%). The only other sector to experience growth during the entire period was professional and business services. That same sector also experienced the third highest growth rate from 2008 to 2009. Natural Resources added 21 employees from 2008-2009 and was the only other sector besides "other services" to experience job growth during the recession.

[18] Lincoln County Workforce Profile 2009. Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.
[19] Lincoln County Zoning Office Records. Eleven of the county's 16 towns are under county zoning. Numbers include permanent seasonal dwellings.

Figure 23 **Lincoln County, WI Employment by Industry Sector[20] (NAICS)**

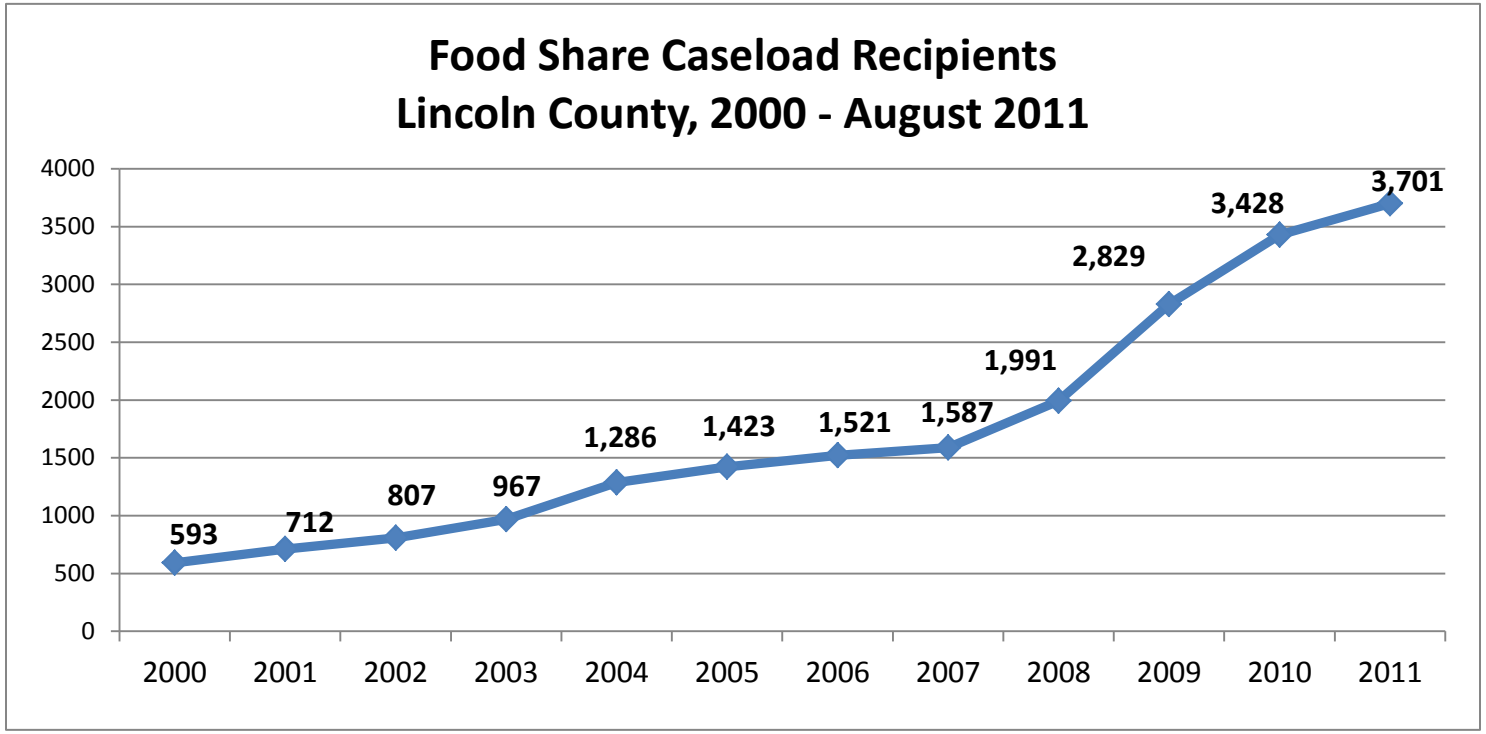
Industry Sector	Average Annual Number Employed (2000-2009)	Number Employed in 2000	Number Employed in 2008	Number Employed in 2009	% Change from 2000 to 2009	% Change from 2008 to 2009
All Industries	11,441	12,052	11,223	10,528	-12.6%	-5.8%
Natural Resources	133	184	126	147	-20%	+16.7%
Construction	450	496	422	352	-29%	-16.6%
Manufacturing	3,495	4,030	3,278	2,736	-32%	-16.5%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	2,198	2,445	2,131	2,104	-13.9%	-1.3%
Information[21]	103	92	102	92	0%	-9.8%
Financial Activities	707	273	943	937	+243%	-.06%
Prof. & Business Services	320	281	344	362	+28.8%	+5.2%
Education & Health	1,690	1,690	1,645	1,632	-3.4%	-.08%
Leisure & Hospitality	1,003	1,202	962	884	-19.8%	-8.1%
Other Services	340	384	296	316	-17.7%	+6.8%
Public Administration	1,002	1,075	974	966	-10.1%	-.08%

Although declining 32% between 2000 and 2009, the number employed in the county's manufacturing sector was still 27% of the total employed in 2009. The second highest amount of employees in 2009 had jobs in the trade, transportation, and the utilities sector. The education and health sectors also employed a good percentage of the total (15.5%).

[20] Source: WI DWD, Workforce Training, QCEW, October 2010
[21] Data could not be located for 2000 and 2007.

Other recent developments point to a depressed economy that may be getting worse. From 2000 through 2007, the number of Food Share/food stamp recipients in Lincoln County jumped nearly 168%. This was the 25th highest increase out of Wisconsin's 72 counties. About 2% of the county's residents were on the Food Share caseload in 2000. Figure 24 below shows that increases in the Food Share program caseload have been almost as dramatic in the shorter four year period since 2007.

Figure 24

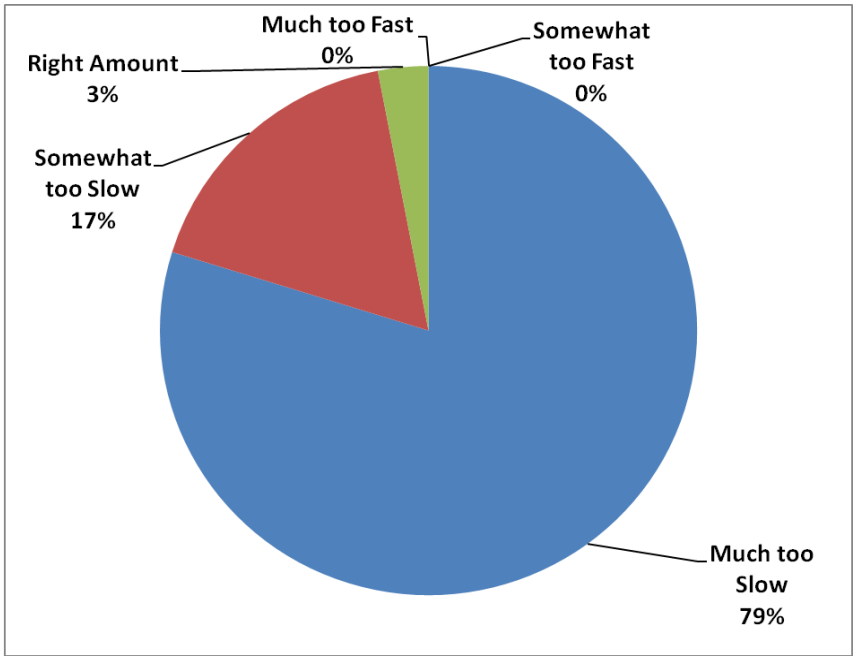


During that period, the caseload increased 133%. More important, in August 2011 about 13% of the county's residents were in the program.

This data is reinforced by recent statistics coming out of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The Merrill Area Public School District experienced a 12.5% jump from the 2008-2009 to the 2009-2010 school years in the number of families qualifying for the free or reduced lunch programs. Nearly half of all students now qualify for the programs. Statewide during the same period, the jump in free or reduced lunch enrollments between the two school years was on average about 5%. In the Tomahawk school district, enrollments jumped about 7.5%.[22]

Concerns about anemic job growth were born out in the results of a 2009 National Citizens Survey conducted by the City of Merrill. Although the survey clearly had some flaws such as comparing Merrill results to data gathered from dissimilar cities, 570 households returned it (nearly 50% of those distributed). Because of the high number of households completing the questionnaire, and because the city has about one-third of the county's population, the results have significant bearing countywide. According to the pie chart directly below, the vast majority of respondents felt that job growth in the area is much too slow.

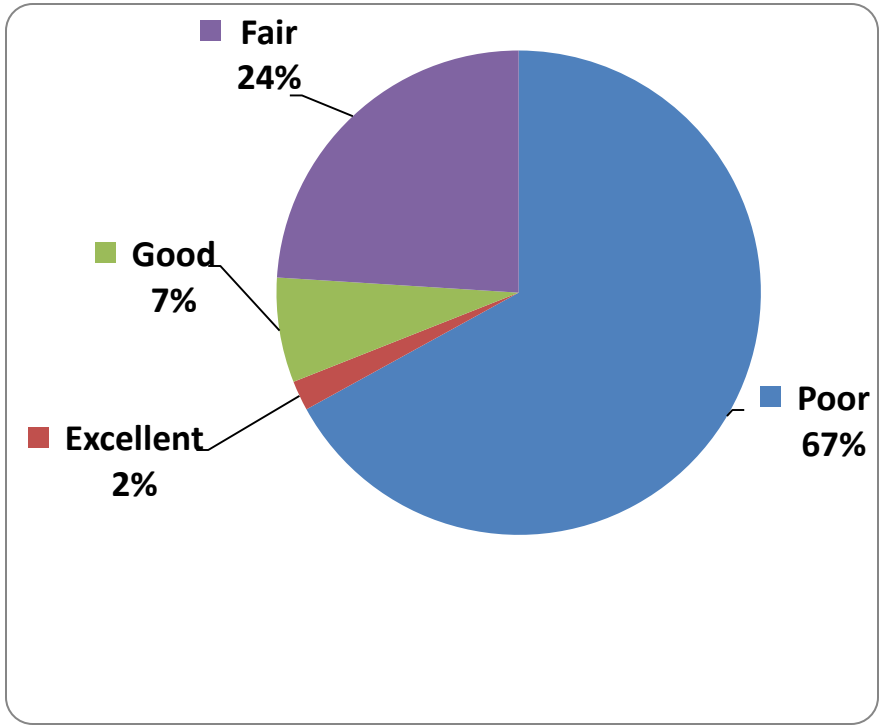
Figure 25 **Pace of Job Growth in Merrill**



[22] Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Enrollment and Participation Report 2009.

In the same survey, employment opportunities, as the next chart depicts, were also rated low.

Figure 26 **Employment Opportunities**



Even when jobs are present it is usually, as Figure 27 on the next page shows,[23] the typical worker in the area no matter what industry he/she is in receives an average annual wage that is considerably lower than state average annual wages.

[23] Source: Lincoln County Workforce Development Profile, 2009. Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

Figure 27

Average Annual Wage by Industry Division in 2008

Industry Type	Lincoln County	Wisconsin	County as a Share of Wisconsin
All industries	$32,349	$39,169	82.8%
Natural Resources	$31,407	$31,227	100.6
Construction	$37,778	$49,658	76.1%
Manufacturing	$40,690	$48,116	84.6%
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	$25,264	$33,604	75.2%
Financial Activities	$40,554	$52,008	78.0%
Professional & Business Services	$28,941	$45,114	64.2%
Education & Health	$33,905	$41,222	82.2%
Leisure & Hospitality	$8,670	$14,102	61.5%
Other Services	$16,816	$22,628	74.3%
Public Administration	$38,037	$41,040	92.7%
Information	$25,185	$49,838	50.5%

Economic Development Initiatives

Despite recent economic struggles, or more accurately largely because of them, entities involved in economic development throughout the county have begun to take a more aggressive approach toward planning and implementing projects that have the potential or have already brought new jobs to the area or, perhaps even more important, kept jobs here.

The Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation (LCEDC) has been the catalyst of much of the economic development activity in the county. Merrill projects that the corporation took a lead role in bringing to fruition included but were not limited to Walgreens, Island City Manufacturers (special military equipment), Russ Davis Wholesalers (food), Zastrow the Beer Man Distribution, and North Central Technical College Training Center (regional fire suppression training).[24] In Tomahawk, the corporation helped maintain or expand jobs at Universal Industries (welding, fabricating, machining), Louisiana Pacific (reconstituted wood products), and Daigle Brothers, Inc (steel fabrication).

Lincoln County received $482,500 in grant funds from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), for Economic Development Program. These funds were loaned to County businesses. The repayments of these loans provide the funds to establish a Lincoln County Revolving Loan Fund. As of November 2010 there were eight (8) outstanding loans totaling over $265,000 and over $260,000 available to lend. The Lincoln County Revolving Loan Fund was slated to be administered by a pooled Central Wisconsin Loan Fund beginning in 2012, increasing the amount of capital available.

The impacts of economic development measured through grants received, property taxes associated with new construction, tax credits obtained by County businesses, and both direct and indirect wages associated with jobs created are collectively 40 times greater than all of the spending of Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation. Stated another way for every dollar spent on economic development there is $40 in impact. Considering only development done through grants received, property taxes associated with new construction, and tax credits obtained by County businesses, there is an impact of nearly $4 for every dollar spent through LCEDC.

Merrill's and Tomahawk's comprehensive plans call for an aggressive but measured approach toward growing their local economies. Emphasis was also placed on working with existing businesses to help them grow in ways that make the most sense for them and surrounding communities. The county's 2001 comprehensive plan endorsed a similar strategy, one that promoted the maintenance and establishment of large scale industrial and commercial development in the urban cores. Rural development, the plan stated, should be confined to agricultural and forestry based opportunities, industrial and commercial development with limited infrastructure needs, convenience and recreation oriented development, and home-based businesses. County zoning regulations over the past decade have tended to promote the strategy.

[24] The entire complex was destroyed by the April 2011 Merrill Area tornado but is being rebuilt on a larger scale.

The recent Highway 51 Corridor and Riverfront Development plans for the City of Merrill reflect urban core, mixed use development appropriate for the quality of life that Lincoln County residents seek to maintain while catering to tourists who most likely are heading north of the county, more deeply into Northwoods settings, for their extended vacations. At the end of 2011, the city was striving to begin the implementation of the 51 Corridor plan.

The broad economic development strategies and goals that were articulated by various entities early in the decade still form the basis for the new goals set by stakeholders and that are outlined in this section of the plan.

TIF District Utilization

Tax Incremental Financing (or TIF) districts, are one of the more heavily used economic development tools in the state of Wisconsin. Although the device - meant primarily as a means to attract investors and developers to blighted land mostly in urban areas - has been around since the early 1970s, both cities in the county did not start heavily using it until quite recently.

TIF Districts, in basic terms, are initially financed by government tax revenues. That money is used for infrastructural development, such as the addition of water or sewer lines, in a specified geographic area. This is an expense that private developers do not have to pay, giving them an incentive to come into the area. Once private industrial, commercial, or mixed use development takes place, the property tax dollars from those new entities are used for a specified period of time to help further development in the designated TIF area. Jurisdictions such as local school districts, the county, and any local technical college receiving property tax proceeds from the area agree to forego those dollars in order to fund the additional economic growth.

As of December 2010, the City of Merrill had five active TIF Districts. Another had been closed out, and another was being planned. TIF District #1 was closed with nearly $14.5 million in new equalized value generation. Two of the districts focus on remediating blight issues. Total TIF District value increments for all districts in 2010 was just over $8.6 million.[25] Also as of December 2010, the City of Tomahawk had three active TIF Districts. According to the city's mayor, all were experiencing moderate development activity.

[25] Data provided by City of Merrill Finance Department.

Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides information about contaminated sites through its Bureau of Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRTTS website).[26] Both contaminated soil and groundwater sites are listed. Although the database is updated regularly, data comes from various sources both internal and external to the department which might lead to delays, omissions or errors. Most of the information contained in the site is received from property owners, contractors, or consultants. Sites listed are only those the DNR knows about.

As of November 2011 there were 17 open Lincoln County sites listed in the database. There was also one site listed as conditionally closed, meaning that remedial work had likely been completed but the paperwork proving that had had not been filed. All but three of the sites are located in Merrill and Tomahawk. Sites not located in either of the cities are in the Town of Pine River, the Town of Bradley, and the unincorporated village of Tripoli. Specific information about these sites, including the nature of the remediation work that is needed, can be found at the Department of Natural Resources BRRTS website.

BID District and Main Street program

In 2008, the City of Tomahawk achieved Main Street status. By the end of 2011, the program was thriving, thanks primarily to a dynamic director and board.

A good portion of the funds used to support the program come from business owners' donations and tax contributions made through a business improvement district (BID). In November 2011, the BID Board voted to raise the business contribution rate from $2 for every $1,000 in valuation to $2.50 for every $1,000 in valuation. Nearly 30% of Main Street revenue comes from BID contributions.[27] The highest amount of revenues supporting the organization comes through fundraising. The Main Street program served to strengthen both primary business districts in Tomahawk. As of late 2011, the City of Merrill had neither a business improvement district nor Main Street designation.

[26] Source: http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/rr/brrts/index.htm
[27] Information provided by Tomahawk Main Street, Inc. (2012 budget figures.)

Economic Development Plan: Goals and Objectives

Below is a framework of a comprehensive ten year economic development plan that needs further refinement. Besides the goals and objectives below, the refinement of the plan should be of paramount importance and take place as early in the ten year period as possible. The community stakeholders who participated in the three meeting planning process were all extremely knowledgeable about a variety of economic development issues in Lincoln County. Because of their varied professional backgrounds, they also each brought a unique perspective on how to enhance the county's economic vitality. Those who participated are listed directly below.

- Pete Wurl (Wisconsin Public Service, Tomahawk)
- Tim Haight (Owner, Merrill Ace Hardware)
- Jeremy Cordova- (Owner, Murphy's Insurance)
- William Burgener (Town of Merrill Chair, Wisconsin Town's Association)
- Tony Kusserow (Courtside Furniture)
- Todd Frederick (Owner, F&M Enterprises)
- Kevin Cohrs (Merrill Area Development Corporation)
- Brian Arndorfer (Merrill Area Development Corporation)
- Tony Chladek (City of Merrill Administrator)
- Dan Frick (Mitchell Metal Products)
- Bob Lussow (Lincoln County Board Chair)
- Bob Lee (Mayor, City of Tomahawk and County Board Supervisor)
- Debbe Kinsey (Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce)
- Lori Koppelmann (Director, Tomahawk Main Street, Inc.)
- Tamra Anderson (Director, Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce)
- Dan Miller (Director, Lincoln County Zoning Department)
- Kent Reinhardt (Wisconsin Public Service, Merrill)
- Mike Cummings (Lincoln Community Bank)
- Mike Ravn (President, Church Mutual, Inc.)
- Mike Hammer (COO, Good Samaritan Health Center)
- Jack Sroka (Director, Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation)

- Art Lersch (Community Resource Development, University of Wisconsin – Extension)
- George Schau, City of Merrill Engineer
- Bob Reichelt, (Director, Lincoln County Solid Waste)

Their rich conversations were facilitated by Thomas Cadwallader, Agricultural Educator, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County. The results of those conversations are highlighted in the table beginning on the next page.

Figure 28 **Economic Development Plan Outline**

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Groups/Agencies	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[28]
Goal #1: ***Education: Promote education about various small business and economic development tools such as Angel investor networks, Small Business Development Centers, help offered through the USDA, and incubators.***	Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation Tomahawk Development Corporation Merrill Area Development Corporation Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce Lincoln County Zoning University of Wisconsin – Extension, Lincoln County	University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce	**Objective A:** Build on the broad spectrum of educational resources that are currently in place and encourage the continued development of a catalyst organization to promote business/economic development. **Objective B:** Increase the knowledge and visibility of the county's resources available for sustained economic development. The county and its communities need to identify a catalyst agency or organization that shows some unity and avoids the perception of fragmentation. Develop a website showing resources available that: Is eye catching/more visual Allows for easy access of information (one or two clicks away) Includes information about schools and educational resources that support the development of a variety of businesses. Communicates career opportunities available in the community Summarizes infrastructure and human resources that are in place to support a	Ongoing throughout life of comprehensive plan.

[28] Some of the action steps mentioned in this plan will occur at the most opportune time (when it most makes sense) so it is difficult to assign them timelines.

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Groups/Agencies	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[28]
			wide variety of businesses. **Objective C:** <u>Improve the level of knowledge of aspiring and established businesses on core financial management skills and successful strategies for business growth, development and transition.</u> Create an advisory board to support communication and mentors that provide the competence factor important in adult education. This should become a way that new, transitioning, and growing businesses are supported. Build on current business to business networking that occurs both formally and informally. Build on current efforts to welcome new businesses to the community. Educational entities need to offer courses in personal and business financial management, efficient office and manufacturing principles, personnel management, marketing, and succession planning. Teach the principles of entrepreneurial activities to youth and adults (one on one and in groups). Teach youth that starting their own businesses once leaving school/college is a viable career option.	

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Groups/Agencies	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[28]
Goal #2: Invest in the county's infrastructure	County government (e.g. highways, IT, etc.) City of Merrill government (e.g. streets, airport, etc.) City of Tomahawk government Town governments Tomahawk airport Grant makers (everything from brownfields to broadband) Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation Merrill Area Development Corporation Tomahawk Development Corporation Wisconsin Public Service Private developers (add infrastructure to TIF developments) UW-Extension, Lincoln County (for planning) North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (for planning) Private technology vendors	Local government Private developers Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation (coordination)	**Objective A:** Adapt to slowly aging population by retaining our young people and attracting new young singles and families to the county. Generate more job opportunities suitable for a younger population Generate more quality of life opportunities interesting to younger people **Objective B:** Take advantage of the knowledge and experience of older workers and retirees by creating more flexible opportunities for them to work based on their own interests and schedules. Establish program that facilitates seniors acting as mentors in various capacities. Lay the foundation to establish a senior based labor market. **Objective C:** Develop and support businesses that will meet the unique needs of the aging population. Particular focus areas might be:	

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Groups/Agencies	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[28]
	(broadband, wind energy, solar, wireless, etc.)		Health Housing Recreation	
Goal #3: Plan for the county's economic development future taking into account how to adapt to the changing regulatory climates	Lincoln County Zoning City of Merrill Zoning City of Tomahawk Zoning Town planning and zoning commissions/committees UW-Extension North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Private planning consultants Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation Merrill Area Development Corporation Tomahawk Development Corporation	Lincoln County Zoning City of Merrill Zoning Town planning and zoning commissions/committee	**Objective A:** Implement Merrill area Highway 51 corridor plans by capitalizing on development that has already occurred along that corridor and even further south along I-39. **Objective B:** Create an atmosphere that fosters units of government that work together and are flexible when it comes to regulations. Include a wide variety of stakeholders, including all municipalities and towns, in economic development initiatives. This type of inclusiveness promotes positive buy-in from the very beginning of any particular project. **Objective C:** Make certain to provide a single, clearly recognized point of contact for county economic development related work. (Trusted point organization to coordinate partners working on economic development projects.)	

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Groups/Agencies	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[28]
			Objective D: Promote the use of incubators to help foster new business growth. **Objective E:** Make certain that all existing and planned industrial parks develop comprehensive plans. **Objective F:** Do everything possible and the local level to minimize regulations for start-up businesses that were originally intended to regulate the negative impacts of larger, more established businesses. **Objective G:** Promote effective density planning that improves the efficiency of providing services but is balanced with the community's desire to maintain a rural feel. **Objective H:** Develop clearly stated, visible and viable housing and infrastructure plans.	

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Groups/Agencies	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[28]
			Objective I: Be actively involved in planning for and regulating the installation of high-capacity broadband communication systems for businesses, schools, government and personal uses. **Objective J:** Capitalize on the 100,000 acres of county forest land. Biomass Traditional wood based industries	
***Goal #4*: Make certain that Lincoln County promotes a positive atmosphere and attitude**	All Lincoln County Departments Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce Merrill Marketing Group North Central Technical College Lincoln County Drug Free Coalition (Social Norms Project) Lincoln County Economic	Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce	**Objective A:** Take measures to promote positive attitudes among county residents **Objective B:** Demonstrate a positive business environment by: Encouraging diversification to expand beyond traditional businesses. Highlighting, promoting and exploiting the many positive aspects of the county for attracting and retaining businesses and a competitive workforce.	

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Groups/Agencies	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[28]
	Development Corporation Merrill Area Development Corporation Tomahawk-Development Corporation UW-Extension		Making sure that cottage and home-based businesses are an integral part of the community and are able to see and realize their growth potential. Work to strengthen existing businesses and people. **Objective C:** Develop a clearly stated vision statement that embraces the uniqueness of each community in the county but shows where they share similar values and goals. The county is seen as "we" not "us versus them." (This could be the first step in taking on a comprehensive approach to marketing all the county's positive aspects.) Communicate this vision on signage that promotes and identifies the community.	
Goal #5: Access financial tools for business development	Local banks USDA programs Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation programs City of Merrill City of Tomahawk Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation		**Objective A:** Provide better communication about loans and funding opportunities for both new and existing businesses. **Objective B:** Effectively use economic development tools such as TIF districts to demonstrate the community's interest in supporting business development.	

Priority/Goal	Organizations/Agencies Involved	Lead Groups/Agencies	Objectives and Proposed Action Items	Possible Timeline[28]
	Merrill Area Development Corporation Tomahawk Development Corporation Community foundations Wisconsin Angel Network		**Objective C:** Develop a venture capital fund that is larger than the currently available fund for the area **Objective D:** Effectively use grants that will help support business development such as Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) Grants. **Objective E:** Provide funds to "nurture" new enterprises with advice and resources.	

Considering that "economic development" became the overarching theme of this revised comprehensive plan, additional planning was done in this category to identify restraining forces that might impede progress toward achieving or driving factors that could promote achieving the primary goal identified.

Goal:

Education: Promote education about various small business and economic development tools such as Angel investor networks, Small Business Development Centers, help offered through the USDA, and incubators.

Promoting Factors

- A very good set of resources to work with such as transportation and other vital infrastructure assets and human resources that have a positive track record.

- Quality of life features that media like to highlight, providing excellent low cost promotion of the county.
- A culture of positive economic development.
- A wealth of educational resources in the area.
- The current business sharing that is already in place to build off of.
- Proximity to Wausau area business resources.

Restraining Factors

- It has been a slow process to develop a central clearinghouse of information as the various organizations in the community adapt to dramatic changes in the economy and culture.
- Coordinating communication is always a challenge.
- The efforts to date have been too broad-based and not strategic in action.
- Achieving a balance between holding on to the businesses and people we have and attracting the types of outside business investments that build on community strengths.
- Sustained funding for a central clearinghouse of information.
- Inconsistent high-speed Internet connections throughout the community.
- Business expertise that is shared does not help to incorporate new business models.
- The smaller community means existing businesses may have trouble providing mentorship to start-up businesses.

Policies

- Plan and conduct economic development projects that have the potential to maintain or increase jobs while preserving Lincoln County's rural/natural character.
- Engage in density development wherever feasible.
- Provide adequate financial support (private and government) to local agencies such as Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation whose primary mission is to be a catalyst for moving proposed economic growth plans forward.
- Provide educational opportunities of numerous kinds using a variety of delivery systems to reach diverse audiences interested in starting or expanding local businesses.
- Use existing educational institutions and economic development entities as the primary disseminators of information useful to current business owners, would-be entrepreneurs, public planning departments, and private developers.
- Foster better communication and partnerships amongst the various organizations responsible in some way for moving economic development forward in Lincoln County communities. These entities include but are not limited to economic development corporations, banks, existing businesses (including retail), home-based business entrepreneurs, government councils and boards, government departments, private developers, engineers, and planners.
- The county needs to work more closely with the City of Merrill as it attempts to carry out development in the Route 51 corridor area and the downtown riverfront section. This could mean collaborating on an extension of Pine Ridge Avenue to County Road G and working with entities on annexation issues.
- Make greater use wherever feasible of tax incremental financing districts in order to attract new development of various kinds to the urban areas of the county.
- Build off of regional efforts to increase broadband and wireless communication technologies throughout the north central portion of Wisconsin.
- Provide support to entities wishing to develop business and labor opportunities geared toward serving the county's increasing aging population.
- Continue to work with towns under county zoning that wish to foster home-based business development.

Possible Funding Sources

The list and descriptions below are by no means exhaustive. Consult your local economic development and government entities for other possible funding sources.

Business Development

- *Lincoln County Revolving Loan Fund:* Loans are available to eligible applicants for acquiring land, buildings, equipment, furniture and fixtures; site preparation, the construction or reconstruction of buildings, or the installation of equipment; clearance, demolition, or removal of structures, or the rehabilitation of buildings and other such improvements; working capital (inventory and direct labor costs only); and the payment of assessments for sewer, water, street, and other public utilities if the provision of the facilities will directly create or retain jobs. The fund is administered by the Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation. Loans are subject to County Board approval. For an application go to http://www.lincolncountyedc.org/info.html and click on "Grants and Loans."

- *City of Merrill Revolving Loan Fund, Façade and Micro-Loan Programs:* The city offers a variety of loans at reasonable terms to help small businesses. As of late 2010, the city had nearly $249,000 to lend in its revolving loan fund and just over $33,000 in its façade improvements and micro-loan account. The loans are administered through the city's community development department. Contact the city for further information.

- *Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA), Small Business Guarantee Loan:* The maximum guarantee of these low interest loans is lesser of 80% of the loan or $200,000 for fixed assets, permanent working capital, and inventory. For loans financing revolving working capital, the guarantee is lesser of 80% of the loan or $80,000. The business owner must search for his/her local WHEDA lender. (The program is similar in concept to the Small Business Administration's Guaranteed Loan Program). In – home businesses are eligible to apply. Citizens Bank, River Valley State Bank, and Tomahawk Community Bank, all of Tomahawk, offer these guaranteed loans. River Valley State Bank in Merrill offers them. Go to http://www.wheda.com/root/BusinessPartners/SmallBusinessLenders/Dynamic.aspx?id=688 for more information.

- *Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA),Agribusiness Guarantee:* Eligible businesses for these low interest guaranteed loans include those that expand the production of products using Wisconsin's raw agricultural commodities. Maximum guarantee is lesser of 80% of the loan or $600,000 for fixed assets, permanent working capital, and inventory. Maximum 80% on loans up to $100,000 for businesses that commercially harvest whitefish from Lake Superior. Maximum guarantee is lesser of 80%

of the loan or $200,000 for revolving working capital. For further information consult http://www.wheda.com/root/BusinessPartners/SmallBusinessLenders/Dynamic.aspx?id=833.

- *Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA), Linked Deposit Loan (LIDL) Subsidy:* Women and minorities who start or expand businesses are eligible for this interest rate subsidy program. The following website contains additional information: http://www.wheda.com/root/BusinessPartners/SmallBusinessLenders/Dynamic.aspx?id=791.

- *Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corporation, Small Business Administration (SBA) 504 Loans:* The 504 Loan program administered through SBA and this finance corporation allows businesses to make investments in commercial real estate and equipment while preserving their working capital. Usually these loans require lower down payments and provide up to 20 year financing with long-term fixed interest rates. Go to http://www.wbd.org/business_owners. (The organization also packages SBA 7a and USDA business and industry loans. See below for general descriptions of these other loan programs.)

- *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans:* Loans can be used for things like industrial acquisition, business conversion, the acquisition and development of land, and equipment purchase. Loans are guaranteed for between 60% and 80% depending on their amounts. The maximum loan is $10 million. A perspective applicant must find a lending entity that collaborates with this USDA program. Interest rates are negotiated between the lender and the applicant. Go to http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/b&i_gar.htm for more information.

- *Small Business Administration (SBA) Guaranteed Loans:* Various loans are made through local banks using SBA guarantees. Besides the aforementioned 504 program, the SBA offers 7a lending. Up to 85% of loans up to $150,000 are backed by the SBA. Loans over that amount have up to a 75% guarantee. Almost every Lincoln County bank does some kind of SBA lending. Various other loans are also offered through agency. Check http://www.sba.gov/financialassistance/borrowers/guaranteed/index.html for further information.

General Economic Development

- *Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Public Facilities for Economic Development:* This federally funded CDBG program provides supplementary grant dollars that help underwrite the cost of municipal infrastructure development. Cities, counties, villages and towns are eligible to apply. Applicants must show that businesses that become part of the larger development project have to create or retain full-time jobs. Over half of the jobs created must be for low to moderate income individuals. Applicants must also demonstrate financial need. They also have to provide a 25% match. Find more information at http://commerce.wi.gov/CD/CD-bcf-cdbg-pfed.html.

- *Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Public Facilities Program:* Units of local governments may apply for funding to help leverage costs of public building/facilities construction that enhances overall community and economic development. The proposed program must meet several Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and national objectives. National objectives may include but are not necessarily limited to slum and blight removal and fulfilling some urgent local need. Applicants must demonstrate financial need. Go to http://commerce.wi.gov/CD/CD-bcf-cdbg-pf.html for further information.

- *Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Blight Elimination and Brownfield Redevelopment Program:* Grants up to $1.25 million are available for local governments, businesses, and individuals to help assess and remediate underused or abandoned contaminated sites. A "20% to 50% match is required depending on the size of the grant awarded." More information can be found at http://commerce.wi.gov/CD/CD-bfi-grants.html.

- *Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Enterprise Development Zone Program:* This program provides tax incentives to expanding or new businesses in economically distressed areas. Zones are designated by the Department of Commerce and can exist up to seven years. Tax credits of up to $3 million can be provided. Distressed areas must include one or more of the following: high unemployment, declining population, low incomes, declining property values, declining business presence, plant closings and layoffs, and high numbers of residents on public assistance. See http://www.commerce.state.wi.us/bd/bd-edz.html for more information including a specific list of the kinds of tax credits offered.

- *Focus on Energy Renewable Energy Incentives for Business:* Focus on Energy Wisconsin offers a wide array of products to individuals, businesses and governments to help incentivize green practices that save energy. For this specific program, several of these incentives come in the form of discounts for work being done such as site assessments (wind and solar) and equipment. Farms, schools and businesses are eligible to apply. For more information go to http://www.focusonenergy.com/Incentives/Business/renewable_incentives.aspx.

Secondary Focus Elements

VIII. LAND USE

Summary of Land Use "Designations" and "Categories"

Map 6 on page 135 outlines and maps numerous land use designations to describe the desired type and location of different land uses. In many cases, these mapped plan designations differ from the existing land use and zoning pattern. The planned land use designations were prepared to reflect the range of economic and geographic conditions and town objectives. In preparing their initial Town Land Use Plans, each participating town used the same menu of land use designations from which to choose, although not every designation was used in every town. This single menu was used for reasons of simplicity, consistency across town boundaries, predictability in future investment and decision making, and ease of implementation and future administration (e.g., for a new zoning ordinance). The Lincoln County Zoning Ordinance of 2004, based on the county's original comprehensive plan and these initial town plans, reflects these planned land uses. Eleven of the 16 towns have chosen to be under the county zoning ordinance.

The various planned land use *designations* are grouped into three general *categories*: Rural/Environmental, Residential, and Non-Residential (see Map 6). In general, differences between the three general *categories* of planned land use (e.g., between "Rural/Environmental" and "Residential") are intended to be greater than differences between the multiple *designations* within each category (e.g., between "Rural Lands" and "Agriculture").

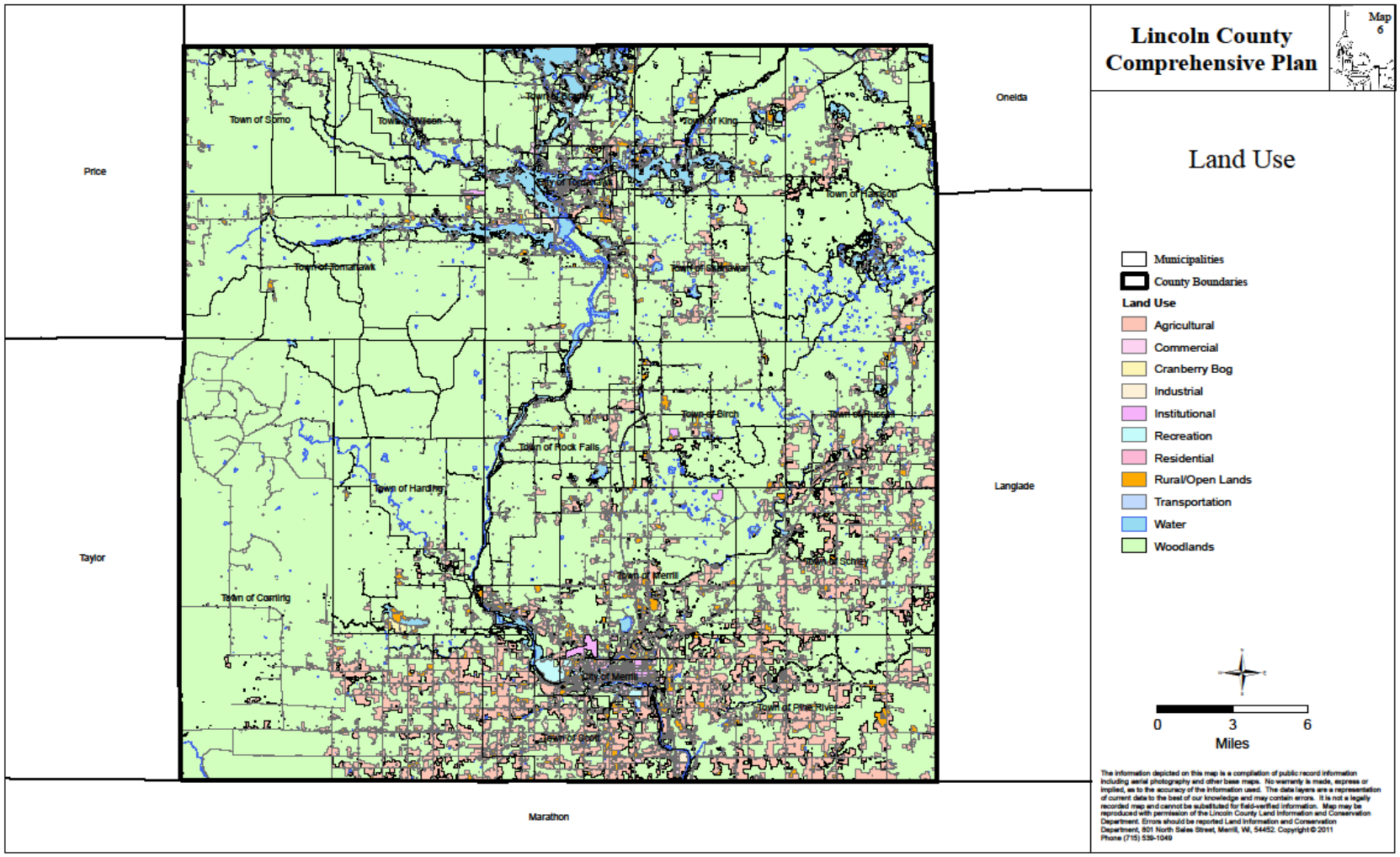
Following initial adoption of the *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan* in 2001, the towns and the County were not required to develop formal *Plan* amendments before acting on a development proposal which suggests a change in land use designation within the same category (e.g., when a land owner proposes to remove land from the "Rural Lands" designation to the "Agriculture" designation.) Such changes to Map 6 may be handled administratively. In contrast, the Town and County required a formal *Plan* amendment before acting on a development proposal which suggests a change in land use designation that would also change the category (e.g., from "Rural/Environmental" to "Residential"). Such changes lead to more significant shifts in land use policy and development impacts.

Relationship Between Planned Land Use Designations and Zoning

A comprehensive rewrite of the Lincoln County Zoning code based on the initial comprehensive plan occurred as a guided process with a representative oversight committee from every zoned township with the county. The new zoning ordinance and maps were developed during this process and was approved by the Lincoln County Board of Supervisors in December 2004 in accordance with statutory provision.

Map 6 is <u>not</u> a zoning map. However, the land use designations shown in the map generally correspond with appropriate zoning for the various properties within those designations. In some cases, existing (year 2004 ordinance) zoning reflects desired future land use.

Map 6 Current Land Use



Source: Map produced by Northcentral Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and Lincoln County Land Information & Conservation, 2011.

If a simplification of the 2004 zoning code is to be undertaken, it will have to accurately reflect current land uses as well as the goals mentioned in this section of the updated Comprehensive Plan. If the revision is to take place, as is being suggested by some Lincoln County officials, towns and property owners will have full notice and full opportunity to participate in the creation of a new or revised zoning ordinance and the mapping of different zoning districts in their respective towns. Also, if the revision is to take place, this land use section of the updated Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan will have to be re-written to reflect any changes in zoning districts. Town representatives will participate in the Land Use Plan rewrite to ensure that the tenets of updated town comprehensive plans are reflected.

To ensure compliance with statutory provisions within the planning law specifically as it related to implementation under state statute 66.1001 which establishes a 10 year review requirement, a parcel by parcel comparative analysis was performed in 2009 with respect to planning districts and zoning districts within each town. Where it was determined that the planning category was inconsistent with the prescribed zoning district a parcel was identified for such inconsistency and a list was generated for each town with such inconsistencies.

Meetings were held with zoning staff and town officials to detail those inconsistencies and to solicit direction on how they were to be addressed. Upon receiving direction from each town, a new planned land use map and a new zoning map were prepared for consideration by the affected town. Each town then handled matters according to their own protocols (i.e. through local plan commissions and formal hearings to informal informational sessions at town board meetings). Lincoln County ultimately held its own public hearing on the formal plan amendment and amendment to the official zoning map on December 10, 2009 and recommended adoption to the full County Board. The Board then approved said amendments via Ordinance 2010-01-549 on January 19 2010.

Detailed Descriptions of Land Use Designations

The various land use designations used in Map 6 are defined below. These definitions were used by each of the towns that have land use maps.

Following the definition of each planned land use designation is the existing County zoning district(s) that best implements that designation. Specific zoning districts are listed on page 184 of this updated Comprehensive Plan.

1. ***Rural/Environmental Designations***

   a. **Rural Lands**: This designation includes privately owned undeveloped lands, small woodlots, grasslands, and open lands at times not in active agricultural or commercial forestry use, with each single area mapped in that designation sized 20 acres or more. Continued open space uses (including farming and forestry) are generally recommended for these areas. Appropriate development includes seasonal and permanent single family residences not exceeding a density of one new residence per 20 gross acres owned, associated home occupations and small family businesses which do not interfere with the interests of nearby property owners, and

the keeping of animals in numbers appropriate to the size of the lot. Within some areas under this map designation, existing development at slightly greater densities may already be in place.

b. **Agriculture:** This designation includes privately owned lands, predominantly in agricultural production, with each single area mapped in that designation sized 35 acres or more. Appropriate uses include agricultural and related uses including livestock grazing; dairy farming; cropland uses; orchards; cranberry bogs, exotic animal farms; and specialty Christmas tree growing and harvesting, and incidental display or sales uses. These are priority areas for agriculture. Other appropriate uses include incidental display and sales of agricultural products, farm family residences associated with the farm operation; additional single family residences not exceeding a density of one new non-farm residence per 35 gross acres owned; associated home occupations and small family businesses which do not interfere with the interests of adjacent property owners; and agricultural related businesses such as implement dealerships, feed operations, greenhouses, garden centers, and display and sales of agricultural products produced on site. Within some areas under this map designation, existing development at slightly greater densities may already be in place.

c. **Private Forest:** This designation includes privately owned lands, predominantly forested, with each single area mapped in that designation sized 35 acres or more. Appropriate uses include commercial forest production and processing; seasonal residences; public access motorized and non-motorized recreational uses where permitted by the Forest Crop Law or Managed Forest programs; and private non-commercial recreational uses. Certain lands within this designation may become available for acquisition as public forest over the 20-year planning period. Within some areas mapped within this designation, there may be existing development that does not meet this description.

d. **Public Forest**: This designation includes existing and planned forest lands owned by a state, county, town, city, university or school district and devoted to multiple forestry, recreational, mineral extraction, and other compatible uses. This land use designation does not include lands specifically designated or appropriate for public parks, scenic areas, conservation areas, or recreation areas. Minor changes to this district may continue to be advisable, including standards for the approval of mineral extraction sites.

e. **Public Recreation**: This designation includes existing and planned publicly-owned lands designated as state parks and scenic areas, state conservation areas, county parks and recreation areas, town parks, city parks, water access areas, or other public recreational facilities. This land use designation may also include recreational lands owned by private utility companies, but does not generally include publicly owned forestlands or public institutional uses. Within the proposed revised zoning ordinance, the Recreation district may be acceptable for larger public recreational uses, while various Residential zoning districts may be appropriate for smaller recreational uses.

f. **Environmental Corridor:** This designation includes generally continuous open space systems based on lands including sensitive natural resources and severe limitations for development. Areas in this designation are depicted both on Map 4 and Map 6. This designation includes the following component parts:

- Wisconsin DNR-identified wetlands subject to existing state-mandated county zoning,
- FEMA designated floodplains subject to existing state-mandated county zoning,
- Slopes of 15 percent or greater, as determined through the Lincoln County Soil Survey, and
- Soils with a majority hydric content (i.e. soils formed under wet conditions).

New development should generally be discouraged in these areas, and is often very limited by existing state-mandated county zoning. Appropriate uses include open space, agriculture, and forestry using Best Management Practices. New homes and other buildings should not be placed in an environmental corridor if other, more appropriate, building sites are available outside the environmental corridor. The existing Floodplain and Shoreland-Wetland zoning districts help implement the recommendations of this planned land use designation. The *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan* does not recommend any additional zoning regulations over those mapped Environmental Corridor lands not officially designated as floodplains or wetlands. These remaining areas mainly include lands with steep (15+%) slopes. Instead, this slope data should be mapped and submitted with subdivision plats and site plans. This will allow issues such as erosion control, stormwater management, road and driveway access, and property protection to be properly considered in the development process. Appropriate zoning options for Environmental Corridor areas not included in wetlands and floodplains may include very low density zoning districts.

g. **Urban Transition:** This overlay designation includes privately owned lands in agricultural or open space uses which may be required for compact urban development over the 10-year planning period, primarily including lands within the DNR-approved sanitary sewer service area for the City of Merrill. Premature rural development should be limited. Appropriate interim rural uses include agricultural and related uses, single family residences not exceeding a density of one residence per 20 to 35 gross acres owned and associated home occupations and small family businesses which do not interfere with the interests of nearby property owners. More intensive development is planned to take place in these areas when a full range of urban services becomes available, including public sewer and water services. Within some areas under this map designation, existing development at slightly greater densities may already be in place.

2. Residential Designations

a. **Suburban Single Family Residential:** This designation includes existing and planned single family residential development served by public sanitary sewer service or group private waste disposal systems, including recorded subdivisions. Development density should be between one residence per 30,000 square feet and five residences per gross acre. This designation may also be applied to historic crossroad hamlet clusters of housing (even if not completely developed), condominium-style developments using single family buildings, and small-scale institutional uses within neighborhoods.

b. **Rural Single Family Residential**: This designation includes existing and planned single family residential development not served by public sanitary sewer service, including recorded subdivisions. Development density should be between one residence per 30,000

square feet and one residence per 20 gross acres, with an emphasis on lots towards the lower end of this range. (Several Town Land Use Plans express a narrower preferred lot size range for this designation.) This designation may also be applied to condominium-style developments meeting density standards and small-scale institutional uses. The keeping of animals in numbers appropriate to the size of the lot may also be considered.

c. **Mixed Residential**: This designation includes a variety of existing and planned residential development, and is generally appropriate for areas served by public sanitary sewer systems or group private waste disposal systems. Development density should not exceed eight housing units per acre and building and project sizes should be compatible with the existing or desired character of the surrounding community. Appropriate uses include two-family (duplex) residences, multiple family residences (including condominiums in 2+ unit buildings and apartments), and mobile home parks in approved locations.

3. Non-Residential Designations

a. **Private Recreation:** This designation includes existing and planned tourist-oriented or local recreation development including campgrounds, RV parks, resorts, private golf courses, race tracks, ski hills, and archery and trap ranges, seasonal restaurants, and recreationally-oriented, small-scale retail and service uses. Design of new buildings and uses in "Private Recreational" areas should generally reflect the community's "northwoods" character, and should include generous landscaping and limited signage.

b. **Planned Business:** This designation includes existing and planned high quality indoor retail, commercial service, and compatible office land uses, with generous landscaping, limited signage, and close attention to building and site design. Development character should reflect the existing or desired character of the community (see examples below).

c. **General Business**: This designation includes existing and planned medium quality indoor and outdoor retail and commercial service uses with moderate attention to building and site design, landscaping, and signage.

d. **Crossroads Mixed Use**: This designation includes an historic or planned future pattern of small-scale, often pedestrian-oriented, indoor commercial, office, institutional, residential, and open space uses, in which community character is protected through building scale, appearance, landscaping and signage.

e. **Planned Industrial:** This designation includes existing and planned high quality indoor manufacturing, assembly, office and storage uses with generous landscaping, limited signage, and high-value building materials and design (see example below).

f. **General Industrial**: This designation includes existing and planned indoor manufacturing, assembly, distribution, and warehousing uses with moderate attention to building and site design, landscaping, and signage, and with outdoor storage and operations in certain cases (see example below).

g. **Extraction**: This designation includes existing and certain planned quarries, gravel pits, mineral extraction and related land uses including processing of extracted materials.

h. **Institutional**: This designation includes existing and planned large scale public and quasi-public buildings and uses, including hospitals, churches, schools, airports, landfills, jails and detention facilities, power plants, hydroelectric facilities, cemeteries, town hall buildings, and special-care facilities.

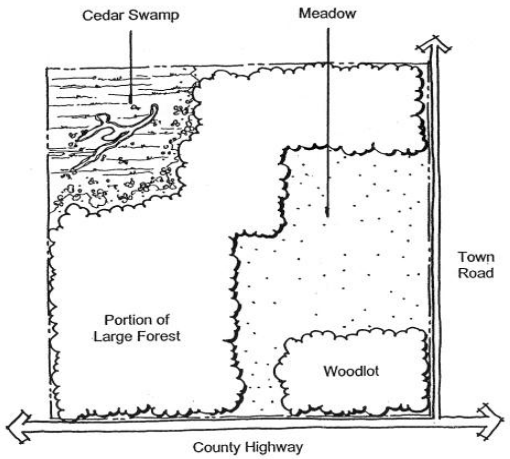
i. **General Development:** This designation includes privately owned lands desired by the town to be available for a wide range of agricultural, forestry, residential, commercial, office, industrial, extraction, recreation, and institutional uses.

The Density-Based Zoning Approach

This updated Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan and the Lincoln County Zoning Ordinance of 2004 recommend certain maximum densities for residential development within some of the "Rural/Environmental" and "Residential" planned land use designations. Specifically, the Zoning Code states that "While each of the zoning districts [A Agriculture, Rural Lands 2, and Rural Lands 4] has a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet, the A Agriculture district has a maximum development density of one new nonfarm dwelling unit per 35 contiguous aces of gross site area, the RL2 district has a maximum development density of 2 new nonfarm dwelling units per every 40 contiguous acres of gross site area, and the RL4 district has a maximum development density of 4 new nonfarm dwelling units per every 40 contiguous acres of gross site area."

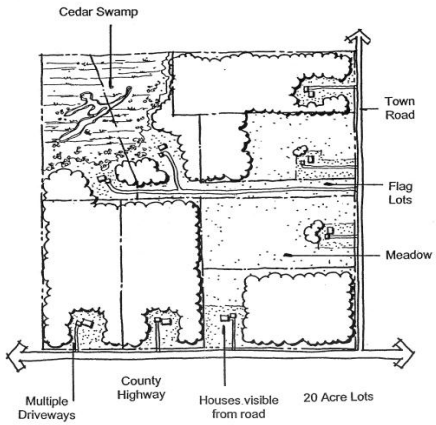
It is critical to understand the difference between maximum density and minimum lot size. Minimum lot size requirements set how big individual homesites or lots have to be. Maximum density requirements set how many homesites or lots can be divided from a larger parcel, regardless of how big individual homesites or lots have to be. Establishing maximum density standards (in additional to minimum lot sizes) is often referred to as "density-based zoning." The diagrams below describe alternative approaches to dividing land for development under a density-based zoning approach using for an example a "one home per 20 acre" standard.

Alternative Development Approaches Under Density-Based Zoning



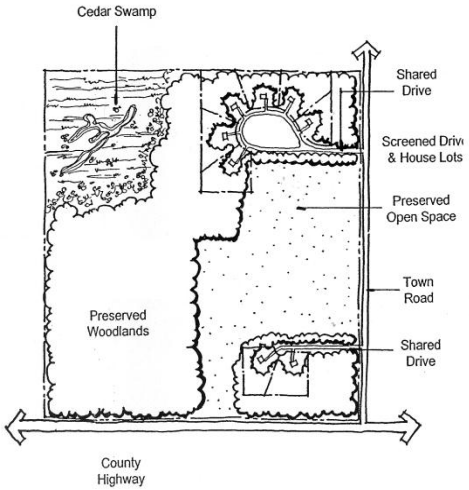
Predevelopment Site Conditions

The graphic on the left shows a hypothetical 160-acre parcel with site conditions common to Lincoln County. Assume the parcel is shown on Map 6 (and the component Town Land Use Plan Maps) in the Rural Lands planned land use designation, and then that land is zoned accordingly. The Rural Lands designation allows a maximum residential development density of one home per 20 acres of land owned.



Conventional Development Option

This second graphic shows how the 160-acre parcel could be subdivided under a conventional approach toward the "one home per 20 acre" density requirement. This approach results in the creation of eight 20-acre sized lots (160/20=8). This has been the standard approach for developing land in Lincoln County, and will probably remain the preferred approach in certain towns and situations. This approach will continue to be allowed under the Rural Lands designation.



Conservation Development Option

This third graphic shows how the same 160-acre parcel could instead be subdivided under an alternative approach to the same "20-acre" density requirement. This alternative approach again yields a total of eight lots. However, instead of lots that are 20-acres each in area, lot sizes are considerably smaller—maybe two to five acres each. The remaining land is left open and undivided. This approach, labeled the "conservation development option," may better preserve rural character and provide greater future flexibility.

This updated Comprehensive Plan recommends amendments to the County's zoning and subdivision regulations to allow for both approaches to achieving these standards, in accordance with town and property owner wishes. The "conservation development option" is the more sophisticated of the two approaches. As such, it will require a greater administrative and monitoring effort. This is particularly true because many property owners will undoubtedly elect to divide some lots at different times (e.g., two lots in 2003, three in 2008).

Recommended Land Use Pattern for Cities of Merrill and Tomahawk

State law requires that county comprehensive plans must include all city-adopted plans "without change," and that a city's plan "shall control in unincorporated territory in a county affected thereby" (Section 59.69(3)). As a result, this updated Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan includes by reference the *City of Merrill Comprehensive Plan* (2007) and the *City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan* (2006). Those plans are mentioned in Chapter II, "Jurisdictional Framework." Complete copies of these comprehensive plans may be reviewed by contacting the respective cities or by going to the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission website at http://www.ncwrpc.org/counties/region.html.

To meet State law requirements and promote coordination among plans, there was a concerted effort to make the recommendations of Town Land Use Plans and the Lincoln County Zoning Ordinance (and the resulting Map 6) consistent with City plans. For example, surrounding the City of Merrill, all lands within the City's identified Sewer Service Area were designated as "Urban Transition" on Map 6, with underlying land use recommendations reflecting the recommendations of the City's *Comprehensive Plan*.

Most opportunities for redevelopment in Lincoln County occur within the current municipal limits of the two cities.

Town Land Use Plans

To assemble Map 6 and this chapter, the towns in Lincoln County prepared and adopted individual Town Land Use Plans to guide future development. Each 15- to 20-page Town Land Use Plan document contains a summary of background information, an existing (year 2000) land use map, the results of public participation efforts, a vision statement, and a set of goals and objectives. Each Town Land Use Plan generally also includes recommendations for planned land use; agricultural, natural, and cultural resources; transportation; utilities and community facilities; housing and economic development; and intergovernmental cooperation. Many of these plans were due to be and a couple were being revised during the development of the county updated Comprehensive Plan. Town plan updates will be reviewed annually so that changes made in them can be reflected in this updated version of the county comprehensive plan. Current copies of updated town plans will be kept in the Lincoln County Zoning office.

The vision statement, goals, objectives, and key recommendations within each of the adopted Town Land Use Plans is provided in the sections that follow. The full version of each Town Land Use Plan can be reviewed by contacting the appropriate town clerk.

TOWN OF BRADLEY (ADOPTED MAY 30, 2001)

Vision Statement

"Through the year 2020, the Town of Bradley will seek to preserve, protect and enhance its scenic, open, forested, residential, rural, wetland and shoreland spaces. The Town will work to ensure a high quality of life while accommodating diverse and balanced private, commercial and light industrial development consistent with existing or easily expandable support services through sustainable, planned development and citizen involvement."

(Note: The town was in the process of revising its 2001 plan as this updated county plan was being completed)

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve rural character and lakes

Objectives:

1. Plan orderly growth.
2. Identify sensitive character and lake classifications.
3. Work Cooperatively with and inform realtors and developers.
4. Improve communication among entities, including but not limited to Towns, Cities, County, Lake Districts and Lake Associations.
5. Enforce sign and billboard regulations.
6. Encourage the dispersal of information about noise and light pollution to minimize these problems.
7. Prevent annexation of Town land by the City of Tomahawk.

Goal 2: Maintain a small town character

Objectives:

1. Attain a viable balance of land uses that reflect the community's desire to maintain their rural character.
2. Develop and implement land use plan.
3. Enhance zoning regulations.
4. Encourage involvement of residents and engage them in open meetings.
5. Consider the clustering of new development to preserve green space.
6. Establish building façade standards.
7. Manage growth.
8. Concentrate small business and industry in specific locations.
9. Regulate signage.
10. Minimize the appearance of public service lines.

Goal 3: Improve water quality and minimize pollution

Objectives:

1. Continue intergovernmental cooperation and the shared provision of services between the Town of Bradley and the City of Tomahawk.
2. Address COMM 83 implications.
3. Increase the enforcement of existing regulations.
4. Improve communications among communities that share boundaries and natural features.
5. Preserve environmental corridor features including waterways, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, woodlands, and scenic areas through the adoption and implementation of zoning and ordinances.
6. Identify and address failing septic systems.
7. Assemble a wastewater treatment center.
8. Maintain water-testing program.
9. Raise environmental awareness and issues of compatibility.

Goal 4: Encourage public participation in the planning and decision-making processes

Objectives:

1. Facilitate the strong leadership of the Town to encourage public involvement.
2. Utilize Town communication assets to disperse information and to engage residents.
3. Reestablish resident confidence in government.
4. Develop system to communicate with landowners.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Bradley Plan include:

- Focusing development in and around the crossroads hamlet of Heafford Junction, which is planned to become the "town center."
- Planning for some waterfront residential development in the northern part of the Town, and open space uses in most of the southern part of the Town.
- Recommending that areas planned for future residential growth should be developed in densities and forms that are consistent with the objectives of protecting groundwater, surface water, floodplain, stream beds, watersheds, and wetlands.

- Considering the possible future acquisition of lands bound by Highways A and U and Hagar Road for parkland, if the parcel ever becomes available for purchase.
- Protecting the Hiawatha Trail right-of-way from additional encroachment by new private buildings, signs or other structures.

TOWN OF CORNING (ADOPTED MARCH 27, 2001)

Vision Statement:

"Over the next 20 years, the Town of Corning will continually strive to provide families an exceptional place to live and raise their youth in a rural atmosphere offering enhanced recreation areas, open wilderness, and thoughtfully planned and designed development, maintaining rural and treasured natural resources and quality town municipal services."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve natural and recreational areas

Objectives:

1. Maintain hunting, fishing, and hiking opportunities. Hiking opportunities can be particularly enhanced along the Ice Age Trail.
2. Preserve the Town's farmland.
3. Develop and promote park and recreational areas for families.
4. Pursue and create the park at Goodrich Dells.
5. Preserve environmental corridor features including waterways, streambeds, woodlands, and wildlife habitats through the adoption and implementation of zoning and ordinance standards.
6. Protect areas of open space and natural features.

Goal 2: Assure that adequate public services are provided to residents

Objectives:

1. Enhance the Town's fire protection services.
2. Maintain government accessibility.
3. Increase employment opportunities.
4. Maintain the Town's low crime rate.

Goal 3: Attain a viable balance of land uses that reflect the community's desire to protect forestland and promote residential growth

Objectives:

1. Create a plan for future land uses and desired development to manage growth.
2. Guide subdivision development to areas with existing development.
3. Minimize or prevent the subdivision of forestland.

Goal 4: Protect and enhance the Town's identity

Objectives:

1. Develop standards for trailer homes.
2. Maintain good relations between residents.
3. Promote Corning's relaxed, small town atmosphere.
4. Promote the strong work ethic of local residents.
5. Minimize the use of property for the storage of automobile and industrial equipment.
6. Minimize the visibility of power lines.

<u>Planned Land Use Map</u>

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Corning Plan include supporting the development of a County park site along the Big Rib River's Goodrich Dells area. The Town Plan also recommends that the County consider a density of one seasonal residence per 40 acres owned for lands designated as "Private Forest" when the County zoning ordinance is rewritten. Most of the limited residential development planned for the Town would be near the major crossroads along Highway 64.

TOWN OF HARDING (ADOPTED MARCH 26, 2001)

Vision Statement

"The Town of Harding will strive to maintain its natural character while responding to the rights of its diverse citizens. We will plan for development in wise and orderly manner while preserving and enhancing our unique natural resources and wildlife habitat. Ongoing communication and dialog with our citizens is paramount."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve the Town's natural features and rural character

Objectives:

1. Establish regulations to control land use and development.
2. Encourage new development in locations, forms, and densities which support the preservation of rural character.
3. Encourage new development along existing Town and County roads.
4. Support farmland preservation programs.
5. Continue communication between the Town and the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation to resolve issues related to access and recreational use on WPS lands.
6. Protect the Town's environmentally sensitive areas.
7. Manage the pace of growth.

Goal 2: Promote ongoing public involvement in Town planning and administration

Objectives:

1. Enhance communications between Town residents and Town government on issues related to land use planning and administration.
2. Periodically review the Town's land use *plan* and refine as needed.
3. Encourage public input in the Town planning and *plan* implementation process.
4. Continue the Town newsletter.
5. Identify and resolve issues between permanent and seasonal residents.

Goal 3: Promote the Town's unique identity

Objectives:

1. Construct a neighborhood "welcome" sign in the Lake Alexander area.
2. Construct a Town "welcome" sign on County Highway E.
3. Encourage tourism-related development that compliments Harding's "northwoods" character.
4. Work with County on ensuring proper maintenance of private property.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted in Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Harding Plan include planning for continued use of Wisconsin Public Service Corporation lands along the Wisconsin River for "Public Recreation," supporting expansion of the County Forest where logical and in the best interests of the Town, and planning for limited additional residential development along Lake Alexander road.

TOWN OF HARRISON (ADOPTED MARCH 22, 2001)

Vision Statement

"Welcome to the Town of Harrison, a unique rural community, rich in clean lakes, natural resources, county lands and a great place to raise a family. Over the next 20 years, Harrison will strive to maintain this character by encouraging wise use of its resources, increasing recreational opportunities and improving emergency services to the Town."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Ensure land use compatibility

Objectives:

1. Adopt and enforce new zoning regulations, particularly around lakes.
2. Improve public understanding of zoning ordinances, particularly related to lakes.
3. Strengthen zoning ordinances to ensure that a desirable mix of land uses is achieved.
4. Develop new and enhance existing ordinances that specifically address commercial and residential uses.
5. Examine effective practices of neighboring counties.
6. Increase county staff or contract out services to assist in planning and zoning matters.
7. Conduct regular review of ordinances.

Goal 2: Support recreational opportunities in the Town

Objectives:

1. Provide Town input into proposed public recreational facilities and uses on County forest land.
2. Provide a diverse range of recreational opportunities including ATV use, biking, hiking trails, public beaches, wilderness and natural areas, camping and lake access.

Goal 3: Implement effective and responsive administrative practices and public facilities

Objectives:

1. Provide for the continued availability of public utility and school capacity.
2. Enhance levels of police and fire service.
3. Pursue facilities for the disposal of garbage.

4. Enhance public awareness of Town issues.
5. Strengthen communication between the Town government and Town residents.
6. Encourage public participation in Town and County decision-making.

Goal 4: Protect natural resources and unique physical features.

Objectives:

1. Protect water quality through regulation of waterfront development.
2. Preserve forest land and other natural areas, particularly along streams and lakes.
3. Regulate the type, location, and density of development near environmentally sensitive areas.
4. Adopt and enforce regulations and practices to prevent shoreline damage, including requiring erosion control measures to be in place before building permits are issued.
5. Test and maintain septic systems and other means of waste disposal regularly and upgrade them as necessary.
6. Encourage continued responsible logging practices.
7. Develop informative literature such as a shoreland owner packet for residents.

Goal 5: Protect and enhance the unique identity of the Town

Objectives:

1. Encourage small business tailored to local needs.
2. Ensure that residential and commercial development is of high quality and reflects the "Northwoods" atmosphere of the Town.
3. Limit residential and commercial development to certain areas of the Town that have already been developed (e.g., the hamlets of Harrison and Jeffris, and the Harrison Hills region).
4. Provide clear guidelines to ensure minimum property maintenance standards are adhered to and ensure that these standards are enforced.
5. Establish density controls, especially around lakes.
6. Plan for a controlled and sustainable amount of growth.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Harrison plan include promoting a mix of land uses in the Harrison "hamlet," Pine Lake, and Highway 17/B intersection area, supporting the State's Prairie River Fishery Area, and exploring the possible designation of Highway B as a "rustic road."

TOWN OF KING (ADOPTED MAY 24, 2001; AMENDED JULY 7 AND AUGUST 7, 2001)

Vision Statement:

"The general and consistent vision for the Town of King expressed by property owners is simple: Our community prides itself in being a small, rural, peaceful place for people to live and recreate and we wish to keep it that way. There is an abundance of environmental wildness and diversity that is a source of enjoyment for many. The lakes, rivers and forests that surround us are a strength and asset to the community that we don't ever want to lose. With that in mind, the Town of King will be vigilant in doing everything possible to preserve its unique rural recreational character. Our main objective regarding our vision will be apparent in the finalization of our community plan and with the results of our community land use survey."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve the rural character of the Town of King

Objectives:

1. In order to preserve the rural character of the Town, development of heavy industry, heavy metal mining operations, and high power transmission lines is discouraged.
2. Improve continuous communication locally and with neighboring municipalities to mitigate conflicting land uses.

Goal 2: Limit new development to appropriate locations to ensure land use compatibility.

Objectives:

1. Develop and enforce all zoning codes in a fair and consistent manner.
2. Require development plans that incorporate the principles of good site design.
3. Provide for growth that benefits the Town and reflects the Town's character.

Goal 3: Preserve and promote a visually attractive environment.

Goal 4: Provide sufficient open space and recreational opportunities to meet the needs of Town residents.

Objectives:

1. Provide for a diverse range of recreational opportunities including hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, ATV and snowmobile trails, beaches, boat accesses, camping, and fishing.
2. Ensure that adequate space for recreation will exist in the future.
3. Protect the Town's natural resources and unique physical features.

Goal 5: Strengthen local government.

Objectives:

1. Encourage public participation in planning and making decisions that affect the Town.
2. Establish fair and consistent decision-making based on the Town's goals and objectives.

3. Create community involvement and spirit through activities.

Goal 6: Protect/preserve appropriate land uses in the Town of King through ordinances, zoning and subdivision controls with dedication or cash contributions for roads and open space/parks.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

TOWN OF MERRILL (ADOPTED MAY 14, 2001)

Vision Statement:

"In the 21st century, the Town of Merrill will provide its citizens with the best quality of life possible. This will be accomplished by promoting industrial, residential, and recreational growth, while retaining the Town's rural character. We will also strive to maintain affordable taxes and promote citizen involvement in town government. Through these efforts and by balancing the Town's needs with the needs of the citizens, we will carry the Town of Merrill forward and maintain its strength and vitality."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Encourage economic development to expand Town's job and tax base

Objectives:

1. Prepare an industrial development marketing strategy and partner with other entities interested in industrial development.
2. Cooperate on the siting of a modern business park near Highway 51 with Lincoln County and the City of Merrill.
3. Encourage the redevelopment of aging commercial/industrial sites near the Highway K and C intersection.
4. Where public utilities are not available, allow businesses without significant water or waste disposal needs.
5. Promote businesses run by local entrepreneurs, with assistance from the University of Wisconsin and technical colleges.
6. Promote high-quality site design, building design, signage, and landscaping for all new nonresidential developments.
7. Allow home-based businesses where there is no impact on surrounding homes.
8. Promote tourism by capitalizing on the Town's assets, including Council Grounds State Park and Highway 51.

Goal 2: Encourage managed growth in a way that protects rural character

Objectives:

1. Attain a balance of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial, and industrial uses in the Town.
2. Propose a land use pattern that directs intensive new development to areas that are well-served with roads and other public facilities, and away from environmental corridors and forest lands.
3. Encourage new development in locations, forms, and densities which support the preservation of rural character.
4. Create and cooperate on new and updated zoning and subdivision regulations to support implementation of this *Plan*.
5. Preserve and provide adequate recreational space to serve Town residents.
6. Encourage and participate in intergovernmental cooperation efforts and achieve shared goals among the Town, County, City of Merrill, and adjoining towns.

Goal 3: Preserve sensitive natural features and resources

Objectives:

1. Protect environmentally sensitive areas, including but not limited to the Prairie River bottom, marshes, waterfronts, and areas of steep slope.
2. Preserve sensitive waterfront areas by providing and restoring natural buffers, allowing only low-density development that is set back from the shoreline, and acquiring or supporting acquisition of certain waterfront lands.
3. Ensure the adequate and safe disposal of sewage to protect ground water quality.
4. Support and participate in state and county efforts to restore the Prairie River.

Goal 4: Encourage participation in the Town planning and decision-making process

Objectives:

1. Strengthen communication between Town government and Town residents.
2. Promote Town meetings and events through better advertising.
3. Attempt to increase resident participation through techniques such as committee appointments.
4. Work to strengthen "civics" curriculum in schools.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Merrill plan include establishing a mixed use "town center" near the intersection of Highways K and C, with industrial development further south along Highway K. Most residential development is planned for the southern parts of the Town, with the northern parts planned primarily for open space uses.

TOWN OF PINE RIVER (ADOPTED MAY 1, 2001)

Vision Statement:

"The Town of Pine River will strive to preserve its quality of life and meet the broad needs of our growing community. We hope to promote thoughtfully planned housing and commercial development along with agricultural and recreational enterprises that meet the needs of our diverse population while minimizing their impact on our rural landscape and natural resources."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve the rural community character of the Town of Pine River

Objectives:

1. Preserve farmland, farming opportunities, and forest land.
2. Encourage new development in locations, forms, and densities which support the preservation of rural character.
3. Require buffer zones between agricultural uses and residential uses, and between commercial/industrial uses and residential uses.
4. Create opportunities for rural businesses serving the local community, including small non-farm businesses on farm properties.

Goal 2: Protect natural resources and unique physical features.

Objectives:

1. Direct intensive development away from mapped environmental corridors.
2. Preserve the quality of and access to the Pine and Wisconsin Rivers.
3. Protect the scenic beauty of Town, including rolling hillsides and river and stream valleys.
4. Preserve farming on large blocks of productive farmlands with prime soils.
5. Preserve forest lands and woodlots to the extent practical.
6. Protect places for hunting.

Goal 3: Preserve private property and hunting rights

Objectives:

1. Carefully consider the impacts on the use of private property before adopting or changing plans or rules.
2. Amend zoning regulations to provide more flexibility to land owners in a way that does not negatively impact the community.

3. Protect private property rights while maintaining the health, safety, and welfare of all Town residents.
4. Designate hunting locations and promote hunting safety, especially in close proximity to developed areas.

Goal 4: Manage the location, type and pace of development in the Town

Objectives:

1. Propose a planned land use pattern that allows placement of compatible uses in close proximity, but promotes separation and buffering of incompatible uses.
2. Propose a planned land use pattern that directs intensive new development to areas which are well-served with roads and other public facilities, and away from environmental corridors and large blocks of farm and forest land.
3. Create and cooperate on new and updated zoning and subdivision regulations to support implementation of this *Plan*.
4. Establish minimum lot size requirements that balance the issues of safe waste disposal with efficient service and road provision and character preservation.
5. Closely coordinate land use planning and development with the provision of new or improved roads.
6. Plan for future commercial and industrial development areas, particularly near the Highway 51/64/17 interchange area.
7. Encourage and participate in intergovernmental cooperation efforts to resolve conflicts among the Town, County, City of Merrill, and other adjoining towns.
8. Remain informed about trends in development and farming, and County and City land use efforts.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Pine River Plan include mapping the "Rural Lands" designation throughout much of the Town—particularly the eastern parts. The Town Plan supports continued agricultural operations in these areas. The Town plan also supports the connection of Highway P across the Wisconsin River to the Highway 51/CTH Q interchange area.

TOWN OF RUSSELL (ADOPTED MARCH 27, 2001)

Vision Statement

"Through the year 2020, the Town of Russell will support small to moderate business development, encourage all-season tourism, cooperate with the state and county to protect and enhance public lands, and continue quality services to residents, while maintaining its rural character."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve the Town's rural character and scenic beauty

Objectives:

1. Encourage new residential development to "cluster" in locations, forms, and densities which support the preservation of rural character, particularly near Gleason.
2. Encourage all new development to occur in an orderly and efficient pattern that preserves natural resources and minimizes the conflicts between agricultural, commercial and residential uses.
3. Require Town Board review and approval of all site design plans for residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional development.
4. Analyze the capacity of existing Town utilities and services to determine the appropriate pace and location of new development.
5. Preserve farmland, farming opportunities and forestland.
6. Promote Gleason and the Town of Russell.
7. Provide formal local input on County Forest planning issues.

Goal 2: Encourage economic development and expand tourism opportunities

Objectives:

1. Expand the Town's retail and tourism base by planning for future commercial development areas, particularly in Gleason.
2. Promote the Town's natural resources, particularly the Prairie River trout fishery, to attract tourism-related businesses.
3. Support the Town's existing local businesses and services.
4. Closely coordinate future development with the provision of new or improved roads.
5. Plan for light industrial development in the Gleason area.
6. Work with the County and State in identifying redevelopment opportunities for lands that are environmentally contaminated.
7. Develop Town "welcome" signs and coordinated signage in Gleason to promote local businesses and services.

Goal 3: Balance private property rights with community interests in land use

Objectives:

1. Protect private property rights while maintaining the health, safety, and general welfare of all Town residents.
2. Work with the County in updating zoning regulations and strengthening the enforcement of those regulations.
3. Amend zoning regulations to provide more flexibility to land owners in a way that does not negatively impact the community.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Russell Plan include expanding the mix of land uses in the hamlet of Gleason and supporting the State's Prairie River Fishery Area plan. The Plan also recommends the preparation of a Town of Russell Sanitary District Master Plan.

TOWN OF SCHLEY (ADOPTED MAY 22, 2001)

Vision Statement:

"Through the year 2020, the Town of Schley would like to promote the involvement of its citizens in making decisions that preserve rural character while allowing for positive change. Agriculture, rural residences, small businesses, and recreation are valued and should be encouraged and improved."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve the rural setting and the unique quality of life of the Town

Objectives:

1. Preserve farmland, farming opportunities, forest land, and sensitive logging.
2. Work to keep property taxes as low as possible.
3. Encourage new development in amounts, locations, forms, appearances, and densities which support the preservation of rural character.
4. Propose a land use pattern that directs intensive new development to areas that are well-served with roads and other public facilities, and away from environmental corridors and large blocks of farm and forest lands.
5. Protect environmentally sensitive areas, including but not limited to the Prairie River, tributary creeks, and marshes.
6. Identify, maintain, and preserve historic sites and buildings.
7. Maintain and encourage a healthy mix of rural businesses, including hobby farms and low-impact home-based businesses.
8. Maintain nuisance ordinance to protect private property owner rights.

Goal 2: Promote and enhance recreational opportunities in the Town

Objectives:

1. Work to expand the amount of accessible recreational land in the Town.
2. Encourage property owners to donate land or provide easements for recreational use.
3. Collaborate with the County on improvements to existing recreational lands, including the Prairie Dells Scenic Area and Hay Meadow Park.
4. Cooperate on developing a recreational trail system in the Town.
5. Provide more opportunities for snowmobile and ATV use next to Town roads.
6. Support and participate in state and county efforts to restore the Prairie River.
7. Retain enough open land for hunting and promote hunting safety.

Goal 3: Enhance the appearance of Town properties

Objectives:

1. Propose a planned land use pattern that allows placement of compatible uses close to each other, but promotes separation and buffering of incompatible uses.
2. Work with the County on clear minimum property maintenance standards, citizen complaint procedures, and enforcement practices.
3. Establish high quality development standards, particularly for commercial uses, mobile homes, and institutional uses.
4. Cooperate on new and updated zoning and subdivision regulations to support implementation of this *Plan*.

Goal 4: Encourage resident participation in Town planning and other activities

Objectives:

1. Enhance communications between Town residents and Town government on issues related to land use planning, including future amendments to this *Plan*.
2. Encourage community involvement in planning, development, and maintenance of the recreational system in the Town.
3. Attempt to increase resident participation through techniques such as committee appointments to address key problems or opportunities in the Town.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Schley Plan include allowing areas of planned residential development along major roads and supporting the continued improvement of the Prairie Dells Scenic Area and Hay Meadow Park.

TOWN OF SCOTT (ADOPTED APRIL 25, 2001)

Vision Statement:

"The Town of Scott will strive to provide its citizens with a wholesome place to live. The Town will work to build and maintain positive cultural and economic relationships with its neighboring communities, promote thoughtful and sensible residential development, and allow for economic opportunities while endeavoring to preserve its agricultural and rural atmosphere, while at the same time keeping the rights of property owners in mind."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Facilitate a balance of different land uses and economic opportunities

Objectives:

1. Encourage a planned development pattern providing residential, recreational, service, retail, and employment opportunities in appropriate locations.
2. Direct intensive new development (including major subdivisions) to areas which are well-served with roads and other public facilities, and away from environmental corridors and large blocks of farmland.
3. Closely coordinate land use planning and development with the provision of new or improved roads.

4. Plan for an attractive "gateway" mixed use development area near the Highway 51/Q interchange, and develop a marketing strategy to attract the desired range of businesses and other uses to this area.
5. Create and cooperate on new and updated zoning and subdivision regulations to support implementation of this *Plan*.

Goal 2: Preserve farmland and farming as a viable occupation in the Town

Objectives:

1. Work to keep intact large blocks of productive farmlands with prime soils.
2. Direct intensive new development away from large areas in active farming.
3. Designate buffer zones between agricultural and residential uses.
4. Encourage the clustering of a limited number of home sites on less productive soils in farming areas.
5. Implement use value assessment to reduce the property tax burden for farmers.
6. Create opportunities for rural businesses serving the local community, including small non-farm businesses on farm properties.
7. Remain informed about trends and opportunities in farming and local and state resources directed to farming.

Goal 3: Preserve "small town" atmosphere and rural, open space character

Objectives:

1. Protect the scenic beauty of Town, including the Joe Snow Road vista, other rolling hillsides, and river and stream valleys.
2. Encourage new development in locations, quantities, forms, designs, and densities which support the preservation of rural character.
3. Work with the City of Merrill to assure that large-scale development proposals do not detract from the Town's rural character.
4. Preserve access to and promote sensitive development near the Wisconsin River.
5. Continue to support and participate in efforts to protect and restore the Devil Creek watershed.
6. Provide recreational and "gathering" spaces for Town residents.

Goal 4: Promote mutually beneficial intergovernmental relations with surrounding communities

Objectives:

1. Research and understand the land use plans of adjacent communities, and share this *Town Land Use Plan* with adjacent communities.
2. Establish a regular working relationship between Town and City planning and land use officials.
3. Work with the City of Merrill on a cooperative plan and agreement addressing boundary, land use, and public service issues for the portion of the Town within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction.
4. Participate in cooperation efforts with all surrounding communities to promote shared services where appropriate and resolve conflicts.

<u>Planned Land Use Map</u>

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Scott Plan include directing residential development to the Highway K and Q corridors, planning for commercial uses at the Highway Q/51 interchange area and other key crossroads, and supporting a long-term plan for the connection of Highway Q across the Wisconsin River to CTH P in the Town of Pine River.

TOWN OF SKANAWAN (ADOPTED MAY 24, 2001)

Vision Statement:

"Skanawan Township's Vision for the next 20 years is to preserve and maintain a quiet, peaceful, rural atmosphere of agriculture, forestry, and recreation, keeping in mind the rights of individual property owners as well as the well-being of the community as a whole, and to promote economic development compatible with our rural lifestyle. We will strive to create a good communication system to inform citizens of Township concerns, issues and plans. We will develop resolutions and ordinances as needed to be compatible with future goals set by this Township and work toward preserving our natural resources so that future generations will have a clean, safe environment for their children and their children's children."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Protect private property rights while maintaining the health, safety, and welfare of the Town

Objectives:

1. Establish ordinances regarding health hazards.
2. Maintain neighbor relations and encourage high levels of respect regarding property.
3. Establish strict regulations regarding the placement and appearance of gravel pits.

4. Develop and enforce adequate ordinances to preserve the quality of life.
5. Enforce minimum property maintenance standards.

Goal 2: Preserve the rural atmosphere of the Town

Objectives:

1. Identify threats to Town.
2. Preserve large tracts of land.
3. Preserve rural areas and natural resources.
4. Review industrial use development proposals to determine if they fit with Town vision and goals.
5. Discourage the placement of additional billboards on Highway 51.

Goal 3: Require and encourage planned development

Objectives

1. Ensure that development meets the needs of residents and property owners.
2. Develop stronger, more applicable ordinances.
3. Enact interstate roadway development restrictions.
4. Establish areas of designated land use, to be reviewed and refined as needed.
5. Address zoning inconsistencies.

Goal 4: Develop a communication system between Town and residents

Objectives:

1. Develop a strategy to disperse Town meeting information.
2. Develop a cost-saving strategy for dispersing information to residents including sending literature with tax mailings.
3. Maintain and enhance Town Board relationship with Townspeople.
4. Encourage residents to attend Town meeting and engage their participation.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Most of the Town of Skanawan is planned for the continuation of rural/open land uses. The Plan recommends a minimum lot size of 10 acres for most of the Town. Lakeshore development is planned for areas near South Twin Lake and around Silver Lake.

TOWN OF SOMO (ADOPTED JUNE 12, 2001)

Vision Statement:

"The Town of Somo will seek to maintain its small town atmosphere and preserve the natural beauty of the local area, while promoting moderate population growth and economic development. We will aim to provide a variety of land uses and still maintain a stable and mixed tax base. Preserving the wildlife of the area and providing the residents and tourists a multitude of recreational opportunities is also our goal."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Maintain rural character and forestland

Objectives:

1. Protect forestlands and wildlife areas by limiting non-residential development in these areas.
2. Enhance the Town's role in County forest planning.
3. Discourage the fragmentation of large parcels of forest land. The Town of Somo wishes to acquire some County land for town use.
4. Maintain the Town's existing mix of land uses, and the small town character of the Tripoli area.
5. Provide for small business and home-based employment opportunities that are compatible with the Town's character.

Goal 2: Protect environmentally sensitive areas, natural and cultural resources

Objectives:

1. Inform the public about the potential impact of large development proposals on property values, health, and the environment, such as the proposed power line, cell phone towers, or the acquiring of private lands for County use.
2. Promote a preservation strategy for the Town's historical and archeologically significant properties. Investigate funding strategies for preservation activities.
3. Encourage planned development in the community through land use planning.
4. Direct development away from environmental corridors.
5. Follow required legal steps to enact a moratorium of at least six months or longer to give the Town adequate time to examine any potentially dangerous hazards proposed for location in the Town, including, but not limited to nuclear, toxic and/or fertilizer waste, mining, transmission lines, substation cell towers, projects that would result in the depletion of our underground water tables, etc.

Goal 3: Encourage public participation and maintain Town resident satisfaction

Objectives:

1. Balance private property rights while promoting the public health, safety and general welfare of the community.
2. Increase the Town's young adult population by developing a strategy for retention.
3. Increase public awareness and involvement in Town issues.
4. Encourage maintenance and continuance of Tripoli School.

Goal 4: Residential development

Objectives:

1. Encourage new residential development in a manner that promotes the tax base and does not drain Town resources.
2. Acquire land for this purpose.
3. Seek grants for residential improvements and community development.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Somo Plan include promoting residential, commercial, and institutional uses in and around the hamlet of Tripoli and supporting the County in obtaining and developing the Mill Pond site in Tripoli as a park.

TOWN OF TOMAHAWK (ADOPTED MAY 14, 2001)

Vision Statement:

"In the next 20 years, the Town of Tomahawk will seek to protect its wild places and will strive to preserve its rural character. In an effort to provide a quality place to live for present and future residents, the Town will also promote small business and local tourism trade that will be compatible with its rural character."

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve the rural and natural character of the Town

Objectives:

1. Adopt site design review criteria.
2. Require site plan review for all residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.
3. Ensure required permits are obtained before development occurs.
4. Require substantial setbacks from main roads.
5. Require aesthetic buffers along roads.

6. Regulate type, location, and density of development particularly of forest land and near flowages.
7. Preserve undeveloped land.
8. Maintain flowages and natural shoreline.
9. Encourage preservation and expansion of forest and farmland.
10. Authorize the use of cluster subdivisions and mixed use planned development, where appropriate.
11. Establish differing minimum lot sizes for off and on water developments.
12. Discourage development in areas that cannot be easily or efficiently served with available municipal utilities and public services.
13. Regulate waterfront development.

Goal 2: Preserve and enhance the aesthetic quality of the Town

Objectives:

1. Establish standards to promote high quality development.
2. Provide clear guidelines to ensure minimum property maintenance standards are followed and ensure that these procedures are enforced.
3. Establish guidelines for mobile home sites.

Goal 3: Encourage public participation and awareness

Objectives:

1. Adopt a strategy to promote public awareness of issues that affect the Town.
2. Provide information about what the Town government can provide to respond to public expectations that may be unrealistic.
3. Create programs that foster neighbor relations.
4. Increase public involvement in making decisions that effect the Town.
5. Address any issues of community health hazards.

Goal 4: Enhance and maintain community assets

Objectives:

1. Protect natural resources base and physical features.
2. Enhance and maintain recreational opportunities by promoting and implementing proposals that are submitted by citizens for these things.
3. Explore and evaluate potential business, residential, and recreational growth opportunities along Highway 86 to meet under-served local needs.
4. Promote and support the existing high quality school system.
5. Maintain Town roads.
6. Attain a desired balance between increased tax base and inflated property value assessments.
7. Control the growth potential along flowages.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Tomahawk Plan include focusing most residential development for properties around the Spirit River Flowage, and recommending different minimum lot sizes for different parts of the Town.

TOWN OF WILSON (ADOPTED MARCH 13, 2001)

Vision Statement

- *To preserve the beauty of our township, and the waters and forests for hunting and fishing.*
- *Provide a balance between maintaining the quiet and peaceful nature of our township and encouraging the various recreational activities that many of our residents / part-time residents want to engage in.*
- *To promote communication between the county and our town board.*
- *Encourage the input by the citizens of Wilson to the town board.*
- *Work for more consistent land use within the township.*
- *Because Somo Lake is such an important part of the Wilson Township, we need to address proper boating etiquette and safety for all its users.*

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve scenic beauty and unique Town features

Objectives:

1. Regulate and manage growth.
2. Improve the enforcement of existing rules.
3. Preserve the Town as a good place to live and retire.
4. Preserve recreational opportunities, including but not limited to ATV and snow mobile trails, the Somo Game Club, hunting, and fishing.

Goal 2: Promote the health, safety, and general welfare of all Town residents

Objectives:

1. Discourage transmission lines in the Town.
2. Maintain a viable mix of land uses.

3. Raise tax base strategically.

Goal 3: Encourage citizen input in Town and County processes

Objectives:

1. Improve communication between County and Towns.
2. Encourage citizen input to Town Board.
3. Coordinate and establish County communications.
4. Promote meetings and special activities to residents through a newsletter or mailings.
5. Establish a Town reporter position.
6. Publicize Town business.

Goal 4: Enhance zoning and development standards

Objectives:

1. Assign specific areas for commercial development.
2. Regulate building permits and strengthen enforcement.
3. Create, strengthen, and update development ordinances.
4. Regulate and discourage conditional uses.
5. Review, regulate, and enforce proper land use.
6. Identify and resolve non-conforming land uses.
7. Require Town Board action on conditional uses.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on Map 6.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Wilson plan include directing residential development along Little Somo River, Somo Lake, Lake Mohawksin, and CTH CC. The plan recommends small-scale commercial development at the intersection of USH 8 and CTH CC.

Land Use Plan Outline

Natural features such as water bodies, rural economic opportunities (e.g., forestry, farming), and the highway network have all had profound impacts on Lincoln County's existing land use pattern. More intensive development is located primarily in and around the cities of Merrill and Tomahawk and in waterfront areas. Most towns in Lincoln County contain less intensive rural uses including forestlands, farmland, and scattered homesites and subdivisions.

This Land Use Plan section is intended to provide specific recommendations for future land use in Lincoln County over the 10 year planning period. Perhaps more importantly, the recommendations were directly derived from individual Town Land Use Plans, adopted by the respective towns in Spring 2001, and city Comprehensive Plans adopted in previous and later years.

County Goal

Lincoln County's land use goal is to work cooperatively with town and city governments to promote an economically efficient, environmentally sustainable, and compatible development pattern that also respects private property rights. The County supports careful consideration of the location, impacts, appearance, and pace of development to minimize land use conflicts and negative impacts; promote the efficient provision of roads, utilities, and public services; preserve the rural character and lifestyle in most parts of the County; and provide appropriate opportunities for community and economic development.

County Objectives

1. Promote new land development that is consistent with this *Comprehensive Plan*, the component Town Land Use Plans, and more detailed planning efforts.
2. Working directly with towns and cities, plan for a compatible land use pattern throughout the County.
3. Guide the location, mix, and quality of private development to meet both private and public land use objectives.
4. Assure that the pace of development does not exceed the capacity of utilities, roads, and community facilities.
5. Manage public lands in a manner compatible with land use goals, objectives, policies, and plans.

County Policies

1. Plan for a sufficient supply of developable land for a range of different uses, in areas, types, and densities consistent with Town wishes and service requirements.
2. Update land use regulations as to better guide and manage the location, mix, quality, and impacts of development in the County.
3. Over the 10 year planning period, work with the towns to rezone properties and change or add zoning districts and standards to match the recommendations of this *Comprehensive Plan* and the component Town Land Use Plans.
4. Work with towns and cities to resolve remaining incompatibilities between local land use plans.
5. Prepare or require detailed neighborhood development plans and phasing plans prior to zoning, platting, and development of large planned residential areas.
6. Encourage the use of conservation neighborhood design strategies for rural residential development in appropriate areas and where consistent with town wishes.
7. Work with the towns to assure that incompatible uses are not located close to one another, and that appropriate separation and screening is used in other instances where incompatibilities might otherwise occur.
8. Promote the mixing of compatible, complimentary uses in close proximity to one another, such as small-scale neighborhood retail and service uses close to residential neighborhoods, if in accordance with town wishes.
9. Use site plan review to encourage high-quality building and site design for planned non-residential development areas.

IX. UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The utilities and community services provided by Lincoln County, the 16 towns and the two municipalities significantly affect the pattern and level of development in the area. These facilities and services add to the quality of life for all residents (full-time and seasonal). This section briefly discusses the utility and community facilities provided by city, town and county governments.

Municipal Facilities and Services

City of Merrill

The city's latest comprehensive plan was developed in 2006 and passed by council in 2007. Two city plans that were still in effect in 2011 are referenced in the 2007 plan under the "Utilities and Community Facilities" section. Referenced in the section are the "City of Merrill Sewer Service Area Plan, 1996-2016," and the city's "Wellhead Protection Plan from 1996."

The Sewer Service Area plan is designed to help the city develop the 20 year sanitary sewer service boundary in the urban area in the most cost effective, environmentally responsible manner. Although the plan has been in effect for 15 years, there is still much to do to achieve the goals mentioned in it. The plan is updated constantly to reflect possible new development. Updates include matters such as whether the area will require additional booster or lift stations

With assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the city also updates its wellhead protection plan annually. In its ongoing planning efforts, the city takes special care to address any environmental issues that have the potential of accompanying new development.

The City provides sanitary sewer service within its municipal limits. However, there are some private systems within the city limits. The wastewater treatment plant is operating below its design capacity of 726,000 gallons per day. The treatment plant was last updated in 1997. Effluent is discharged into the Wisconsin River. The system includes 14 lift stations. The City has identified a need to upgrade the system's sewer mains. The City is too small for the state to mandate adoption of a sewer service area.

The primary goal identified in the city's 2007 comprehensive plan under the "Utilities and Community Facilities" section is to "promote an effective and efficient supply of utilities, facilities and services that meet the needs and expectations of residents." Objectives related to achieving this goal as outlined in the plan are:

- Coordinate community facilities and utility systems development and use with land use, transportation, and natural resources planning."

- Direct intensive land development to areas where a full array of utilities, community facilities, and public services are available.
- Provide the appropriate level of community services and administrative facilities and practices while striving for a low tax levy.
- Protect public and environmental health through proper waste disposal.
- Provide quality and accessible parks and recreational facilities, areas and services for all residents, including persons with disabilities and the elderly.
- Protect the lives, property and rights of all residents through law enforcement and fire services.
- Support high quality educational opportunities for all residents.

In 2010, the city also completed strategic plans for the fire and police departments. Primary goals as listed in the fire department plan are:

- Does it make sense for the city to acquire the EMS service? (Currently, the county contracts with the city to provide EMS/ambulance.)
- How does the Fire Department and city better communicate the needs of the department and what it does for area residents? (education)
- What must be done to identify the most viable option for establishing a centralized fire station that allows the department to continue providing the highest quality service while increasing its efficiency?
- How do we increase staffing levels and create departmental efficiencies using methods like a paid on call (POC) model/combination department?
- How does the Fire Department replace the old equipment (primarily fire trucks/pumper) and technology that it currently utilizes?

Police department strategic planning goals include:

- How does the Merrill Police Department effectively improve/foster general communication between the department and the public?
- What must the Merrill Police Department and City of Merrill do to maintain or increase when possible department staffing to ensure the highest level of public safety and service?

- How does the Merrill Police Department and City of Merrill ensure that patrol officers have the equipment and technology they need to carry out law enforcement efforts in the most effective and efficient way possible?

- How should the Merrill Police Department provide more professional training and development opportunities for its officers?

The city provides fire suppression services to two-thirds of the southern half of Lincoln County. It is also contracted by the county to provide EMS/ambulance services to county residents. In late 2011, the city passed a budget which included funding to develop a concept plan to expand the fire department's center city station with the intent of consolidating services there.

The City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan (effective to the end of 2012) recommends the development of a river walk, a more biker friendly city, two new parks in the northern part of town one in the southern part of the city, and another to serve residents in the extreme eastern part of the city. This plan also recommends several city park system capital improvement projects.

Other recent plans include one for the development of the Route 51 corridor area, including the extension of Pine Ridge Avenue in the eastern part of the city north to County Road G, and a riverfront development plan, an extension of what was recommended in the city's Outdoor Recreation plan. In late 2011, residents were working with the city and the National Parks and Forest Service to develop a nearly two mile rails to trails bike path in the western end of the city.

City of Tomahawk

Recent plans that outline "Utilities and Community Facilities" goals for the City of Tomahawk are the city's 2006 comprehensive plan, City of Tomahawk North Fourth Street and Downtown Redevelopment Plan (2008), City of Tomahawk Outdoor Recreation Plan (2009), Tomahawk Parks and Recreation Plan (2010).

Goals outlined under the "Utilities and Community Facilities" section in the most recent Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan are:

- Encourage adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for a harmonious mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- Promote an effective and efficient supply of utilities, facilities and services that meet the needs and expectations of residents.
- Provide sufficient park facilities to meet the outdoor recreation needs of residents.

Objectives for achieving these goals are similar to what is outlined in the City of Merrill Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Tomahawk provides public water for its residents. The system includes two wells with a pumping capacity of 1.8 million gallons per day, which is more than the average daily demand. The City has one 400,000-gallon storage tank. Water pressure is at 70 psi. The City is currently searching for a new well site.

Town Facilities and Services

The location of each Town Hall in Lincoln County and many other community facilities is once again shown in Map 5 on page 107. The Towns of Corning, Russell and Pine River maintain volunteer fire departments. The volunteer Tripoli Fire Department serves the Town of Somo and surrounding area. Several other towns contract with nearby cities for fire and police protection services. Other services provided at the town level include road maintenance, snow plowing, garbage collection and recycling programs. Lincoln County assists the towns with road maintenance, etc. on a for fee basis.

County Facilities and Services

Courthouse/Administrative Buildings

The Lincoln County Courthouse was completed in 1903 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A comprehensive renovation of the building was completed in 2011 as part of an overall county building project. Prior to the renovation, administrative offices were located there. Upon its completion, the building includes only those county offices related to court functions.

An administration building with offices for all land services departments, administrative departments, and the University of Wisconsin-Extension was completed in the fall of 2008. This new building also has ample meeting room space, including a large County Board/Assembly room. It is located on the east side of town near the county Health and Human Services building.

The Safety Building, built in 1981, is located across the street from the courthouse and accommodates other law-related functions, including the sheriff's department and a recently expanded county jail. The jail addition was completed as part of the county's overall building project. Before the expansion, the county was able to house 53 inmates and often had to pay for prisoners to be located in other communities' jails. With the expansion, the jail currently houses a maximum 182 inmates. As part of the overall building project, the building formerly known as the Lincoln County Annex was sold to a local nonprofit domestic abuse/sexual assault shelter. The Health and Human Services Building is located on the east side of Merrill near the new administration building and houses the Department of Social Services, including child support services, the county Health Department, and North Central Health Care for Lincoln County.

Lincoln County also administers Pine Crest Nursing home located adjacent to the Health and Human Services building. At its maximum capacity, the facility serves 180 residents. Nearly half of all county employees work at the nursing home.

Fairgrounds

The Lincoln County Fairgrounds is a 26-acre parcel of land located on the northeastern side of the City of Merrill. The County purchased the fairgrounds in 1885 for fairs and other types of recreational activities. The primary use of the fairgrounds is the Lincoln County Fair, which is held annually in July. Other annual events include the Wisconsin Pro Rodeo and Labor Day car show. The grounds are also utilized for 4-H related events and the Merrill [Horse] Riders Club shows. They are also used by local residents for walking, biking, jogging and golf practice.

There are four main buildings and three restrooms owned by the County. Other buildings on the grounds are owned by the Lincoln County 4-H Leaders Association or various community organizations.

A 1999 *Lincoln County Fairground Utilization Study* prepared by North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission recommends several capital improvements to the fairgrounds if the County wishes to continue these activities at its current site. These recommended improvements include building a new grandstand, constructing a multi-purpose center (kitchen, meeting rooms, exhibition halls, etc.), and expanding the existing parking area with landscaping. The study also includes an analysis of relocating the fairgrounds. According to the study, the current fairgrounds site is limited in its size and parking area to accommodate larger events such as stock car racing, off-road racing, snowmobile racing, or large concerts. If the County chooses to relocate the fairgrounds, the study recommends that a new site be located one to two miles outside of Merrill on approximately 80 acres of land to allow for ample parking, camping, and future expansion.

In 2010 and 2011, representatives from fairgrounds user groups discussed during several meetings how the facility could attract more events. The group came to a similar conclusion as the 1999 report referenced above and began taking steps to strengthen collaboration with county government to make improvements to the grounds.

Law Enforcement

The Lincoln County Sheriff's Office serves as the primary law enforcement agency to all Towns in the county and operates its administrative functions and jail facility in the City of Merrill. The office also coordinates 911 services for the entire county. The Sheriff's Office employs 21 patrol deputies, 21 corrections employees, a recreation officer, a court security officer, five detectives, and several 911/dispatch personnel. Sheriff's Office equipment includes eights marked patrol cars, four unmarked cars assigned to investigations, two special use vehicles (Recreation Deputy and Court Security), three transport vehicles, one vehicle for the Sheriff, one vehicle for the Chief Deputy, a emergency response snowmobile, and an ATV (the latter two are leased).

Other Community Facilities and Services

Library Service

Lincoln County residents are served by two municipal libraries in the Cities of Merrill and Tomahawk. Each library is funded by the respective City and the County according to patron usage.

The Tomahawk Public Library is located at 300 West Lincoln Avenue on the Wisconsin River and opened its current facility in 1995. According to Wisconsin Department of Instruction figures, the Tomahawk Library had a total circulation in 2010 of 101,805 materials.

The T. B. Scott Library is located in Merrill at 106 W. First Street on the Pine River and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Library maintains a branch facility in Gleason. According to the library's 2010 annual report, its total circulation was 296,325 materials.

Medical Facilities

Lincoln County residents receive medical services from facilities in Merrill and Tomahawk. Founded in 1926 in Merrill, the Good Samaritan Health Center is a 25 bed, critical care facility. It provides the following major services: emergency, intensive care, heart care, surgery, gastrointestinal services, rehab services, outpatient care, oncology services, extended care, and hospice. Since 2005, the hospital has been affiliated with Ministry Health Care. Residents in the northeast part of the County receive medical services in Rhinelander.

In Tomahawk, the Sacred Heart Hospital provides general, emergency, recovery, hospice, mental health, and medical rehab services. It is a primary care, 18 bed facility. There are also nursing homes and a medical center located in Tomahawk.

Post Offices

There are U.S. Post Offices located in the City of Merrill, City of Tomahawk, Town of Birch (Irma), Town of Russell (Gleason), and the Town of Somo (Tripoli).

Park and Recreation Facilities

Lincoln County has many areas that are available for public use as parks and recreational facilities. Map 8 on page 180 shows the location of existing parks, open spaces and trails in the County. The following four paragraphs summarize Lincoln County's park and open space facilities by jurisdiction.

County Facilities

The most prominent public land area in the County is the vast forest system. Lincoln County's Forestry, Land and Parks Department manages nearly 101,000 acres of forest land. This land is managed for multi-purpose use, and is open to public access. In 2010, timber sales from county forest land amounted to nearly $1.4 million. Some of the public forest is closed to motorized vehicles. A system of roads and trails provide seasonal access to nearly every section of land in the forest system. Examples of recreational opportunities that are permitted on County Forest lands include hunting, fishing, hiking, and wildlife observation. Developed facilities on County Forest lands include parks, beaches, campgrounds, waysides, boat landings, mountain bike trails, horse trails, snowmobile (the department maintains about 53 miles of trails) and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails (nearly 200 miles of winter and 44 miles of summer trails maintained) and , and cross-county ski areas.

In addition to the forest system, the County's developed parks include Prairie River Dells Scenic Area (20 acres) in the Town of Schley; Spirit Falls Scenic Area (30 acres) in the Town of Tomahawk; Camp Newood Park (16 acres) in the Town of Rock Falls; Larson Lake in the Town of Birch (4 acres); Haymeadow Park (4 acres) in the Town of Schley; Otter Lake Recreation Area (20 acres) in the Town Harrison; Tug Lake Recreation Area (25 acres) in the Town of Rock Falls, the Underdown Recreation Area (5,000 acres) in the Town of Birch and Roothouse Lake Special Use Area (320 acres) in the Town of Harrison.

Town Facilities

There are seven parks and open space facilities in Lincoln County maintained by the Towns. These include the Gleason Community Park in the Town of Russell, Harrison and Pine Lake Parks in the Town of Harrison, Pine River Park in the Town of Pine River, and Crystal Beach and Kalhle and Thiesen Parks in the Town of Bradley.

City Facilities

The City of Merrill maintains 11 park and open space facilities within its jurisdiction. The largest facility is the Merrill Memorial Forest, actually located in the Town of Schley. This 920-acre wildlife habitat park provides for multiple recreational uses and includes walking trails. There are also 11 park/open space facilities within the City of Tomahawk.

State Facilities

The State of Wisconsin, primarily through the Department of Natural Resources, holds several tracts of land within Lincoln County. This land is open to the public for hunting, fishing, or hiking. Most notable are the Prairie River parcels located along the Prairie River in the Towns of Russell and Harrison, the Bill Cross Rapids Wildlife Area (1,500 acres), the 4,600-acre Newwood Wildlife Area in the west/central portion of the county, and the 1,700-acre Menard Island Resource Area in the Town of King.

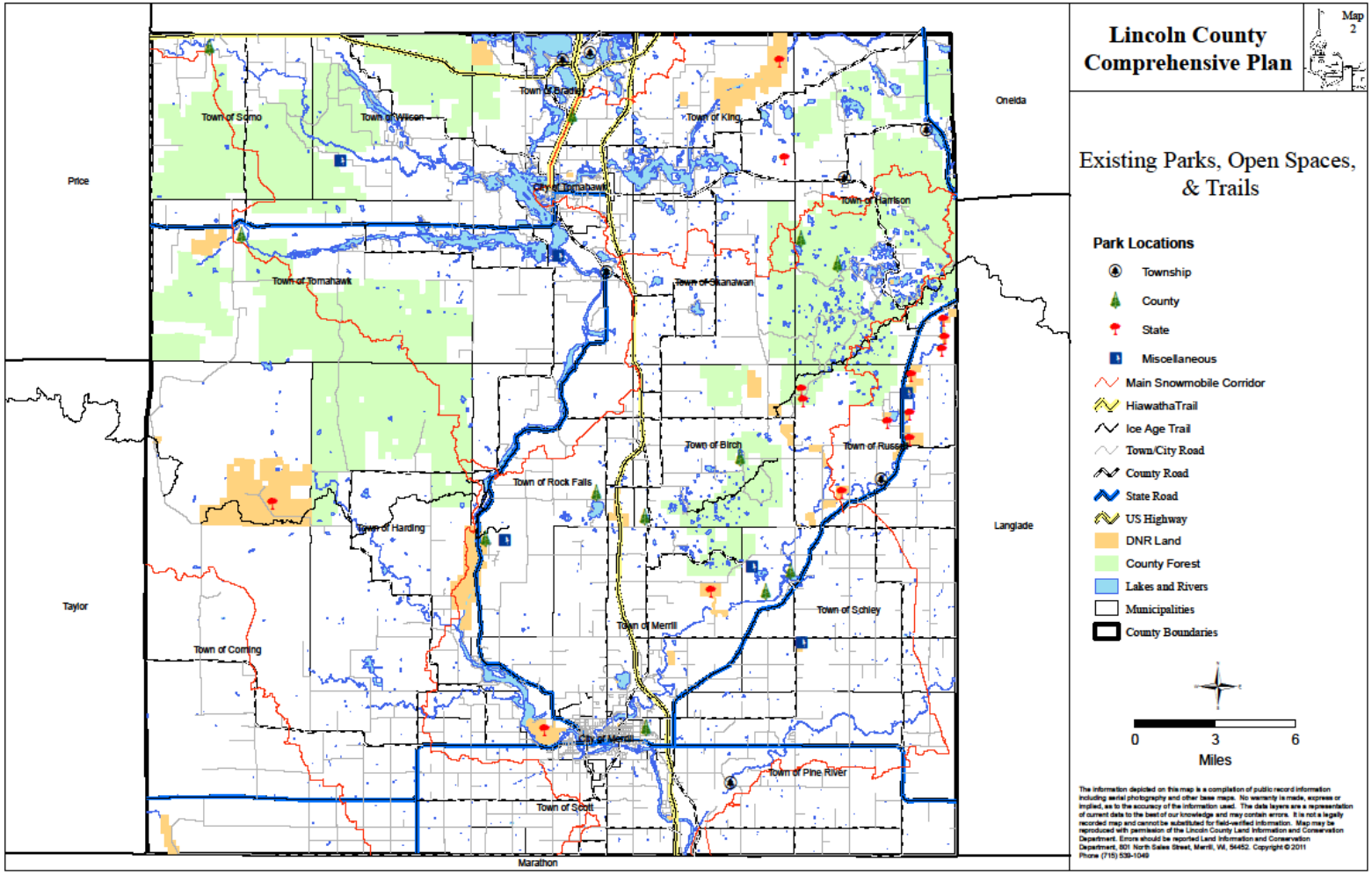
Council Grounds State Park encompasses 508 acres and is located on the west side of the City of Merrill along the Wisconsin River. The park contains a campground, play equipment, a swimming beach, boat access, fishing, picnic grounds, nature, bike and hiking trials, cross-country ski trails and shelter buildings. Map 7 on page 180 shows parks, open spaces and trails.

Over 27 miles of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail transverse the eastern half of Lincoln County (see Map 7 for location). Most of the trail in the county is located in forested areas. The longest segment in the county at just over 16 miles winds through the Harrison Hills area. The Ice Age Trail is an intermittent, 1,000-mile hiking trail that crosses 26 counties in Wisconsin while following the approximate farthest southern advance of the last glacier. The highest point on the entire trail is at Lookout Mountain (1,920 feet above sea level) in the Harrison Hills area of Lincoln County.

School District Facilities

School districts in the Merrill and Tomahawk area provide additional recreational opportunities. School yards often have playgrounds with equipment, ball diamonds, and basketball courts and serve as neighborhood parks. The Merrill Area School District maintains the 764-acre Nels P. Evjue School Forest in the Town of Rock Falls, using it to teach students about their environment in a real-world setting. In 2009, the school system opened the 900 square foot Cordwood Education Center, a facility that obtains all its energy through solar power.

Map 7: Existing Parks, Open Spaces & Trails



Source: Map developed by lincoln county information and conservation department, 2011

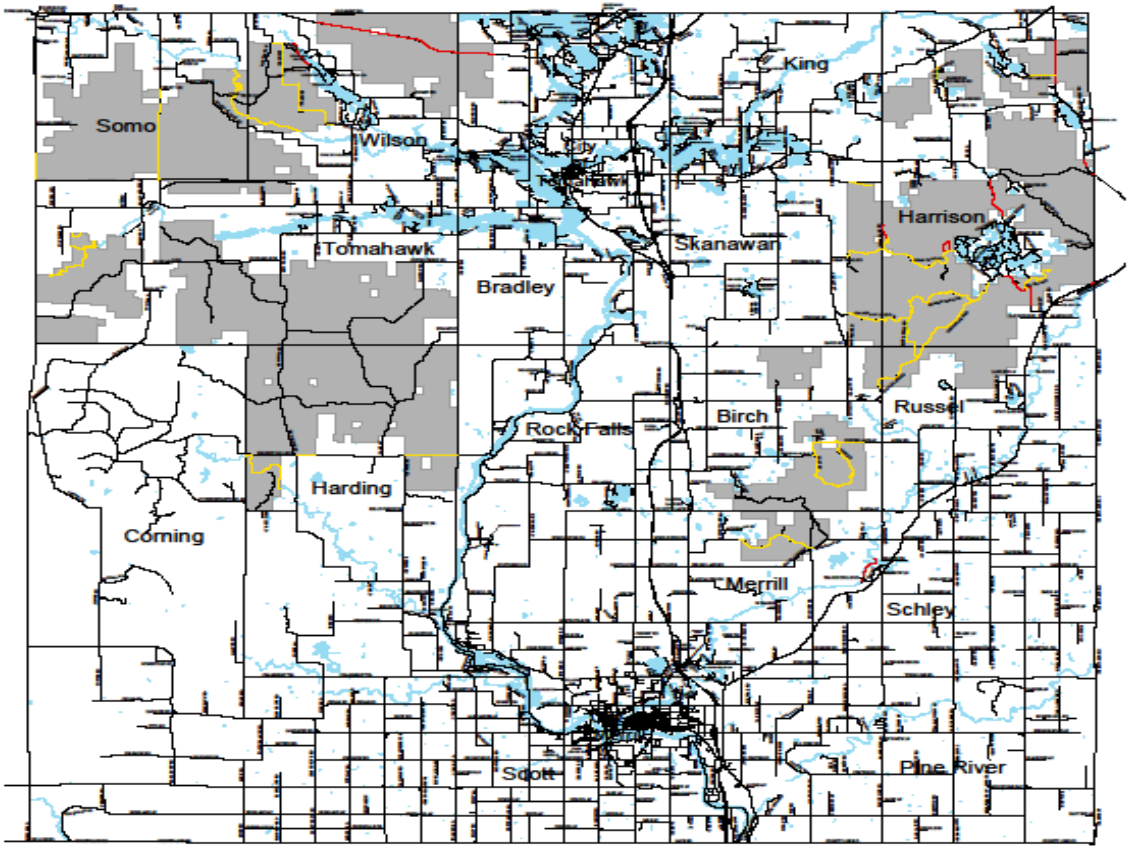
Other Local Plans

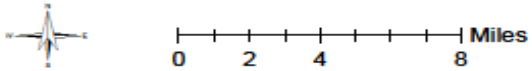
- Lincoln County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 2006-2020. The primary goal of the plan is "to administer the County Forest Law as stated in chaper 28.11, Wisconsin Statutes, giving consideration to input from citizens and groups." The law requires that the county "provide the basis for a permanent program for County Forests and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of County Forests for optimum production of forest products together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple use to assure maximum public benefits; to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the Counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to towns in which such lands lie."

Map 8 on the following page outlines the county's forest aesthetic management zones. The map uses the following definitions.

- *Aesthetic Management Zone A*: This zone includes areas where there is intensive public use because of good accessibility or scenic quality. Examples include parks and recreational facilities, popular lakes and streams, and land along scenic road corridors. Forest management practices that preserve the scenic values of the landscape (e.g., thinning instead of clearcutting) are recommended for this zone.
- *Aesthetic Management Zone B*: This zone includes areas where public use is less intensive, such as along roads used for purposes other than viewing of scenic beauty, and along more remote lakes and streams. Forest management practices that provide for multiple uses (recreation, timber extraction, wildlife habitat, etc.) are recommended for this zone.

MAP 8
Aesthetic Management Zones for the Lincoln County Forest





Legend

- Aesthetic Management Zone B
- Aesthetic Management Zone A
- County Forest
- Lakes and Rivers

The information depicted on this map is a compilation of public record information including aerial photography and other base maps. No warranty is made, express or implied, as to the accuracy of the information used. The data layers are a representation of current data to the best of our knowledge and may contain errors. It is not a legally recorded map and cannot be substituted for field-verified information. Map may be reproduced with permission of the Lincoln County Land Information and Conservation Department. Errors should be reported Land Information and Conservation Department, 801 North Sales Street, Merrill, WI, 54452. Copyright © 2011 Phone (715) 539-1049

- Lincoln County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2010. The plan provides detailed information about the county's water bodies and sets goals aimed and preserving and enhancing those bodies to be pursued over the next several years. The primary goals outlined in this plan, and reflected in the updated Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan, are to conserve and protect productive agricultural land, forestland and cultural areas; to protect the water resources of Lincoln County; and to monitor and manage threats from invasive species.

- Lincoln County Soil and Water Conservation Standard for the Farmland Preservation Program, 2004. Building of the county's 1982 Farmland Preservation Plan, this document outlines soil and water conservation standards to be met and procedures to be followed by participants in the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program.

- Lincoln County Land Record Modernization Plan, 2005-2010. In 1992, Lincoln County drafted and adopted the first Land Records Modernization Plan. That document was revised in 1999 and following are revisions to carry modernization efforts through to 2010. Specifically, provides a "working" document that describes records modernization projects undertaken within the county, and outline projects which should be initiated in the near future. The plan benefits all users, public and private, that operate within and outside of Lincoln County.

- Lincoln County Five Year Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2007-2011. This plan, which at the end of 2011 was being updated to cover 2012 through 2017, assesses the existing recreation system in Lincoln County; identifies recreation needs based upon public input, recreation standards, and the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP); sets forth goals and objectives to be used as guidelines in formulating recreation plans; and establishes recommendations for improving the recreation system over the period. Primary goals outlined in the plan are to protect, restore, and enhance Lincoln County's natural resources for outdoor recreation and continue to improve and develop Lincoln County's outdoor recreation facilities.

- Lincoln County Forest Access Plan, 2004. This plan was developed by a group of citizens at the behest of the Lincoln County Forest, Land and Parks Department. Its purpose is to outline parameters for using public accessible areas and facilities within county managed forests. Problem areas that are addressed are user conflict, resource degradation, litter, law enforcement, endangered resources, crowding, etc. Many of the goals contained in this plan are also featured in the Lincoln County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Thus, these goals will be pursued at least until 2020.

- Lincoln County Zoning Ordinance, 2004. Portions of the code were updated in mid-2008. The purpose of the code is to achieve compatibility of land uses within each district and to implement the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan and component town land use plans. Chapter 17 of the Lincoln County Ordinances describes the following zoning districts in detail.

RURAL ZONING DISTRICTS:

- **(F), Forestry District**
- **(A), Agriculture District**
- **(RL2), Rural Lands "2 per 40" District**
- **(RL4), Rural Lands "4 per 40" District**

RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS:

- **(SR), Suburban Residential District**
- **(RR1), Rural Residential 30,000 District**
- **(RR2), Rural Residential 40,000 District**
- **(RR3), Rural Residential 50,000 District**
- **(RR4), Rural Residential 100,000 District**
- **(RR5), Rural Residential 200,000 District**
- **(MR), Mixed Residential District**
- **(MH), Manufactured/Mobile Home Park District**

NONRESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS:

- **(RE), Recreation District**
- **(PB), Planned Business District**
- **(GB), General Business District**
- **(CMU), Crossroads Mixed Use District**
- **(PI), Planned Industrial District**
- **(GI), General Industrial District**

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS:

- **(PD), Planned Development District (labeled by year and approval order in year, e.g., PD 04-2)**

- Lincoln County Solid Waste Long Range Plan, 2010. Goals stated in this plan were: Offer continuous long-term quality service at a fair cost to Lincoln County residents. Operate an environmentally safe landfill (-minimize environmental liability). Continue to improve operating efficiencies; Operate the landfill in a fiscally responsible manner so as to avoid a need for any tax dollars to support the enterprise (- stay off of the tax levy); Extend the landfill useful life through 2016.; and decide the role of the County in providing solid waste services to its tax payers and future expansion of the landfill in 2011 – approximately 4 years prior to closing,

or in the year when the landfill reaches 80% of its total capacity. In 2011, the county decided to develop another landfill cell to extend the use of the site.

X. Intergovernmental Cooperation

The 2007-2009 Great Recession and the sluggish recovery that followed forced many businesses throughout the country to become more lean. Persistently high and chronic unemployment continued nationwide and in Lincoln County into 2012.

As has been the case with most recessions, this one had little effect upon government operations in its early months. Since the official end of the recession, however, governments were having to adjust to what seemingly was becoming a permanent state of lessening revenues.

The need for these adjustments were most notably displayed during the state of Wisconsin's last biennial budget negotiations (2011-2013). Reductions were made in nearly every area of state government service to make up for a projected $3 billion deficit. During the biennium, local governments were slated to receive significantly less in shared revenue (state government payments) than they had in previous years. Lincoln County's reduction in 20111-2012 will be about 21%, roughly $250,000 less than what it received in 2010-2011.

In order to balance these reductions and to make up for lost revenue being sent to local governments, the state enacted a substantial increase in most public employee contributions to health care premiums and the state retirement system. This helped to a degree, but not enough to make up for all the lost revenue at the local government level. Other measures such as the state's decision to essentially regionalize social services/income maintenance programs (i.e. counties should provide services through county consortiums) allowed some counties to further reduce their expenditures. Lincoln County's 2012 budget ended up being about $7 million less than its 2011 budget.

These conditions are also forcing local governments to look for more ways to cooperate in the effort to provide public services. Several departments within Lincoln County government already do everything from sharing employees to sharing equipment. The county contracts with the City of Merrill to provide emergency medical services to two-thirds of the southern half of the county. Recently, two other counties began paying the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office for housing their overflow prisoners. The office also provides the City of Merrill full and the City of Tomahawk partial dispatch services. Lincoln County Information Technology Department also provides a private entity administering the county's Family Care program with for fee technology support. Along with these and several other intergovernmental efforts, Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation, a quasi-government entity, also provides services to both the City of Merrill and the City of Tomahawk. In turn, both cities contribute annual financial support to the agency. Also, the county's current zoning code is used by 11 of the 16 townships.

Although these are just some of the most notable examples of intergovernmental cooperation between county government and city/town government, it is likely more can be done. If the situation of dwindling revenues persists, and if the state continues to promote the idea that local government through regional consortiums must provide services, these governments will on an ongoing basis consider more intergovernmental arrangements that lessen service duplication and strengthen government financial situations.

Goals:

a. *Continue to look for ways to restructure county government with minimal impacts on services*

Objective: Promote measures such as job sharing, continue cross-training of employees, combine departments when it makes sense, reform committee structure when feasible, etc.

Policy: Restructuring of government should lead whenever possible to maintenance of service levels and reduced costs

b. *Promote a more entrepreneurial approach to service provision that does not place county departments in direct competition with private enterprise*

Objective: Develop such approaches with the aim of bringing more non-tax levy revenue to government operations.

Policy: Make county government run more like business when that benefits the citizens of Lincoln County.

c. *Hold at least one annual meeting amongst city, town and county department heads/boards to explore possible intergovernmental cooperative arrangements*

Objective: To pursue at least one promising relationship per year.

Policy: Engage in exercises that have the potential of being cost effective while providing the same level of service (or higher level) if possible.

d. *Work together to promote economic development that benefits several jurisdictions without compromising the county's rural character.*

Objective: Increase communication and planning between governments when a proposed development project will impact several jurisdictions and their boundaries.

Objective: When possible, strive to create an atmosphere where growth/development is managed based on various jurisdictions' comprehensive planning goals.

Objective: Manage potential annexations appropriately by fostering open communication channels.

Policy: Begin to take more regional economic development approaches.

Policy: Negotiate all boundary agreements (rather than sanctioning annexation).

XI. Implementation

Formal Approval

It is recommended that following plan review by the Lincoln County Planning & Zoning Committee and the required public hearing that the Lincoln County Board formally approves the document. Without formal approval, the chances that this plan will be implemented become remote.

Measuring Plan Progress

Measuring outcomes is something that many government entities do not do well. In general, potential programmatic outcomes are contained in the objectives in each one of the four detailed element plans. If the county is to carry out those plans, it is recommended that logic models or something similar be developed to help indicate what short, medium and long-term outcomes are expected. Success in achieving objectives and goals must be monitored and communicated to key stakeholders and in many cases the general public to show the effectiveness of plan implementation and the positive effects that will have on Lincoln County. Plan goals and objectives should be incorporated into department annual plans of work. Copies of the updated comprehensive plan should be provided to all local governments in Lincoln County.

Plan Amendment

Comprehensive plans are meant to be modified as circumstances and conditions change. A periodic review of the plan – every two years should be sufficient – is recommended to determine whether changes are needed. Additional action planning may also be needed as personnel changes and the capacity of Lincoln County government fluctuates. Periodic updates of the data featured in this plan will also help stakeholders determine major new trends within the county.

Under current law, an update of the comprehensive plan must take place every 10 years. As of late 2011, the state legislature was in the process of eliminating this requirement. A bill allowing this, and stating that local governments could entirely opt out of comprehensive planning, passed the Wisconsin Assembly and was set to be introduced in the Senate in early 2012. A close monitoring of what happens to this bill, or any similar bill being proposed in the legislature may open up the possibility for Lincoln County to decide that it no longer wants to designate resources to implementing and modifying this updated comprehensive plan. If, however, the county still plans to encourage development, this updated comprehensive plan and any possible future modifications of the county zoning code will help to

guide the direction under which such development takes place and will help ensure that it be done in such a way as to preserve the county's rural character.

The public must help guide any comprehensive plan modifications. Planning meetings such as the ones conducted during the development of the original plan and this updated plan should be scheduled when plan modifications appear to be needed. A diverse group of knowledgeable stakeholders, but not necessarily the same people who worked on developing element plans for this updated comprehensive plan, should take part. Any major modifications to goals, objectives, etc. in the plan must be presented at a public hearing that has been advertised using a Class I notice.

Implementation of the plan depends on a constant effort to make local officials aware of changes that have taken place to it. Any changes that are being proposed or are made to the plan provide opportunities for county officials to continually educate local politicians, government department heads, and the public in general about what is in the plan and how its goals can be achieved.