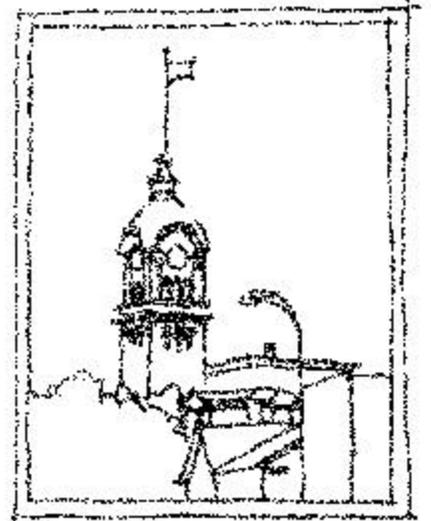


Town Land Use Plan
Town of Skanawan
Lincoln County, Wisconsin



Adopted by Town Board:
May 24, 2001

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I. Purpose of Town Land Use Plan

The *Town of Skanawan Land Use Plan* will allow the Town to guide future land development in a way that preserves the rural character of the community, protects natural resources, enhances recreational tourism opportunities, and provides for efficient service delivery. The *Town Land Use Plan* includes background information, maps, images, goals and objectives, and implementation strategies.

More specifically, the *Town Land Use Plan* recommends how lands within Skanawan 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, such as zoning and subdivision ordinances. The recommendations should also be used as a basis for day-to-day development decisions, such as rezonings, conditional use permits, subdivisions, and parkland acquisitions. After adoption, the Town should occasionally consider logical amendments to the *Plan* based on changing conditions in the community 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, zoning, 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 Skanawan. More detailed information and maps may be found in the *Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan, Volume I: Inventory and Analysis Report* (November 2000).

A. Location

Located in the northeastern quadrant of Lincoln County, the Town of Skanawan encompasses approximately 36 square miles of land area. From its center, the Town is approximately six miles southeast of the City of Tomahawk and 16 miles northeast of Merrill. There are no cities or villages in or adjacent to the Town. There are also no definite unincorporated "crossroad villages" (or hamlets) located in the Town. Within Lincoln County, the Town of Skanawan abuts the Town of King on the north, the Town of Harrison on the east, the Town of Birch on the south, and the Town of Bradley on the west.

B. Growth Trends

The Town experienced moderate population growth during the 1990's. Between 1990 and 2000, Skanawan's population grew from 312 to 354 full-time residents, representing a 13.46% increase. Growth in residential development substantially outpaced population growth over the past decade. The number of housing units increased from 190 in 1990 to an estimated 312 in 1999—a 31% increase. According to 1990 census data, nearly 37 percent of all housing units in Skanawan were classified as "seasonal" homes.

C. Summary of Significant Natural Resources

The Town of Skanawan is predominately forested, with a fair amount of farmland in the central and west central portions of the Town. A large contiguous block of County-owned forestland comprises the eastern edge of the Town (nearly 17% of the Town's land area is contained in the Lincoln County Forest system). The northwestern, southeastern and southwestern corners of the Town are characterized by tracts of privately owned forestland. Several medium sized natural lakes are located in the Town, including North and South Twin Lakes, Gerbick Lake, Silver Lake and Skanawan Lake. Little Pine Creek meanders east to west through the southern half of the Town, and Skanawan Creek drains the west central portion of the Town. Small streams predominate in the northern portions of the Town.

Most of the sensitive natural areas within the Town are located in the forested areas that predominate in the eastern and western thirds of the Town. The State's Natural Heritage Inventory program suggests the presence of rare plant or animal species in most of these sensitive natural areas, particularly along the Town's western edge. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, most of the mapped "prime farmland" soils are in the central third of the Town, and in the areas located northwest, west and south of Skanawan Lake. Most of these areas are currently used for agriculture; the remainder are predominantly used for forestry.

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.

A vast majority of Skanawan is forested. Forestland in the County Forest system comprises a mile-wide strip along the entire eastern boundary of the Town. This land is designated as "Public Forest" on the land use map. The remainder of the forestland is held under private ownership (designated as "Private Forest"). A substantial portion of central Skanawan and an area around Skanawan Lake are used for agricultural purposes.

Most of the developed lands within the Town of Skanawan are used for single-family residences. Subdivisions and small clusters of lots are concentrated on waterfront properties around Silver Lake. Scattered clusters of homes are located near other lakes in the Town, and along Town and County roads. Map 1 shows locations where several or more homes are located in proximity to one another.

E. Existing Transportation System

The Town is well connected to the region through the existing roadway network. US Hwy 51 runs north south at the western boundary of the Town, with an interchange at CTH S. The average daily traffic count on Us Hwy 51 adjacent to the Town is estimated at approximately 10,000 trips. There are no recent traffic counts for any of the County highways in the Town. However, traffic on County highways in other portions of the County experiencing similar levels of population growth has increased 50-80% in average daily traffic volume between 1992-1998. CTH H running north south and CTH S running east west serve as collector roads. Local roads managed by the Town complement this major road network.

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

The Town Hall building is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of CTH S and CTH H, in the center of the Town. Skanawan Township also owns and maintains Oak Hill Cemetary located on CTH V. The Town does not own or operate any parkland in the community. The Town of Skanawan has no County-owned parkland. Two segments of Lincoln County snowmobile trail run through the Town, one segment running north south along the western edge of Town, roughly parallel to US HWY 51, and the second segment running east west through the Town, roughly parallel to and north of CTH S.

The Town does not provide public sanitary sewer or water services. There are no properties in Skanawan listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places. A comprehensive survey of historic or archeological resources has not been conducted in Skanawan.

INSERT 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 the vision of the Town residents. These exercises are summarized in the following paragraphs.

A. Key Planning Issues Exercise

In Spring 2000, the Committee participated in a preliminary exercise to identify key planning-related issues in the Town, which included the following:

- *Land Use:* Lack of subdivision ordinance. Rely on County for zoning controls. Current zoning does not reflect current use. Conflict with gravel pits and residential. Impact of Highway 51. Extraterritorial issues with Town of Bradley. Concern about large-scale industrial development.
- *Community Character:* Quiet, rural community. Abundant open space, woods, lakes. Diminishing attributes include gravel pits, worn-out barns, loss of crop and dairy farm and economy, animal control, power lines, snowmobile trails. Improvements include: cleaned up cemetery and improved signage. Absentee landlords are a problem. Residential development poses issues.
- *Pace of Development:* Pace of residential development is appropriate. Effect of Comm 83. Cost of City lots versus rural lots.
- *Housing:* No rural subdivisions. Mostly owner-occupied, single family housing. Sixty percent of residents are permanent. Number of permanent residents is growing. Compatibility of old and new homes. Some older homes need to be rehabilitated.
- *Economic Development:* Small scale industry versus large scale. Landfills are small and old. Landfills are located at Cloverbelt Road and Cranefoot Lake Road.
- *Transportation:* Roads are well maintained. Traffic issues at the corner of H and V triangle, extension of Stevens to H, upgrading of Kyes, and the bridges over Pine Creek on CTH H and Skanawan Creek on CTH S.
- *Intergovernmental Issues:* Road maintenance is shared. Address EMT service. Recycling and solid waste. Extraterritorial issues.
- *Environment:* Septic system failure. Forestland, wetlands, creeks, and lakes are assets.
- *Community Services and Facilities:* No schools located in the Town. Town Hall and Oak Hill Cemetery are the two only facilities in the Town of Skanawan.

B. Town Vision Setting Workshop

A Town vision setting workshop was held on May 22, 2000 to understand key issues and obtain participants' vision for the future. Eighteen Skanawan residents attended.

Many participants stressed their desire to protect property owners' rights, to require and promote planned development, and to develop communication systems between residents and the Town.

When asked to describe the Town's strengths, common responses included: abundance of forestland and wildlife, quiet, rural setting, and public support of the Town board. When asked to

describe weaknesses, common responses included: Lack of Town ordinances, low property maintenance standards, billboards on Highway 51, and gravel pits.

C. 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. Committee members also photographed places that they felt hurt the character and appearance of the Town.

Of the 44 photos taken in Skanawan, 34 of them were of "good" or "special" places. These photos can be grouped into four main categories:

1. Neatly kept rural homes. Usually these homes were well cared for and well landscaped; often they blended with the landscape by nature of their setting in the forest or by their natural building materials (e.g. log homes).



2. Small businesses, many of them rural. These were frequently photographed, and included lumberyards, a quilting business, and the campground shown below.



3. Agriculture-related scenes, such as fields, raspberries, dairies, horses, and farm homes.



4. Natural areas, especially waterways such as Little Pine Creek, wetlands such as those off of Skanawan Lake Rd., and water bodies such as Gerbick Lake, and Silver Lake.



Most of the small businesses that were photographed, as well as the Town hall, are located along Highway H. However, rural homes, farms and natural areas are scattered throughout the Town.

Photos of places that Committee members felt hurt the character of Skanawan were of neglected or cluttered residences, sections of Highway H that are dangerous or in need of repair, broken down signs, large highway signs, and the gravel industry.

D. Community Survey

To gather citizen perception of the Town of Skanawan and its growth, a written citizen survey was sent to all 330 Town households. The survey included questions to gather citizen perception on existing conditions in Skanawan, and attitudes on how Skanawan should grow in the future. The Town received 126 completed surveys, representing about 40 percent of the surveys distributed. This is a good response rate for a written survey.

1. *General survey results*

In general the Town of Skanawan residents are quite satisfied with their community and optimistic about its future. Residents feel that Skanawan should develop a future land use plan. A majority of respondents believe that Town government has the responsibility to protect the interests of neighboring property owners and the community. Survey participants expressed strong views against increased activities involving gravel pits. Securing desirable economic development will be a goal to work toward over the next 25 years.

2. *Types of development in Skanawan*

Respondents were asked to indicate what type of businesses the Town should encourage. Responses included: home-based businesses, tourism oriented businesses and attractions, and service oriented businesses. Survey participants expressed a need to develop sign ordinances regulating the size and type of signs.

E. Summary of participation efforts

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

- Strong support for planned future land use and development while maintaining private property rights.
- Interest in enhancing the communication between the Town and its residents about Town meetings and proceedings.
- Interest in preserving and maintaining rural and natural areas and the Town's quality of life through local ordinances, if needed.
- While property rights are important to residents, preventing negative impacts (within reason) on neighbors and surrounding areas is a responsibility of the Town.
- Support for limiting new gravel extraction operations.
- Strong support for sign and billboard regulations.

IV. Planning Framework

A. Town Vision Statement

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

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 emerged from the Town's vision statement and public participation results.

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

INSERT MAP 2: TOWN OF SKANAWAN PLANNED LAND USE MAP

V. Land Use Plan Map and Description

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

A. Land Use Plan Map Designations

The land use designations shown on the Town of Skanawan Planned Land Use Map are designed to reflect both desired land *use* and development *character*. To achieve the desired future land use pattern in Skanawan, new or revised zoning districts will have to be created and mapped after the land use planning process is complete.

B. Description of Land Use Plan Map

In general, the Town of Skanawan Planned Land Use Map recommends the continuation of a land use pattern in the Town that is focused on the preservation of Skanawan's unique environmental features, lakes, large blocks of public and private forestlands, and residential development in a highly dispersed, truly rural development pattern, and to avoid substantial clusters of rural residential development. The Town of Skanawan Planned Land Use Map shows how these two objectives will be met. In total, the amount of land designated for development matches 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 on the Town of Skanawan Planned Land Use Map.

1. Rural Lands (Includes Agricultural and Private Forestry Use)

Privately-owned lands with each parcel sized ten acres or more, and including woodlots, grasslands, open lands, active agricultural and forestry. Appropriate development includes seasonal and permanent single-family residences not exceeding one residence per ten acre parcel. Appropriate development may also include associated home occupations, the keeping of animals in numbers appropriate to the size of the lot, and small family businesses which do not interfere with the interests of nearby property owners. Appropriate agricultural uses include livestock grazing, dairy farming, cropland uses, orchards, cranberry bogs, exotic animal farms, specialty Christmas tree growing and harvesting, and incidental display or sales of agricultural products 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.

2. Environmental Corridors

Generally continuous open space systems based on lands including sensitive natural resources and severe limitations for development, including Wisconsin DNR-identified wetlands subject to existing county zoning, FEMA designated floodplains subject to existing county zoning, slopes of 15 percent or greater, soils with a majority hydric content (i.e. soils formed under wet conditions), and other environmentally sensitive lands protected through public ownership. New development should generally be discouraged in these areas and is often limited by existing State-mandated county zoning. Appropriate uses include open space, agriculture, and forestry using Best

Management Practices. Lands may be designated away from this land use designation if more specific analysis suggests that the environmental resource is not present in the location identified on the land use plan map(s). Lands within “Public Forest” designation may include areas which otherwise would be included within the “Environmental Corridor” designation.

3. Public Forest

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 category does not include lands specifically designated or appropriate for public parks, scenic areas, conservation areas, or recreation areas.

4. Rural Single-Family Residential (for Existing Lakeshore Residential Development)

The Rural Single-Family Residential category is designated for areas of development near South Twin Lake and around Silver Lake. These lands are described as follows: Existing and planned single-family residential development not served by public sanitary sewer service, including recorded subdivisions. Development should be between one residence per 30,000 square feet and one residence per 10 gross acres, with an emphasis on lots towards the lower end of this range. The keeping of animals in numbers appropriate to the size of the lot may also be considered.

VI. Other Plan Recommendations

A. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

- No recommendations.

B. Transportation

- Continue to work with the Lincoln County Highway Department to update and implement the Town Road Improvement Program (TRIP) to provide for the appropriate upgrading of Town roads.
- Consider implementing Town road impact fees for new development projects that place a burden on or require the upgrading of Town roads.
- Plan for a network of interconnected new roads in planned residential development areas, if such areas are added to the planned land use map, for reasons of highway access control and rural character preservation (visibility of development).
- Consider applying to the State for “rustic road” status along one or more Town roads. To qualify, a roadway must have outstanding natural features, including native vegetation, abundant wildlife, open areas or agricultural vistas that make the area unique.
- 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

- Provide new neighborhood parks within the areas planned for significant residential uses, if such areas are later added to the map. The Town may acquire at least some of that land through requiring parkland dedications and/or park impact fees from new developments.

- Work with Lincoln County on the possibility of providing shared park facilities within the Town.
- Follow the recommendations of the County's *Outdoor Recreation Plan* when making park acquisition and development decisions. Encourage the County to update this plan.

D. Housing and Economic Development

- Work with Lincoln County to address housing, zoning, or property maintenance code violations on existing residential or commercial properties.

E. Intergovernmental Cooperation

- Provide a copy of this *Town Land Use Plan* to all surrounding local governments in Lincoln County and surrounding counties.
- Work with Lincoln County on zoning ordinance administration, day-to-day decision-making (e.g., conditional use permits), and eventual updating.
- Work with surrounding Towns to address any unforeseen conflicts between local plans.

F. Plan Adoption and Implementation

This Plan includes many recommendations for guiding land development and preservation within the Town over the next 20 years.

- Adopt a Town subdivision ordinance to provide for appropriately designed development patterns, interconnected road networks, parkland dedication and park impact fees, and advancement of "conservation neighborhood design" principles.
- 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 Lincoln 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.
- Appoint a permanent Town Planning Commission to be responsible for reviewing and recommending Town Board actions on development proposals, ordinances, and long-range planning issues.
- 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*, after Town Board approval.