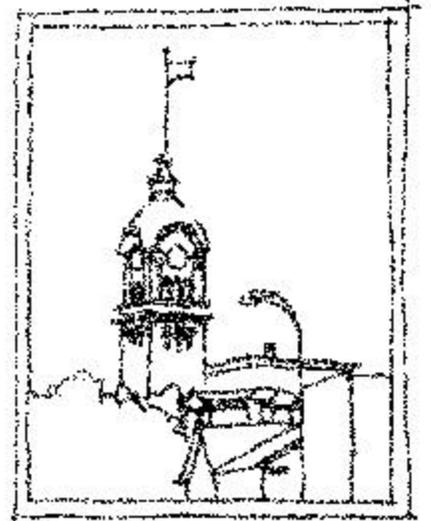


Town Land Use Plan
Town of Somo
Lincoln County, Wisconsin



Adopted by the Town Board:
June 12, 2001

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I. Purpose of Town Land Use Plan

The *Town of Somo Land Use Plan* is intended to guide the Town's future land development in a way that maintains the natural beauty and "northwoods" character of the community, protects natural resources, provides for an efficient delivery of services, enhances recreational opportunities and resources, and balances private property rights with community interests. It contains background information, maps, goals and objectives, and implementation strategies.

More specifically, the *Town Land Use Plan* recommends how lands within Somo should be used over the next 20 years, based on public involvement and the Town's vision, goals, and objectives. These recommendations may form the basis for new or updated tools to implement the Plan. The recommendations should also be used as a basis for month-to-month development decisions, such as planning, conditional use permits, and parkland acquisitions. After adoption, the Town should semi-annually consider logical amendments to the *Plan* based on changing conditions or new information.

Following adoption by the Town Board, this *Land Use Plan* is also intended to be a component of the *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan*. This dual adoption is important because, under State law, the Town and County share planning and land division review authority. Both jurisdictions should be "reading from the same playbook" to ensure consistent, predictable, and desirable decision-making.

II. Background Information

The following is a summary of background information pertinent to land use planning in the Town of Somo. More detailed information and maps may be found in *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan, Volume I: Inventory and Analysis Report* (November 2000).

A. Location

The Town of Somo is located in the northwestern corner of Lincoln County. The Town's land area is 36 square miles. The Town is about 15 miles west of Tomahawk, 40 miles northwest of Merrill, and 17 miles east of Prentice in Price County. There are no cities or villages in or bordering the Town. Tripoli is an unincorporated "crossroads village" (or hamlet) located near the intersection of U.S. Highway (USH) 8 and County Trunk Highway (CTH) T on the northern edge of Somo (along the Lincoln-Oneida county line). Within the County, the Town of Somo abuts the Towns of Wilson and Tomahawk. The Town also abuts land in Oneida and Price Counties.

B. Growth Trends

The Town of Somo is the least populated town in Lincoln County. Somo added 5 full-time residents during the 1990s, from 116 in 1990 to 121 in 2000. New housing development in Somo outpaced population growth over the past decade. The number of housing units increased from 105 in 1990 to an estimated 124 in 1999. According to 1990 census data, nearly half (48%) of all housing units in Somo were classified as "seasonal" homes.

C. Summary of Significant Natural Resources

The Town of Somo is predominately forested and County land. Most of the Town's southern half is contained within the Lincoln County Forest system. There are no large lakes or flowages in Somo. All of the Town's rivers and creeks drain southeast toward the Wisconsin River. The Big Somo River and its major tributaries (Brant, Rennhak, and Landwehr Creeks) flow through the northern part of Town. The Pappoose, Flanigan, and Squaw Creeks meander through County forestland in the southern part of Somo. Much of

the southeastern portion of Somo is wetland, known locally as the Sparrow Bog. Most of the Town's sensitive natural areas are located in the Sparrow Bog area and along the Big Somo River and its tributaries. The State's Natural Heritage Inventory program suggests the presence of rare plant or animal species in several of these sensitive natural areas.

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, there are scattered pockets of land in the north half of Somo designated as "prime farmland" areas due to soil conditions. However; only a few of these pockets are in active agricultural use.

D. Existing Land Use

Providing an accurate depiction of the Town's existing land use pattern is an early step in planning for a desired *future* land use pattern. Map 1 presents the existing (Year 2000) land use within the Town divided into several land use designations.

Most of the Town's southern half is within the County Forest system and designated as *Forest-Public* on Map 1. In the northern portion, Map 1 shows three small pockets of land being farmed---the largest area along Meyer Road. There are also scattered areas of unused open land in northern Somo which are not forested. Most of the remainder of the undeveloped portions of Somo are forested and designated as *Forest---Private*. Commercial forest product companies own most of these larger private forest tracts.

Most of the developed lands within Somo are used for single family residences. Map 1 shows a cluster of commercial, residential and institutional uses located near the crossroads of USH 8 and CTH T (the hamlet of Tripoli.)

E. Existing Transportation System

The Town's northern portion is well connected to the region through the existing roadway network. There are few roads serving the southern portion of Somo. USH 8 runs east-west along the extreme northern edge of Somo. CTHs T and YY, both running north-south, serve as the Town's major collector roads.

F. Existing Utilities, Community Facilities, Parks, Historic and Cultural Resources

The Town Hall and Town garage are located in Tripoli. The volunteer Tripoli Fire Department, serving the Town of Somo and neighboring areas, also shares the Town Hall building. Tripoli is home to a U.S. Post Office and the Tripoli elementary School (in the Prentice School District). The nearest medical care facility and library are located in the City of Tomahawk. The Town does not provide public sanitary sewer or water services. There are no Town-or County-owned developed park sites within Somo (not counting the expansive County Forest lands). However there is an 18-acre County-owned site along the Big Somo River in Tripoli (locally known as the Mill Pond) that could be developed as a park. There is an historic log church in Tripoli built in 1919. There are also two cemeteries located in Tripoli. There are no properties in Somo listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places. A comprehensive survey of historic or archeological resources has not been conducted in Somo.

MAP 1: EXISTING LAND USE

III. Results of Public Participation Exercises

To guide the planning process, the Town Board appointed a Town Land Use Committee. That Committee led and participated in a number of participation exercises to ensure that this *Plan* is based on Town residents' vision. These exercises are summarized in the following paragraphs.

A. Vision Setting Workshop—Basic Planning

A Town vision setting workshop was held on May 22, 2000 to understand key planning issues in Somo and obtain participants' vision for the future. Seven Somo residents attended this workshop.

Many participants stressed their desire to maintain the Town's rural character, minimize the appearance and impact of potential power lines that could traverse the community and maintain the self-sufficient lifestyle of residents. Additionally, participants expressed a desire to get residents involved in Town issues and promote economic development for jobs and tax base purposes. When asked to describe the Town's strengths, common responses included strong relationships between neighbors, the self sufficiency of residents and the Town's abundant forestland and wildlife. When asked to describe Somo's weaknesses, common responses included a lack of community involvement, limited shopping opportunities, lack of services for the Town's elderly population, and lack of employment alternatives.

B. Visual Preference Exercise

In Summer 2000, the Committee completed a visual preference exercise to capture the Town's defining character as seen from the eyes of residents. Committee members photographed the "special places" that capture this character. These photographs suggest places that Committee members wish to preserve or see more of in the future. Members also photographed places that they felt hurt the character and appearance of the Town. Of the 29 photos taken in Somo, 24 of them were of "good" or "special" places. These photos can be grouped into three main categories:

1. *Natural and Recreational Images*: Several photographs featured natural and recreational areas in Somo such as waterways, forests, hunting areas, and trails.



2. *Small Town Development Images:* Some photographs depicted Somo's "small town" development character such as the fire department and small locally owned industry.



3. *Water Resource Images:* Many photographs featured Somo's water resources such as Big Somo River and the Mill Pond (shown below).



C. Summary of participation efforts

Several common themes emerged from the participation exercises, including the following:

- Strong desire to maintain the Town's rural character.
- Concern over the potential impact of a proposed power line route through Lincoln County—and the Town of Somo—connecting Wausau and Duluth.
- Support for the preservation of Somo's natural areas and the environment.
- Interest in converting some County-owned forestland into private land for development.
- Interest in providing additional employment opportunities.
- Desire to increase resident involvement.

IV. Planning Framework

A. Town Vision Statement

A community vision statement is an expression of the direction the Town wishes to pursue over the next 20 years and beyond. In Summer 2000, the Town Land Use Committee developed the following 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.”

B. Town Goals and Objectives

The development of goals and objectives is an important step in the planning process because these statements represent the basic values of the community. Goals are broad statements that express general preferences for the long-term development of the community. Objectives are more specific than goals and are usually attainable through implementation activities, described later in this *Plan*. The following goals and objectives emerge from the Town’s vision statement and public participation results.

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.

V. Land Use Plan Map and Description

This part of the *Town of Somo Land Use Plan* presents the planned land use map, intended to guide growth and development decisions over the next 20 years. Map 2 presents desired *future* land uses for different properties within the Town.

A. Land Use Plan Map Designations

The land use designations shown in Map 2 are designed to reflect both desired land *use* and development *character*. These planned use designations have been divided into three general categories: rural/environmental, residential, and nonresidential. A complete description of the categories and specific designations is provided as Attachment A. (Not all the designations described in Attachment A have been used in Map 2.) To achieve the desired future land use pattern in Somo, new or revised zoning districts will have to be created and mapped after the land use planning process is complete.

In general, differences between the three general *categories* of 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"). As such, following initial adoption of this *Town Land Use Plan*, the Town and County should not require a formal *Plan* amendment 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 "private forest" designation to the "rural lands" designation.) In contrast, the Town and County should require 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. Note: Decisions should be made on a local level to the extent allowed by law.

B. Description of Land Use Plan Map

In general, Map 2 recommends the continuation of a rural land use pattern in the Town, focused on the preservation of Somo's environmental features and large blocks of public and private forestlands. Map 2 shows more development directed into the Tripoli area, where existing development and infrastructure is already in place. In total, the amount of land designated for development far exceeds the anticipated land use demand within the Town over the next 20 years.

The following paragraphs describe the locations and recommendations for each of the major land use designations shown in Map 2.

1. Public Forest and Public Recreation

The *Public Forest* designation was mapped over lands currently contained in the Lincoln County Forest. In some instances, Map 2 recommends *Public Forest* designation for isolated, privately-held parcels that are currently in forestry use and surrounded by the Lincoln County Forest. These parcels would be logical expansions to the County Forest system over the planning period. The ten-year *Lincoln County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan* designated specific areas of the forest system into “aesthetic management zones”. In the Town of Somo, the segments of CTH’s T and YY that cross or border the County Forest are designated as “Aesthetic Management Zone B”. This zone includes areas where there is less intensive public use, such as roads used for purposes other than viewing of scenic beauty. The plan recommends forest management practices in this zone that provide for multiple uses (recreation, timber extraction, wildlife habitat, etc.).

The *Public Recreation* designation was mapped for the 18-acre County-owned site along the Big Somo River in Tripoli (locally known as the Mill Pond) that could be developed as a park in the future, through cooperation between the Town and County.

2. Private Forest

The *Private Forest* designation was mapped over privately-held lands that are currently used for forestry and zoned for forestry, or used for forestry, not currently zoned for forestry, but enrolled in State Forest Crop Land or Managed Forest Land programs, or used for forestry, not currently zoned for forestry, not enrolled in State Forest Crop Land or Managed Forest Land programs, but owned by a commercial forest products company.

Private Forest lands are generally scattered in the north half of Town..

3. Environmental Corridors

Environmental Corridors are mapped over Wisconsin DNR-identified wetlands and FEMA-designated floodplains (both subject to county zoning), slopes of 15 percent or greater, and soils with a majority hydric content (i.e. soils formed under wetland-type conditions). *Environmental Corridors* are not shown within the existing and planned County Forest. New development should generally be discouraged in these areas to protect the environmental resources, prevent property damage, and preserve wildlife habitat. The large amount of *Environmental Corridors* in the Town of Somo is attributable to the wetlands in this region.

MAP 2: PLANNED LAND USE

4. Rural Single Family Residential

Rural Single Family Residential areas are planned for homes at a density between one residence per 30,000 square feet (about 2/3 acre lots) and one residence per 20 acres. However, to provide for adequate lands for private wastewater disposal and to avoid wasteful use of these lands, this *Plan* recommends lot sizes of 2 acres and larger. Planned *Rural Single Family Residential* areas may be served by individual well and septic systems or by approved group systems. This designation is mapped over most of the northern half of Somo, including an area in around Tripoli. The Tripoli area already contains residential, commercial and institutional development. The Tripoli area is well served by a state highway and has relatively good soils for development. The principles of crossroads mixed use should be used for new development in this area. Natural stormwater management practices and progressive erosion control techniques should be used in all new residential development in this area. A recommended park, located long the Big Somo River in Tripoli, would serve this area.

5. Nonresidential Development District

Map 2 recommends areas of *Crossroads Mixed Use* (small-scale business, institutional, and residential uses) for the Tripoli area and along USH 8, and for certain properties along CTH T. New development and redevelopment in these areas should be of high-quality and designed to fit within the Town's rural "northwoods" character and surrounding residential context. These areas are typically mapped at crossroads, although the Town has decided to map these areas along roadway corridors as well. The Town will have to carefully consider the appropriate future mix of zoning districts to implement this planned land use designation. This *Plan* recommends lot sizes in this designated area be two acres and larger.

VI. Other Plan Recommendations

A. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

- Support logical additions to the Town of Somo tax base with particular focus on acquiring privately owned or County owned parcels in the Town of Somo, in between larger sections of the existing County Forest system. The Town advises that the County notify the Town Board 180 days prior to any County land being relinquished.
- Work with the County to assure that a full range of recreational and forestry uses are allowed in the County Forest.
- Encourage private landowners to participate in industrial tree farm programs to protect open space and diverse habitats.
- Preserve environmental corridors and large blocks of open lands to protect water quality, maintain connections among habitats, and provide appropriate hunting grounds.
- Conduct or require viewshed analyses before approving new developments. New development should be designed, located, and landscaped in a manner that does not detract from the rural character of the Town.
- Cooperate with the County and other communities on comprehensive survey of historic and archaeological resources in the Town, and preserve these resources.

B. Transportation

- Work with the Lincoln County Highway Department to prepare and implement a two to five year Town Road Improvement Program (TRIP) to provide for the phased upgrading of Town roads.
- Support access control and rural character objectives by discouraging large amounts of “side of the road” development on State and County highways.

C. Utilities and Community Facilities

- Work with the County in obtaining the 18-acre Mill Pond site in Tripoli and developing this site as a Town Park. Suggested facilities include parking and restroom facilities, campsites, walking trails and picnic facilities.

D. Housing and Economic Development

- Residents should seek to work to uphold the *Land Use Plan* adopted by the Township.
- Encourage developers to plan for new neighborhoods using the principles of crossroads mixed use and rural single family residential. These principles emphasize providing housing in proximity to parks, open spaces, and services; blending automobile convenience with the creation of safe, comfortable places to live and walk; preserving and enhancing natural systems that define, sustain, and connect neighborhoods; and promoting rural character by “hiding” development from main roads through natural topography, vegetation, and setbacks. The principles are reflected in the illustrations in Attachment A.
- Promote the expansion of a range of small scale mixed uses in the Town of Somo.
- Work with the Town Board to support and allow small locally-owned business development and home-based businesses where there will be little or no detrimental impact on surrounding properties.

E. Administration and Intergovernmental Cooperation

- Provide a copy of this *Town Land Use Plan* to all surrounding local governments in Lincoln County and surrounding counties and request the same from them.
- Work with Town Board bi-annually to review conditional use permits, and eventually updating this plan as needed.
- Continue to oppose the Wisconsin Public Services Corporation’s plan to build a 250-mile transmission line between Wausau and Duluth, including the proposed substation in Tripoli and 115-volt line to Rhinelander.
- Work with surrounding towns to address any unforeseen conflicts between local plans.
- Prepare and distribute an annual newsletter to inform residents of community news, events, and involvement opportunities.

F. Plan Adoption and Implementation

The new State comprehensive planning law (S. 66.1001) suggests the process the Town should use to review and adopt this *Town Land Use Plan*, including the following:

- As soon as possible, the Town Board should adopt by resolution written procedures that describe the public participation process for review of this *Plan*.

- Once the Town Land Use Committee is comfortable with the *Town Land Use Plan*, the Committee should forward a recommendation for approval to the Town Board.
- The Town should then post and publish a Class 1 notice for a formal public hearing on the *Plan*, which would be held in front of the Town Board.
- Following the public hearing, the Town Board should approve a resolution which (a) adopts the *Town Land Use Plan* and (b) forwards the Plan to the County for inclusion in the *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan*.
- The County Board will then adopt the *Town Land Use Plan* as a component of the *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan*.
- Following County adoption of the *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan*, the Town Board may have to adopt the complete *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan* by ordinance to fully comply with the State planning law.

This Plan includes many recommendations for guiding land development and preservation within the Town over the next 20 years. Some of the recommendations may be applied immediately, such as recommendations for where new subdivisions would and would not be appropriate. Other recommendations will require subsequent Plan implementation activities, including the following:

- Consider implementing a driveway ordinance and design standards to encourage the appropriate siting of homes in areas where limited development is proposed.
- Participate to the full extent allowed by law in the County zoning process to assure that Town desires are brought forward in zoning decisions.
- Work with the County on an update of the County's zoning ordinance to properly implement the land use recommendations of this *Plan*. Many provisions of this *Plan* cannot be implemented without a new or substantially revised zoning ordinance.
- Bi-annually review this *Plan* to gauge progress on implementation and consider logical amendments based on changes in conditions. A more detailed review and update should be performed every five to ten years. Forward all adopted *Plan* amendments to the County for incorporation into the *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan*.