

Lincoln County, Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan 2022-2031

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Lincoln County, Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan

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Chapter One

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 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, in 2021 the County prepared this updated to the 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 initially required 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, aims to meet all statutory requirements.

During the 2012 update, Lincoln County department heads and staff coordinating the focus provided greater detail to four of the 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, at that time, the County, 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 implementing a recommendation contained within the 2001 Comprehensive Plan. Some of the code's basic tenets are discussed in the "Land Use" section of this plan. As part of the 2020 update, Towns were provided the opportunity to update their early 2000's land use plans. As discussed in greater detail in

the Land Use section, the Lincoln County Planned Land Use Map is a compilation of maps generated at the local level.

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.

Planning Process for 2001 Comprehensive Plan

Lincoln County Vision Statement

Over next 20 years and beyond, Lincoln County desires to preserve its abundant rural character. The County's rural character is defined by its forests; pristine lakes, rivers, wetlands, and other natural areas; farms and open spaces; clear separation between "city" and "country;" schools and other institutions; careful placement and design of development; and most importantly, its people. At the same time, the County will accommodate and promote thoughtfully planned housing and economic development, and seek to balance community goals with private property rights. Lincoln County seeks to achieve this vision in close partnership with towns, cities, and others interested in the County's long-term health, success, and beauty.

After consultations with local government officials, the Lincoln County Board of Supervisors in 1998 budgeted funds for completion of Lincoln County's first comprehensive plan. In early 1999, the County Board appointed 14 Lincoln County citizens to serve on the Land Use Advisory Committee, or "LUAC." Membership was intended to represent a wide range of interest groups. The role of the LUAC was to oversee the planning process, and ultimately recommend the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan to the County Zoning Committee and Board of Supervisors for adoption.

The substantive planning process began in Fall 1999. The process was divided into three interrelated categories of activities: town planning process, technical planning process, and general public participation. Lincoln County engaged in an extensive public participation process to prepare the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan. This

process involved thousands of county residents over an 18+ month period. Numerous public and local official participation opportunities took place at the town and county level.

Vision Statement

The vision statement is an expression of the direction the County wants to head over the next 20 years, and what it wants to look and feel like at the end of that period. Subsequent, more detailed recommendations of the Plan should contribute towards the achievement of this vision statement. As a key part of this planning process, each of the participating Towns also developed their own vision statement, presented in Chapter V of this volume. The following County vision statement is derived from review of those statements and the various countywide public participation efforts included in this process.

Planning Process for 2021 Comprehensive Plan Update

The 2021 Comprehensive Plan update process began in early 2019, with the Lincoln County Land Services Department informing area municipalities that the County was beginning the plan update process. In summer 2019, the Lincoln County Land Services Department, with assistance from Lincoln County UW-Extension, hosted two meetings to build awareness of the necessity for the Plan update and offer assistance with updating Town Land Use Plans. All Towns were offered the opportunity to revise their Planned Land Use plan, to correct mapping errors, reflect existing land uses, and plan for future land uses that were not envisioned during previous planning efforts.

The Towns of Bradley, Corning, Schley, and Wilson made small amendments to their Planned Land Use Plans and maps to indicate proposed land use changes based upon input obtained at town public

meetings. However, no jurisdictions made substantial departures from their established land use plans. The Town of Skanawan utilized the services of a private planning consultant to update their Land Use Plan. The Town made small alterations to their planned land use map, identified objectives for non-metallic mining, and corrections to non-conforming land use designations.

The 2021 Comprehensive Plan update also reflected the latest information available from the U.S. Census Bureau, WI State Department of Administration, and the 2018 Agricultural Census.

After gathering input from area jurisdictions, the County incorporated requested changes into this Comprehensive update. General feedback from County organizations and local governments was that the Comprehensive Plan remained relevant and was not in need of substantial revision.

General Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The following set of goals, objectives and policies from the 2000 Plan established the general policy framework to advance the County's vision and effectively respond to issues and challenges that Lincoln County would face. Additional goals, objectives, and policies are found at the end of each chapter. Goals are broad statements that express general priorities over how Lincoln County should grow. Objectives usually expand upon and are more specific than goals. They provide greater guidance for specific implementation strategies. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal. Policies are rules or courses of action used to accomplish goals and objectives and ensure plan implementation. Policies guide the specific recommendations found later in the Plan. They should also be used by County and local decision-makers on a day-to-day basis.

Goal

The County's overall goal is to work with local governments to promote an economically efficient, environmentally sustainable, and compatible development pattern. That pattern should preserve and enhance rural character, open space, natural areas, forests, and productive farms. Careful management of the location, impacts, appearance, and pace of development will assure a pattern that meets this goal.

Objectives

1. Work with towns and cities to proactively address growth and development issues.
2. Preserve productive forestland, productive farmland, shoreland areas, and other sensitive natural areas.
3. Use open space, historic resources, community recreational and gathering spots, and educational facilities as

defining aspects of Lincoln County's character.

4. Support redevelopment and new development that is consistent with and advances this Comprehensive Plan and the more detailed Town Land Use Plans.
5. Assure that the amount and pace of development does not exceed the capacity of utilities, schools, recreational resources, and the land and water.
6. Encourage high-paying jobs and a diverse tax base through coordinated economic development efforts that capitalize on the County's natural advantages.
7. Support the design of neighborhoods and non-residential areas in a manner compatible with the County's desired character.

Policies

1. Coordinate with towns, cities, and school districts in Lincoln County, along with adjacent counties and communities, to address growth issues of mutual concern.
2. Update regulations as necessary to control the type, quality, impacts, location, and mix of private development.
3. Rezone properties and modify the County Zoning Ordinance to reflect the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan and the Town Land Use Plans.
4. Develop planned land use designations and zoning districts to address not only current use, but also the character of future land development.
5. Require development to be consistent with or improve on this Comprehensive Plan, subsequent amendments to this Plan, and any more detailed plans.
6. Promote a mix of commercial, industrial, recreational, and residential land uses in the County to provide a range of housing, shopping, and job opportunities.

7. Direct intensive urban development to sewer service areas and sanitary districts, where a full array of municipal services are available.
8. Encourage redevelopment and infill development, including lands within existing City limits.
9. Assure that clearly incompatible uses are not located close to one another, and that appropriate separation and screening is used in instances where incompatibilities might otherwise occur.
10. Support the long-term protection, conservation, and production of large blocks of forestland and farmland, including identifying new markets for products.
11. Consider protection and enhancement of sensitive natural resources, open space, and scenic vistas when reviewing development proposals and making public expenditures.
12. Charge new development for the additional services and facilities it generates, or require such development to provide such facilities and services.
13. Consider site plan and design review to ensure high-quality building, site, and landscaping design, particularly for non-residential and large-scale developments.
14. Encourage design of new neighborhoods and developments in a manner that respects, reflects, and enhances Lincoln County's character.
15. Protect the visual quality of major highways and entryways (particularly Highway 51) through site plan, lighting, landscaping, signage, and other standards.
16. Work closely with local governments to update the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan at least once every ten years.
17. Work with towns on the preparation and update of Town Land Use Plans.

Goals and Objectives Summary

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

Goal 1: Economic Development

Objectives

- A. Develop a business assistance network to aid in dealing efficiently and effectively with government agencies and organizations that can help rural economic development.
- B. Improve the coordination of agencies that are intended to either regulate and/or assist in the development of new and established businesses.
- C. Improve the promotion of local rural businesses, agricultural products, and cooperatives.
- D. Engage in the development and implementation of the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiatives reflecting the County's desire to keep framing in the community by examining the potential to create agricultural enterprise zones and discussing areas appropriate for Farmland Preservation Zoning in areas with productive agricultural and forestry lands.
- E. Engage local, state, and federal elected officials in the County's activities to develop its rural economy.

Goal 2: Resource Management

Objectives

- 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.
- B. 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.
- C. Maintain the balance between wildlife preservation and providing recreational opportunities so that, by balancing the controls needed to reduce their negative

impacts on agricultural and forest crops, ecosystems will be maintained..

- D. Decisions that impact local resources should be made at the county level.

Goal 3: Education, communication, and the Community.

Objectives

- 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.
- 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.
- C. Citizens will have opportunities to learn about the common practices and legal codes associated with living and working in rural areas.

Housing

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.

Objectives

- A. Develop "one stop shopping" type documents/methods communicating to people available housing assistance options.
- B. Create regular networking opportunities for local organization and agency representatives dealing with housing issues.
- C. Explore and take advantage of collaborative funding opportunities with agencies such as United Way, WHEDA, local CDBG housing dollars administrators, etc.

Goal 2: Improve older homes to increase affordable housing and promote aging in place opportunities.

Objectives

- A. Determine which older homes in the county (20+ years) are in need of repair and/or renovation.
- 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).
- 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.).
- A. 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.

Goal 3: Develop much more specialized senior housing.

Objectives

- A. Build specialized senior housing units.
- B. Renovate older, larger existing buildings in senior housing (e.g. Franklin School, old St. Mary's in Tomahawk, Old Wausau Hospital renovation).

Utilities and Community Facilities

Goal 1: Lincoln County supports the effective delivery of community utilities, facilities and services corresponding to the expectations of residents—both in terms of service level and costs. Community utilities, facilities, and services should focus on preserving quality of life and satisfying core needs for public safety, health, education, social service, recreation. They should support other County goals for land use, growth management, and natural resources.

Objectives

- A. Coordinate community facilities and utility systems planning with land use, transportation, and natural resource planning.
- B. Direct more intensive development to areas where a full array of utilities, community facilities, and public services are available.
- C. Provide the appropriate level of high quality community services and administrative facilities and practices, while maintaining a low tax levy.
- D. Protect public and environmental health through proper waste disposal.
- E. Provide quality and accessible parks and recreational facilities and services for all residents, including persons with disabilities and the elderly.
- F. Protect the lives, property, and rights of all residents through law enforcement and fire services.
- G. Support high quality educational opportunities to all residents.
- H. Support broadband expansion. Access to high speed internet is a necessity for economic development, education, and telehealth opportunities. Lincoln County recognizes rural broadband as a necessity and will work with area Internet service providers, state and federal agencies to expand access to high speed internet throughout the County.

Transportation

Goal 1: Road systems will be upgraded to retain existing area employers in Lincoln County and to attract additional businesses and new employment opportunities to the area.

Objectives

- 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.
- B. Upgrade roads and bridges.

- C. Create and implement a plan that separates truck routes from regular traffic 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 economic activity.

Objectives

- 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.
- B. Plan and promote multiple modes of transportation as part of road repair and construction.
- C. 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).

Goal 3: County departments will coordinate the development of a plan that effectively promote Lincoln County trail systems.

Objectives

- A. Explore and take advantage of, when feasible, revenue programs and grants that improve and connect different modes of transportation.
- B. Develop an inventory of existing trail systems to determine what trails are most important and easily marketed.
- C. Organize and begin discussing with stakeholders how to market tourism on a countywide level.
- D. Establish a Lincoln County welcome or visitors' center near county entrance.

Goal 4: Strengthen infrastructure development of the Merrill, Tomahawk, and local private airports to foster long-term economic growth.

Objectives

- A. County stakeholders, including those departments involved in land use issues, will learn more about how existing airports need to more effectively promote local economic development and future plans, including expansion.
- B. Determine what land use and zoning changes are needed to help accommodate airport growth.
- C. Study the feasibility of lengthening runways to accommodate passenger service.

Economic Development

Goal 1: 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 incubator programs.

Objectives

- 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 and economic development.
- B. Increase the knowledge and visibility of the County's resources available for sustained economic development.
- C. Improve the level of knowledge of aspiring and established businesses on core financial management skills and successful strategies for business growth, development, and transition.

Goal 2: Invest in the County's infrastructure.

Objectives

- A. Adapt to aging population by retaining our young people and attracting new young singles and families to the county.
- 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.

- C. Develop and support businesses that will meet the unique needs of the aging population.

Goal 3: Plan for the county's economic development future, taking into account how to adapt to the changing regulatory climates.

Objectives

- A. Implement Merrill area Highway 51 corridor plans by capitalizing on development that has already occurred along that corridor and future development south along I-39.
- B. Create an atmosphere that fosters units of government that work together and are flexible when it comes to regulations.
- 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.)
- D. Promote the use of incubators to help foster new business growth.
- E. Make certain that all existing and planned industrial parks develop comprehensive plans.
- F. Do everything possible at the local level to minimize regulations for start-up businesses that were intended to regulate potential negative impacts of larger, more established businesses.
- G. Promote effective density planning that improves the efficiency of providing services but is balanced with the community's desire to maintain a rural atmosphere.
- H. Develop clearly stated, visible and viable housing and infrastructure plans.
- I. Be actively involved in planning for and facilitating the installation of high-capacity broadband communication systems for businesses, school, government, and personal uses.
- J. Capitalize on the 100,000 acres of county forest land.

Goal 4: Cultivate a positive atmosphere and attitude in Lincoln County.

Objectives

- A. Take measures to promote positive attitudes among county residents.
- B. Cultivate a positive business environment.
- C. Develop a clearly stated vision statement that embraces the uniqueness of each community in the county but identifies shared 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 many resources.)

Goal 5: Access financial tools for business development

Objectives

- A. Increase communication regarding loans and funding opportunities for new and existing businesses.
- B. Effectively use economic development tools such as Tax Increment Finance districts to demonstrate the community's interest in supporting business development.
- C. Develop a venture capital fund that is greater than the \$100,000 currently available.
- D. Effectively use grants that help support business development such as Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) Grants.
- E. Provide funds to "nurture" new enterprises with advice resources.

Land Use

Goal 1: 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, impact, appearance, and pace of development to minimize land use conflicts, reduce the

negative impact of new development on existing land uses, and facilitate the efficient provision of roads, utilities, and other public services, preserve the rural character and lifestyle of the County, and provide appropriate opportunities for community and economic development.

Objectives

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

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Goal 1: Continue to look for ways to increase the efficiency of county government with minimal impacts on services.

Objective

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

Previous Plans and Studies

LAND AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Purpose

The Lincoln County Land and Water Resource Management Plan provides information on the County's natural resources and identifies key issues and concerns related to resource management. In accordance with State Statute, the plan is required to contain an assessment of the County's natural resources and the

Goal 2: Promote a more entrepreneurial approach to service provision that does not place county departments in direct competition with private enterprise.

Objective

- A. Develop such approaches with the intent to bring more non-tax levy revenue to government operations.

Goal 3: Hold at least one annual meeting amongst city, town, and county department heads/boards to explore possible intergovernmental cooperative arrangements.

Objective

- A. Pursue at least one promising relationship annually.

Goal 4: Work together to promote economic development that benefits several jurisdictions without compromising the County's rural character.

Objectives

- A. Increase communication and planning between governments when a proposed development project will impact several jurisdictions.
- B. When possible, strive to create an atmosphere where growth/development is managed based on various jurisdictions' comprehensive planning goals.
- C. Manage potential annexations appropriately by fostering open communication channels.

development of a multi-year work plan for the County's Land Conservation Office.

Summary

The 10-year Lincoln County Land and Water Resource Management Plan was adopted in 2017, this Plan begins with an assessment of the area's natural resources. This section provides a description of the County's

thirteen watershed areas, summary of recent land use trends, implementation strategies for Agricultural Performance Standards (NR151), and summary of previous accomplishments since completion of the previous Plan. The Plan also identifies the top natural resource management Goals and Objectives which were based on input from Federal, State and County agencies, sporting groups, farmers, forestry interests, and private individuals. The Plan establishes the following goals:

1. **Improve soil health.** Anticipated outcome: Healthy soil continues to produce food and fiber.
Objective:
Promote soil health activities (e.g. rotational cropping, establishment of shoreland buffers, grazing, improved plant diversity)
2. **Protect and improve groundwater quality and surface water quality.** Anticipated outcome: Reduced soil erosion and less nutrient loading of waterbodies.
Objectives:
 1. Promote best management practices to restore and maintain riparian habitat.
 2. Promote shoreland stewardship.
 3. Reduce phosphorus from septic systems.
 4. Reduce phosphorus pollution from lawns.
 5. Control soil erosion.
3. **Control the spread of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species.** Anticipated

outcome: Stabilize the current ecosystem from further advancement of non-native species, terrestrial and aquatic.

Objectives:

1. Control terrestrial, non-native, invasive species.
 2. Control aquatic, non-native, invasive species
 3. Prevent introduction of new non-native invasive species.
4. **Improve forest silviculture for multiple uses.** Anticipated outcome: Maintain a healthy vigorous forest, while also providing for wildlife habitat, water quality, and recreation.
Objectives:
 1. Improve forest management to control sediment, erosion and protect habitat cover types.
 2. Reduce erosion and habitat degradation caused by trail use.
 5. **Promote well planned development.** Anticipated outcome: Protect property values of privately owned land in Lincoln County.
Objective:
Keep the County Comprehensive Plan current.

The Plan suggests strategies to address these concerns, which include the development of educational programs to raise public awareness, techniques for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of various resource management programs,

[LINCOLN COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN](#)

The Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan identifies community standards and needs for parklands and facilities. The Plan also identifies and prioritizes proposals for recreation land acquisition and

development. Preparation and submittal of the Plan to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources allows the County and local units of government to apply for a

variety of State and Federal funding programs.

Summary

The current Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan was adopted in 2021 and is a comprehensive recreational land acquisition and development plan for the County. The Plan seeks to maintain and enhance Lincoln County's vast network of parks and open space as a means to promote recreational tourism while, at the same time, providing for the needs of local residents.

Plan Goals and Objectives

Protect, restore, and enhance Lincoln County's natural resources for outdoor recreation.

Objectives

- Follow Best Management Practices for water quality and for invasive species control in development of trails and recreation facilities.
- Purchase land within county forest blocking.
- Continue Recreational Officer position.
- 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 still protecting the natural resources of the county in a sustainable manner.
- Protect and preserve the environmental integrity of the natural resources in Lincoln County so future generations will have use and enjoyment of our public lands.
- Create a one stop location for tourism and outdoor recreation information.
- County should investigate the creation of a countywide tourism bureau.

- Encourage both the Merrill Chamber and the Tomahawk Chamber to create significant website links to the Forestry, Land, & Parks website for outdoor recreation information.

Continue to improve and develop Lincoln County's outdoor recreation facilities.

Objectives

- Develop new facilities as outlined in 5-year Capital Improvement tables and as opportunities and funding sources become available and the ability to maintain these facilities is established.
- Maintain and improve existing recreational facilities as outlined in 5-year capital improvement tables and as opportunities and funding sources become available.
- Work with user groups to meet specific needs and desires for recreation on the Lincoln County Forest.
- Continue to develop and improve all types of recreational trails.
- Cooperate with various governmental agencies to improve all outdoor recreation facilities within Lincoln County.
- Improve and protect access to water resources.
- Continue to qualify Lincoln County and local governmental units for eligibility of state and federal financial aid programs which require outdoor recreational planning.
- Continue planning and developing recreational facilities to accommodate the elderly and handicapped.

LINCOLN COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

The Lincoln County Forest 15-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan was adopted in 2007 and provides background information on County forest lands, establishes a comprehensive plan to manage and protect the forest's natural resources on a sustainable basis and address ecological, social, and economic needs.

Summary

The Plan provides a detailed inventory of the county's forest lands, including their location, physical geography, history, plant and animal resources, recreational opportunities, access, timber management, and administration.

The Plan seeks to protect County forest lands from natural catastrophes (e.g., fire, insect and disease outbreaks) and human threats (e.g., encroachment, over-utilization, environmental degradation, and excessive development), while at the same time providing for social and economic needs. To

effectively manage, utilize and sustain forest resources, the Plan designates areas of the County forest system into "aesthetic management zones" and "special use areas".

Key Recommendations

- Forestry personnel should actively enforce the desired forest management practices within each of the designated "aesthetic management zones" or "special use areas".
- Recreational use of the county forests should be in accordance with the Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan and 15-Year Forest Comprehensive Plan.
- Forest management policies should balance local needs with broader concerns of state and national agencies dealing with forestry, wildlife, fisheries, endangered resources, water quality, soil, and recreational issues.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

The Lincoln County Farmland Preservation Plan was first adopted in 1982 and contained a basic listing of conservation standards that would be need to be met in accordance with Wisconsin State Statutes. This enabled interested landowners to enter into an agreement with the State to receive a tax credit for meeting conservation standards.

In 2009, Wisconsin's Working Lands Initiative (WLI) was adopted as part of the 2009-2011 biennial budget. The law is codified within Chapter 91 of Wisconsin State Statutes. In 2016, Lincoln County completed an update to the 1982 Plan to reflect the current statutory requirements for a Farmland Preservation Plan.

Farmland Preservation Plans are the first step in allowing eligible landowners the ability to receive a State Income Tax credit.

Summary

The 2016 Lincoln County Farmland Preservation Plan sets forth directions for how the County intends to preserve agricultural production capacity, farmland, soil and water resources, and rural character. The Plan also reviews the economic and cultural importance of agriculture in the County.

One of the primary components of the Plan is a set of detailed maps that identify farmland areas for preservation based on locally established mapping criteria.

The Lincoln County Farmland Preservation Plan Map used the existing County Zoning map as a base, with all lands in the: Agriculture, Forestry, Rural Lands 2, or Rural Lands 4 categories being designated

as areas appropriate for Farmland Preservation.

Farmland Preservation Plan Goal:
Promote Working Forests and Farmlands
Objectives:

1. Minimize the conversion of agricultural lands and woodlands into other uses.
2. Encourage retaining large, contiguous, forestry and farmland tracts.
3. Work to preserve farming as a viable occupation within the County.

Policies:

- Promote agricultural cost share programs to farmers per the Lincoln County Land & Water Resource Management Plan.

- Promote governmental programs to farmland owners.
- Promote active forest management to forestland owners.
- Encourage new residential development to locate away from agricultural areas through appropriate land use planning.
- Encourage new or expanding agricultural development away from existing residential areas through appropriate land use planning.
- Promote rural cluster development for housing that seeks to locate in forested or agricultural areas.

LINCOLN COUNTY LAND USE REGULATIONS

The Lincoln County Zoning Ordinance went through a comprehensive revision in 2004, as part of implementation of the initial Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan. The County Zoning Ordinance regulates the use of structures, lands, and waters, size and location of structures, private sewage systems, water pollution sources, parking, loading, and access, and signage within the unincorporated areas of Lincoln County.

Summary

The Zoning Ordinance establishes various districts and standards for development in those districts. The County's shoreland regulations apply to all unincorporated areas of the County. The County Zoning Ordinance applies in all unincorporated areas of the County, with the exception of the Towns of Birch, Harrison, Pine River, Rock Falls, and Somo, which do not participate in County Zoning. Under State law, the Cities of Merrill and Tomahawk are responsible for administering their own zoning ordinance. The County Zoning Ordinance sets forth the following districts:

- The Forestry District, provides for the long term investment and management of the County's public and privately owned forest areas. This District is compatible with the State's Managed Forest Land Program. While seasonal dwellings are permitted, year-round residences are prohibited in this district.
- The Agricultural District is intended to provide for the protection of productive agricultural lands and agriculture related development. This district permits single and two-family homes on parcels of 20 acres or more.
- The Rural Lands "2 per 40" District is intended to preserve the rural character of Lincoln County while providing areas for residential development at a density not exceeding two dwelling units per forty acres.
- The Rural Lands "4 per 40" District contains the same intent and parameters of the Rural Lands "2 per

40” District at a great density of four homes per forty acres.

- The Zoning Ordinance sets forth six Residential Districts, which allows residential development at a variety of densities. Accessory and compatible land uses are generally allowed on a conditional basis.
- Three Commercial Districts, one of which allow a wide range of retail and commercial uses at varying intensities.
- The Industrial Districts allow for indoor and outdoor manufacturing, assembly and warehousing uses.
- The Zoning Ordinance contains districts for specific uses, such the Mobile Home Park District and the Recreation District. These districts generally correlate with the location of these uses within Lincoln County.

The Zoning Ordinance also sets standards for the following aspects of land use development in the County:

- Development in the shoreland areas
- Parking and loading requirements
- Sign regulations
- Non-conforming uses
- Non-metallic mineral extraction use
- Processes such as rezoning property and obtaining a conditional use permit.

Floodplain zoning policies and regulations are also included in Chapter 20, of the Lincoln County Code.

Land division and platting regulations which provide for the efficient division of land and support the ability to transfer land ownership within the unincorporated areas of the County are found within Chapter 18 of the Lincoln County Code. The Subdivision and Platting Ordinance regulates all land divisions creating lots less than 10 acres in area.

[LINCOLN COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN](#)

Initially adopted in 1972 and updated in 1984, the Lincoln County Solid Waste Management is largely a historical document. Key provisions outlined in the Plan have been implemented, including hiring of a Solid Waste Manager and development of a County owned sanitary landfill.

The Lincoln County Landfill was constructed in 1989 and a 1.2 million cubic yard expansion was sought and approved by the WIDNR in 2013. The Landfill has an estimated projected life through 2037 and accepts waste from within Lincoln County and portions of North Central Wisconsin. The Landfill accepts roughly 40,000 tons of waste items annually.

The Lincoln County Landfill operates under a Plan of Operation, which is required for every licensed solid waste facility in the State of Wisconsin. The Plan of Operation provides operational standards and prescribes future direction. Elements of the earlier planning efforts have been incorporated into the current Plan of Operation, including source reduction through recycling and diversion of waste items such as woody debris and compost from the landfill. The Initial Site Report, Feasibility Report and Plan of Operational report which are required by DNR to site a new or expand an existing landfill serve as the planning documents and road map to Lincoln County’s solid waste handling procedures into the future.

CITY OF MERRILL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City of Merrill's first Comprehensive Plan prepared in accordance with the State of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning legislation was adopted in 2007. The City updated this plan in 2017.

The Plan anticipates that the City's population will remain relatively constant during the 20-year planning period and designates current and long-range areas for future development.

The Plan strongly recommends coordinated, intergovernmental land use, transportation, and utility planning. In order to remedy the negative impacts of unplanned growth and development in Merrill's peripheral area, the Plan recommends that the City fully exercise

its statutory right to review and approve all land divisions within its 1 ½-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). The Plan recommends mixed use, mixed residential, and traditional neighborhood development in the peripheral areas immediately adjacent to the City's municipal boundary inside the ETJ. Short-term residential development is proposed for peripheral areas primarily along the north and south sides of the City's boundary. The Plan also recommends that a new business park be developed outside the city limits on the east side of Merrill along the USH 51 corridor and full development of the CTH K and USH 51 interchange.

CITY OF TOMAHAWK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; TOMAHAWK

The City of Tomahawk's first Comprehensive Plan prepared in accordance with the State of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning legislation was adopted in 2006. The City completed an update to this Plan in 2017.

The updated City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan anticipates that the City's population will decline slightly during the 20 year planning period. The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map indicates that the City plans for commercial development at the two Highway 51 interchanges at CTH A and CTH D/Highway 86.

The Plan does not anticipate a need to extend the City's jurisdictional boundary to accommodate future growth. Therefore, the Plan does not make land use recommendations for areas outside the municipal limits. Overall, the Plan recommends locating new development adjacent to existing development and limiting urban expansion in areas that are environmentally unsuitable. Residential development is proposed for areas primarily on the northeast and southeast portions of the City.

REGIONAL LIVABILITY PLAN (NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION);

The Regional Livability Plan prepared by the North Central Wisconsin Regional provides a regional development framework and vision for the region to develop in an orderly, efficient manner.

The Livability Plan divides the Region into three subregions, identifies regional issues

and establishes the following 10 livability goals:

1. Promote a variety of safe and affordable housing options that meet the needs of all community members.
2. Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce.

3. Support and develop a diverse economic base ensuring economic growth and resiliency.
4. Support infrastructure needed for economic development.
5. Develop tourism and the knowledge-based economy into leading economic sectors.
6. Provide and improve transportation access to people of all ages and abilities to ensure lifelong mobility and accessibility.
7. Fund the maintenance and expansion of the transportation system.
8. Enhance the regional economy by supporting airports and freight rail.
9. Preserve and protect the region's landscape, environmental resources, and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.
10. Manage and reduce vacant land and structures.

Several of the livability goals correlate well with the goals established within Lincoln County's Comprehensive Plan.

[Connections 2030: Wisconsin's Long Range Transportation Plan](#)

Connections 2030 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the State. This plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and transit. WisDOT officially adopted Connections 2030 in October 2009.

Connections 2030, establishes system level priority corridors, two of which transect Lincoln County. The North Country (US 8) connecting Minnesota and Michigan and the Wisconsin River Corridor Part 2 (US 51) connecting Wausau to Ironwood, MI. WisDOT is currently drafting Connect 2050, an update to Connections 2030.

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 2](#). This section briefly describes government jurisdictions in the Lincoln County area.

Background

While this is a County plan, it can 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 and the City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan. As outlined in the introduction, many Towns in Lincoln County completed land use plans during the initial early 2000s comprehensive planning process. As part of the 2021

Comprehensive Plan update each town had the opportunity to work with Lincoln County to update these plans. Town land use plans that remain in effect are summarized within 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 common goals. 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.

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 the Merrill and Tomahawk City 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 2019, it made over \$2.55 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 the 2015 American Community Survey, 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 wood products. Large wood-based companies include Packaging Corporation of America, Lincoln Wood, and Semling-Menke Corporation.

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.

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 currently 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 [Table 1-1](#).

[City of Merrill](#)

The City of Merrill's most recent Comprehensive Plan was approved by Council in 2017. 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 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 Route 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 2017. Protection of natural areas, promotion of tourism, and diverse, responsible economic development are emphasized. The City's parks and recreation plan also emphasize similar themes.

[Public School Districts](#)

Lincoln County includes two public school districts, the Merrill Area Public School District and Tomahawk School District. According to Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction statistics, in the 2018-19 school year 3,291 students were enrolled in the Merrill Area Public School District. Meanwhile, 1,224 students were enrolled in the Tomahawk School District during the

2018-19 school year. Because of projected aging population trends and declining populations, it is expected that enrollment will likely trend downward in both districts over the planning period.

[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).

Chapter Two

Demographics

Background

Lincoln County is located in northern Wisconsin. The County is bounded by Oneida County to the north, Langlade County to the east, Marathon County to the south, and by Taylor and Price Counties to the west. There are sixteen towns and two cities in the County. See [Map 2](#).

Demographics are an important consideration for planning. The review of the socio-economic trends throughout the County are critical to understanding what has occurred and what is likely to occur in the future. Total population, age, distribution, households, educational levels, employment, and income levels will be examined in some detail below

Data Sources

Data from the U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS), in addition to other sources such as the Wisconsin Department of Administration's population projections and the Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator is used throughout this report.

The U.S. Census and the American Community Survey are both produced by the U.S. Census Bureau; however the Census is a count of the American population and housing units conducted every ten years while the American Community Survey is an estimate of the population and housing released on a yearly basis. Data is included from 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2017 and trends are generally analyzed for the fifteen year time frame from 2000 to 2017 in this report.

The American Community Survey evolved from the "long form" that a random subset of the population formally received with the Census. In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau started releasing American Community Survey data for all populations on a yearly basis. The availability of these surveys means that communities do not need to wait ten years for the Census to assess current trends.

However, small populations, such as many of the communities in Lincoln County, are often difficult to survey and the census count of the population is never completely accurate. These factors can produce data that is not always completely accurate or consistent. Furthermore, Census and ACS data is self-reported which can produce its own accuracy issues. However there are few substitutes, if any, for most of the demographic data provided by these sources.

Population

Population growth has slowed at both the State and the County levels when compared to previous decades. In the 1980s, the County grew 1.6 percent while the State grew 4.0 percent. In the 1990s, the County grew 9.8 percent while the state grew 9.6 percent. Over the past seventeen years, population within Lincoln County has been declining.

In 2010, Lincoln County had a total population of 28,743 residents. By 2017, 28,830 persons resided in the County according to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) estimates, which is a 0.3 percent increase from the 2010

Census total. From 2000 to 2010, the County's population declined by 898 residents, which represents a 3 percent decrease. Overall, Lincoln County's population decreased by 2.7 percent between 2000 and 2017. In comparison, the State's population grew by 7.8 percent between 2000 and 2017, with a 1.7 percent increase between 2010 and 2017.

However, Lincoln County and Wisconsin differ in the two components of population

continued to grow as the natural increase from births outpaced deaths and negative net migration from the State. In contrast, Lincoln County's population experienced positive net migration but declined in population because there were more deaths than births.

Table 1-1 displays total population for each local unit (minor civil division), the County and the State. Five out of the 16 towns and both of the cities in Lincoln County lost population between 2000 and 2017,

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2017	2000-17 % Change	2000-17 Net Change
Birch	675	801	594	596	-25.6%	-205
Bradley	2,231	2,573	2,408	2,449	-4.8%	-124
Corning	795	826	883	883	6.9%	57
Harding	283	334	372	377	12.9%	43
Harrison	660	793	833	840	5.9%	47
King	675	842	855	880	4.5%	38
Merrill	2,716	2,979	2,980	3,033	1.8%	54
Pine River	1,552	1,877	1,869	1,878	0.1%	1
Rock Falls	463	598	618	639	6.9%	41
Russell	671	693	677	684	-1.3%	-9
Schley	838	909	934	934	2.8%	25
Scott	1,210	1,287	1,432	1,441	12.0%	154
Skawanaw	312	354	391	395	11.6%	41
Somo	116	121	114	117	-3.3%	-4
Tomahawk	370	439	416	427	-2.7%	-12
Wilson	238	299	309	312	4.3%	13
City of Merrill	9,860	10,146	9,661	9,626	-5.1%	-520
City of Tomahawk	3,328	3,770	3,397	3,319	-12.0%	-451
Lincoln County	26,993	29,641	28,743	28,830	-2.7%	-811
State	4,891,769	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,783,278	7.8%	419,603

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

change, natural population change and net migration. From 2010 to 2017, Wisconsin

including the Town of Birch which experienced the largest decline of 25.6

percent. The City of Merrill saw the largest net decrease, losing 520 people. At the same time, the Town of Harding experienced the largest percentage increase, at 12.9 percent, adding 43 people. The Town of Scott had the largest net increase, adding 154 people. The City of Merrill saw a percentage decrease of 5.1 percent, while the City of Tomahawk saw a percentage decrease of 12 percent.

The WDOA calculates population projections for the County and each local government unit. The latest population projections were published in 2013 and project population sizes from 2015 to 2040.

Population Projections

Lincoln County's population is projected to increase to 29,355 residents by the year 2040, a 2.1 percent increase from the total population in 2010. Populations throughout the County's municipalities are projected to peak between 2030 and 2035, with the County's population projected to peak at 30,750 residents in 2030. The Town of Birch

The WDOA estimated that the County would hit peak population in 2035, at 30,580 people before declining by 1,225 people by 2040. From 2015 to 2025 the population was projected to increase by 5.9 percent and 1.6 percent from 2025 to 2035.

There are signs that Lincoln County's population is growing faster than the current projections. The WDOA's population estimate for Lincoln County in 2015 was 28,835 residents, which is 420 more residents than the projected population of 28,415 for Lincoln County in 2015.

is projected to experience the fastest increase within the County, with a projected 59.1 percent increase in population. The City of Tomahawk is projected to experience the fastest decrease within the County, with a projected 8.2 percent decrease in population. Population projections for Lincoln County and all municipalities within the County can be found in [Table 1-2](#).

Minor Civil Division	2010 Census	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Projected % Change
Birch	594	940	960	985	1,000	990	945	59.1%
Bradley	2,408	2,355	2,415	2,485	2,530	2,510	2,405	-0.1%
Corning	883	865	895	935	965	970	940	6.5%
Harding	372	370	395	420	445	455	450	21.0%
Harrison	833	825	870	915	960	975	955	14.6%
King	855	855	900	955	1,000	1,015	1,000	17.0%
Merrill	2,980	2,920	3,015	3,135	3,215	3,215	3,105	4.2%
Pine River	1,869	1,840	1,910	1,990	2,060	2,070	2,010	7.5%
Rock Falls	618	615	645	680	710	725	710	14.9%
Russell	677	665	680	700	715	710	685	1.2%
Schley	934	915	950	990	1,020	1,025	990	6.0%
Scott	1,432	1,425	1,510	1,605	1,685	1,720	1,695	18.4%
Skawanaw	391	390	410	435	460	470	460	17.6%

Somo	114	110	115	115	120	115	110	-3.5%
Tomahawk	416	410	420	435	445	445	430	3.4%
Wilson	309	305	325	340	360	365	355	14.9%
City of Merrill	9,661	9,345	9,460	9,625	9,690	9,500	8,990	-6.9%
City of Tomahawk	3,397	3,265	3,295	3,355	3,370	3,305	3,120	-8.2%
Lincoln County								
Lincoln County	28,743	28,415	29,170	30,100	30,750	30,580	29,355	2.1%
State	5,686,986	5,783,015	6,005,080	6,203,850	6,375,910	6,476,270	6,491,635	14.1%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

Age Distribution

Population distribution is important to the planning process. In particular, two groups are examined here. They are the 17 years of age and younger and the 65 and older population groups. These are often referred to as dependent populations and have different needs. The younger group requires schools and the older group is retiring. Comparing these groups over time and to the state, demographic changes in the county are identified.

During the last seventeen years (2000-2017), the population of the 17 and younger group declined from 25.4% percent of the total population in 2000 to about 19.4% percent of

the total county population in 2017, as displayed in [Table 1-3](#). This was a net decrease of 2,097. Meanwhile the State population of children 17 years and younger decreased from 25.5 percent of the population in 2000 to 22.4 percent in 2017, decreasing by 74,806.

All local units within Lincoln County experienced net losses in this demographic group from 2000 to 2017. The City of Merrill experienced the largest net loss in this demographic group, losing 606 residents. The Town of Birch has the highest percentage of residents within this demographic group, with 33.9% of their population being 17 years of age or younger.

Table 1-3: Persons 17 Years of Age and Younger

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2017	1990 % of Total	2000 % of Total	2010 % of Total	2017 % of Total	2000- 17 Net Change
Birch	372	438	222	200	55.1%	54.7%	37.4%	33.9%	-238
Bradley	529	537	408	324	23.7%	20.9%	16.9%	13.6%	-213
Corning	253	221	226	116	31.8%	26.8%	25.6%	18.8%	-105
Harding	78	86	91	65	27.6%	25.7%	24.5%	16.9%	-21
Harrison	154	197	159	134	23.3%	24.8%	19.1%	16.0%	-63
King	164	156	147	150	24.3%	18.5%	17.2%	14.5%	-6
Merrill	813	774	631	543	29.9%	26.0%	21.2%	18.5%	-231

Pine River	467	506	387	397	30.1%	27.0%	20.7%	21.0%	-109
Rock Falls	119	136	106	99	25.7%	22.7%	17.2%	15.8%	-37
Russell	194	190	164	176	28.9%	27.4%	24.2%	24.4%	-14
Schley	226	215	201	165	27.0%	23.7%	21.5%	18.9%	-50
Scott	353	325	334	299	29.2%	25.3%	23.3%	21.1%	-26
Skawanaw	93	87	59	63	29.8%	24.6%	15.1%	16.7%	-24
Somo	23	20	17	7	19.8%	16.5%	14.9%	6.3%	-13
Tomahawk	98	88	53	21	26.5%	20.0%	12.7%	5.4%	-67
Wilson	59	54	54	43	24.8%	18.1%	17.5%	13.9%	-11
City of Merrill	2,482	2,563	2,311	1,957	25.2%	25.3%	23.9%	21.1%	-606
City of Tomahawk	794	948	732	685	23.9%	25.1%	21.5%	21.2%	-263
Lincoln County									
Lincoln County	7,271	7,541	6,302	5,444	26.9%	25.4%	21.9%	19.4%	-2097
State	1,288,982	1,368,756	1,339,492	1,293,950	26.4%	25.5%	23.6%	22.4%	-74,806

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

During the same period, the 65 and older age group increased as a percentage of total population from 16.4% percent to 20.1% percent, as shown in [Table 1-4](#). Every local unit in Lincoln County experienced increases in this demographic.

This increase is mainly due to the aging of the Baby Boomers, the largest generation in American history, and retirees moving into the County. The oldest Baby Boomer will be 75 in 2020 while the youngest Baby Boomer will be 57 years old. Based on increases in life expectancy and advances in medicine, the 65 and older group can expect to grow in absolute numbers and as a percentage of total population.

However, the increase is also due a lower fertility rate that is shifting the age profile. According the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 1957, the fertility rate was 3.7 births per woman in the United States. In 2014, the average was 1.93 which is lower than the 2.1 replacement rate needed to keep a population steady.

Rural Wisconsin Counties, including Lincoln County, are aging much faster than the State and the Nation as a whole. In 2010, the median age in Lincoln County was 44.7 years, compared to 37.0 for the State. Furthermore, in 2017, the percentage of the population that was 65 and older in Lincoln County was 20.1 percent, compared to 15.6 percent for the State.

Table 1-4: Persons 65 Years of Age and Older

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2017	1990 % of Total	2000 % of Total	2010 % of Total	2017 % of Total	2000-17 Net Change
Birch	42	52	68	71	6.2%	6.5%	11.4%	12.0%	19
Bradley	394	520	578	763	17.7%	20.2%	24.0%	32.0%	243

Corning	91	96	120	117	11.4%	11.6%	13.6%	19.0%	21
Harding	26	38	39	62	9.2%	11.4%	10.5%	16.1%	24
Harrison	112	124	169	191	17.0%	15.6%	20.3%	22.8%	67
King	132	170	211	240	19.6%	20.2%	24.7%	23.2%	70
Merrill	280	324	452	554	10.3%	10.9%	15.2%	18.9%	230
Pine River	149	171	274	377	9.6%	9.1%	14.7%	19.9%	206
Rock Falls	62	75	118	144	13.4%	12.5%	19.1%	23.0%	69
Russell	100	74	119	100	14.9%	10.7%	17.6%	13.9%	26
Schley	115	104	124	124	13.7%	11.4%	14.3%	14.2%	20
Scott	118	131	172	177	9.8%	10.2%	12.0%	12.5%	46
Skawanaw	28	49	57	70	9.0%	13.8%	14.6%	18.5%	21
Somo	20	28	18	32	17.2%	23.1%	15.8%	28.6%	4
Tomahawk	49	62	86	102	13.2%	14.1%	20.7%	26.1%	40
Wilson	46	64	72	90	19.3%	21.4%	23.3%	29.0%	26
City of Merrill	1,912	1,999	1,876	1,717	19.4%	19.7%	19.4%	18.5%	-282
City of Tomahawk	699	771	716	687	21.0%	20.5%	21.1%	21.3%	-84
Lincoln County									
Lincoln County	4,375	4,852	5,269	5,618	16.2%	16.4%	18.3%	20.1%	766
State	651,221	702,553	755,485	896,724	13.3%	13.1%	13.4%	15.6%	194,171

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2 below show the population pyramid for Lincoln County in 2010 and the projections for 2040. However, the term “pyramid” has already become misnomer in Lincoln County’s case. Until recently, most communities’ population “bases” were larger than the tops. Today in the North Central Wisconsin region, many communities’ population age-sex distributions resemble columns rather than pyramids, as is the case in Lincoln County. In 2010, 18.3 percent of the population was 65 years and older and had jumped to 20.1 percent by 2017.

By 2040, 33.7 percent of the population is expected to be 65 years or older, a net increase of 4,287 senior citizens. To put that in perspective, the country of Japan became the world’s first “Hyper-Aged” society in

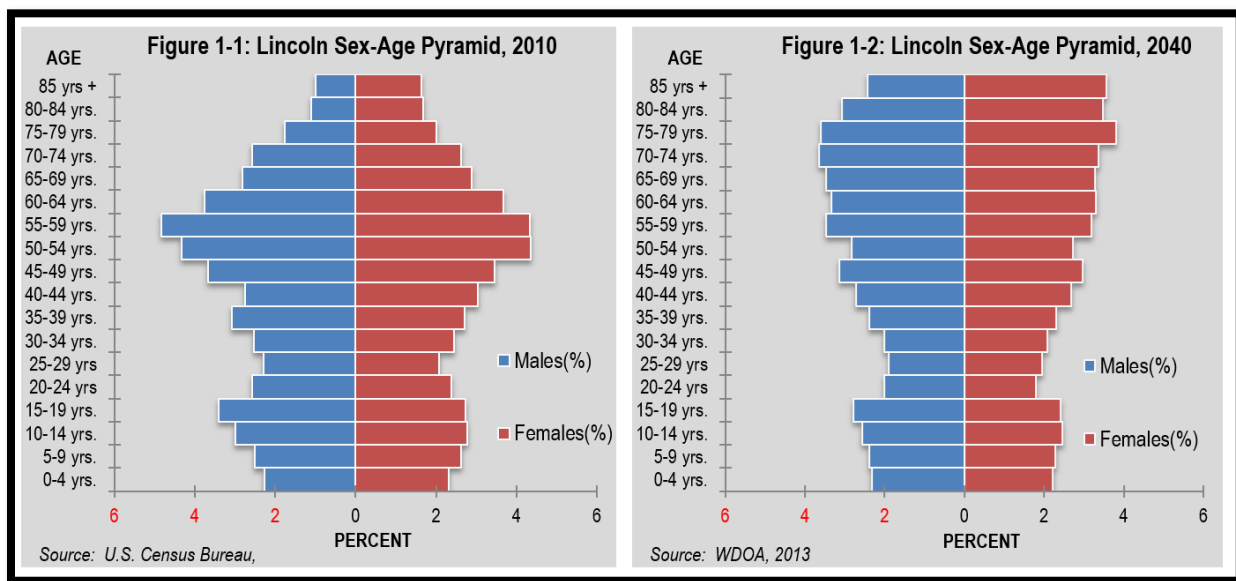
2007 when more than 21 percent of its society was estimated to be aged 65 or older. According to the latest projections out of Japan, the percentage of Japan’s population that is 65 and older is not expected to reach 40 percent until 2060.

The decrease in the percentage of 17 and younger persons and the increase in the 65 and older persons will have an impact on the labor force, school system and health care industry in the County. As population growth slows, so will the workforce and ultimately job growth. It will also be difficult to fund public services if employment and tax revenues are not growing, as there is a lower percentage of the population working from which to collect State income taxes and more income coming from Social Security. At the same time, the economy is expected to

shift as older adults drive the economy. Healthcare is expected to continue to grow as well as other service providers.

There are a number of actions a community can take to not only address these challenges but to capitalize on the benefits of this age group. Not only do older adults have years of

valuable experiences and wisdom, many of the entrepreneurs, and therefore job creators, are at or near retirement age. As Lincoln County attracts older adults looking to retire in the area, this demographic brings a great amount of spending power to the local economy.



Households

In 2010, there were 12,094 households in Lincoln County following at least three decades in household growth as displayed in [Table 1-5](#). The 1990s saw a 15.4 percent increase in the number of households. Between 2000 and 2010 the number of households grew 3.2 percent and 3.9 percent from 2010 to 2017. Generally, the number of households across the Country has been increasing for several decades, as more people live alone and more couples have fewer children or no children. The number of households has increased faster than the population as a whole. Similarly, the 2017 American Community Survey indicates that

the number of households in Lincoln County from 2000 to 2017 has increased 839 households during this time.”The number of people per household has slightly decreased during this time, from 2.33 in 2010 to 2.30 in 2017. In 2000 the average number of people per household was 2.46.

The number of households is independent of population increase. This is best illustrated by the fact that in the local units that experienced a decrease in population over the past seventeen years, such as the Town of Bradley, actually gained households. The Town of Bradley had an 8.8 percent increase in the number of households despite a population decrease of 4.8 percent.”

Table 1-5: Households

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2017	2000-17 % Change	2000-17 Net Change
Birch	145	179	189	191	6.7%	12
Bradley	897	1,094	1,089	1,190	8.8%	96
Corning	256	299	330	285	-4.7%	-14
Harding	100	129	140	152	17.8%	23
Harrison	251	314	356	393	25.2%	79
King	268	362	373	463	27.9%	101
Merrill	954	1,125	1,204	1,222	8.6%	97
Pine River	519	673	754	802	19.2%	129
Rock Falls	181	231	266	302	30.7%	71
Russell	237	271	276	310	14.4%	39
Schley	289	356	378	405	13.8%	49
Scott	399	458	537	601	31.2%	143
Skawanaw	109	141	165	171	21.3%	30
Somo	49	57	52	62	8.8%	5
Tomahawk	142	192	193	225	17.2%	33
Wilson	99	130	137	144	10.8%	14
City of Merrill	3,919	4,183	4,175	4,181	0.0%	-2
City of Tomahawk	1,345	1,527	1,480	1,461	-4.3%	-66
Lincoln County						
Lincoln County	10,159	11,721	12,094	12,560	7.2%	839
State						
State	1,822,118	2,084,544	2,279,768	2,328,754	11.7%	244,210

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

Education Levels

Educational attainment improved significantly between 2000-2017. Over the period, the number of persons who graduated from high school as a percentage of those over 25, increased from 81.6 percent in 2000 to 91.0 percent in 2017. The increase was reflected in every local unit between 2000 and 2017. The gap between the County and the State has decreased significantly, decreasing from 10.2 percent in 2000 to 0.7 percent in 2017. This is displayed in [Table 1-6](#).

The percentage of persons 25 and older with four or more years of college has also increased within the County, but at a much slower rate than the State, as shown in [Table 1-7](#). In 2017, 17.3 percent of the County, aged 25 years and older, had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. This was a 3.7 percentage point increase over 2000. During the same time period, the State's percentage of the population 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher increased 6.6 percentage points. Furthermore, the State was 11.7 percentage points higher in this category compared to the County.

Table 1-6: Persons 25 and Older Who Have Completed Four Years of High School or More

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2017	1990 % of Total	2000 % of Total	2010 % of Total	2017 % of Total	2000-17 % Change
Birch	211	240	289	294	74.8%	74.1%	78.1%	90.2%	22.5%
Bradley	1,178	1,705	1,517	1,845	75.1%	87.7%	83.6%	92.3%	8.2%
Corning	319	451	607	438	65.6%	78.7%	91.7%	91.8%	-2.9%
Harding	114	165	236	264	66.3%	80.5%	88.7%	92.3%	60.0%
Harrison	332	501	492	628	73.6%	85.9%	88.0%	91.5%	25.3%
King	354	499	654	723	74.2%	82.2%	90.1%	93.8%	44.9%
Merrill	1,303	1,692	2,092	2,095	76.8%	84.6%	94.0%	94.1%	23.8%
Pine River	705	1,056	1,184	1,273	73.4%	85.8%	87.8%	91.8%	20.5%
Rock Falls	211	351	452	474	71.5%	85.0%	90.6%	92.9%	35.0%
Russell	283	361	469	398	68.0%	78.6%	87.7%	86.7%	10.2%
Schley	333	491	577	551	63.1%	76.5%	89.3%	90.1%	12.2%
Scott	512	682	849	1,003	68.4%	79.3%	89.8%	91.9%	47.1%
Skanawan	149	201	285	276	67.4%	82.7%	96.3%	93.6%	37.3%
Somo	71	92	75	96	73.2%	91.1%	85.2%	95.0%	4.3%
Tomahawk	186	250	288	317	73.2%	78.9%	77.0%	91.9%	26.8%
Wilson	127	170	211	218	78.4%	80.6%	77.3%	85.5%	28.2%
City of Merrill	4,506	5,382	5,720	5,815	69.6%	78.8%	86.1%	90.7%	8.0%
City of Tomahawk	1,593	2,125	2,104	2,010	69.9%	82.4%	85.3%	86.7%	-5.4%
Lincoln County									
Lincoln County	12,490	16,414	18,105	18,718	71.1%	81.6%	87.3%	91.0%	14.0%
State	2,432,154	2,957,461	3,342,883	3,584,017	81.3%	85.1%	89.4%	91.7%	47.4%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

As the County has been closing the gap with the State in the percentage of residents who have graduated from high school, the gap in the percentage of residents with a college degree has slightly widened. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 27 percent of jobs in the United States require a college education. However, other experts believe the percentage to be much higher.

Nonetheless, today 37.8 percent of the workforce has an associate's degree or higher. In Lincoln County only 28.3 percent of the population has an associate's degree or higher, compared to 39.6 percent in the State. This could affect job growth if local employers cannot find skilled workers in the area.

Table 1-7: Persons 25 and Older Who Have Completed Four or More Years of College

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2017	1990 % of Total	2000 % of Total	2010 % of Total	2017 % of Total	2000-17 % Change
Birch	18	35	31	46	6.4%	10.8%	8.4%	14.1%	31.4%
Bradley	179	245	191	388	11.4%	12.6%	10.5%	19.4%	58.4%
Corning	33	55	63	51	6.8%	9.6%	9.5%	10.7%	-7.3%
Harding	13	22	49	47	7.6%	10.7%	18.4%	16.4%	113.6%
Harrison	44	69	102	153	9.8%	11.8%	18.2%	22.8%	121.7%
King	50	102	155	169	10.5%	16.8%	21.3%	21.9%	65.7%
Merrill	188	292	449	393	11.1%	14.6%	20.2%	17.6%	34.6%
Pine River	79	172	231	288	8.2%	14.0%	17.1%	20.8%	67.4%
Rock Falls	28	65	62	97	9.5%	15.7%	12.4%	19.0%	49.2%
Russell	24	23	44	63	5.8%	5.0%	8.2%	13.7%	173.9%
Schley	21	77	83	78	4.0%	12.0%	12.8%	12.3%	1.3%
Scott	26	92	189	169	3.5%	10.7%	20.0%	15.5%	83.7%
Skanawan	20	17	90	48	9.0%	7.0%	30.4%	16.3%	182.4%
Somo	3	7	2	7	3.1%	6.9%	2.3%	6.9%	0.0%
Tomahawk	25	21	42	56	9.8%	6.6%	11.2%	16.2%	166.7%
Wilson	6	16	15	28	3.7%	7.6%	5.5%	11.0%	75.0%
City of Merrill	822	972	877	1,047	12.7%	14.2%	13.2%	16.3%	7.7%
City of Tomahawk	321	450	373	432	14.1%	17.4%	15.1%	18.6%	-4.0%
Lincoln County									
Lincoln County	1,897	2,732	3,049	3,560	10.8%	13.6%	14.7%	17.3%	30.3%
State									
State	547,678	779,273	964,725	1,134,481	18.3%	22.4%	25.8%	29.0%	45.6%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

Employment

In 2017, there were 14,327 residents employed. (Note that these are persons employed and many of them work outside the County.) This reflected a 2.6 percent decrease in County employment since 2010, compared to 2.4 percent growth for the State. Seven towns which include; Bradley, Harding, Harrison, King, Merrill, Pine River, and Scott, experienced increases in the

number of their residents working as shown in [Table 1-8](#). The decrease in the number of workers in Lincoln County is likely tied to the aging population. The median age in 2017 for Lincoln County is 46.9, which is much older than the State median age. When an individual reaches the age of 55 and older, their probability of participating in the labor force decreases significantly.

Table 1-8: Total Employed Persons (16 and older)

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2017	2000-17 % Change	2010-17 % Change
Birch	199	243	236	225	-7.4%	-4.7%
Bradley	974	1,272	944	1,032	-18.9%	9.3%
Corning	366	485	536	329	-32.2%	-38.6%
Harding	124	174	215	230	32.2%	7.0%
Harrison	282	396	380	440	11.1%	15.8%
King	279	361	420	516	42.9%	22.9%
Merrill	1,375	1,583	1,548	1,681	6.2%	8.6%
Pine River	781	1,018	1,099	998	-2.0%	-9.2%
Rock Falls	206	331	362	316	-4.5%	-12.7%
Russell	267	332	383	348	4.8%	-9.1%
Schley	426	532	522	466	-12.4%	-10.7%
Scott	611	778	782	823	5.8%	5.2%
Skawanaw	134	206	265	208	1.0%	-21.5%
Somo	38	46	61	43	-6.5%	-29.5%
Tomahawk	155	213	260	224	5.2%	-13.8%
Wilson	81	118	123	138	16.9%	12.2%
City of Merrill	4,428	4,726	5,047	4,869	3.0%	-3.5%
City of Tomahawk	1,426	1,716	1,524	1,441	-16.0%	-5.4%
Lincoln County						
Lincoln County	12,152	14,530	14,707	14,327	-1.4%	-2.6%
State	2,517,318	2,734,925	2,871,201	2,939,880	7.5%	2.4%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

Income Levels

Median household income and per capita income are displayed in [Table 1-9](#) and [Table 1-10](#) respectively. The County's median household income rose about 36.6 percent

During the past seventeen years. The County's median household income grew slower than the State rate, while the per capita income in the County grew at a faster rate than the State. Overall, the total County median income and per capita income are less than the State level. However, when

between 2000 and 2017, compared to the State increase of 29.6 percent. Meanwhile the County per capita income also increased by 59.4 percent, compared to the State increase of 43.7 percent. Note that these changes have not been adjusted for inflation. incomes are adjusted for inflation, it is apparent that median household incomes in Lincoln County have stagnated. Had the median household income risen with the Consumer Price Index, it would have been \$56,279 in 2017. In reality, the median household income for Lincoln County was

\$54,203 in 2017. However, it is also apparent that per capita income in Lincoln County has been rising at a faster rate than the Consumer Price Index. If the per person capita income

would have risen with inflation, it would have been \$25,809. However, Lincoln County's per person capita income in 2017 was \$28,603.

Table 1-9: Median Household Income

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2017	2000-17 % Change	2010-17 % Change
Birch	\$24,931	\$41,442	\$40,735	\$57,083	37.7%	40.1%
Bradley	\$25,025	\$38,676	\$43,000	\$54,630	41.3%	27.0%
Corning	\$27,308	\$48,224	\$57,083	\$61,719	28.0%	8.1%
Harding	\$31,667	\$43,250	\$59,375	\$75,000	73.4%	26.3%
Harrison	\$27,604	\$42,500	\$50,139	\$66,033	55.4%	31.7%
King	\$23,687	\$37,500	\$51,350	\$59,375	58.3%	15.6%
Merrill	\$27,847	\$48,875	\$61,633	\$70,776	44.8%	14.8%
Pine River	\$28,696	\$47,723	\$61,852	\$56,875	19.2%	-8.0%
Rock Falls	\$26,250	\$46,875	\$55,313	\$47,333	1.0%	-14.4%
Russell	\$22,312	\$42,500	\$47,500	\$44,500	4.7%	-6.3%
Schley	\$25,114	\$40,703	\$64,500	\$58,009	42.5%	-10.1%
Scott	\$29,191	\$50,441	\$67,228	\$72,813	44.4%	8.3%
Skawanaw	\$21,406	\$41,458	\$67,750	\$75,250	81.5%	11.1%
Somo	\$15,682	\$22,250	\$36,250	\$63,750	186.5%	75.9%
Tomahawk	\$22,083	\$35,625	\$49,333	\$49,583	39.2%	0.5%
Wilson	\$19,500	\$32,750	\$39,712	\$58,750	79.4%	47.9%
City of Merrill	\$24,074	\$33,098	\$39,783	\$48,653	47.0%	22.3%
City of Tomahawk	\$24,384	\$33,986	\$45,283	\$39,194	15.3%	-13.4%
Lincoln County	\$25,175	\$39,120	\$46,625	\$54,203	38.6%	16.3%
State	\$29,442	\$43,791	\$51,598	\$56,759	29.6%	10.0%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

Table 1-10: Per Capita Income

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2017	2000-17 % Change	2010-17 % Change
Birch	\$7,188	\$11,074	\$17,519	\$21,591	95.0%	23.2%
Bradley	\$11,510	\$19,803	\$23,550	\$31,784	60.5%	35.0%
Corning	\$9,419	\$19,225	\$23,245	\$32,211	67.5%	38.6%
Harding	\$13,695	\$19,933	\$25,025	\$37,686	89.1%	50.6%
Harrison	\$11,752	\$19,463	\$26,305	\$37,599	93.2%	42.9%
King	\$10,216	\$18,549	\$24,716	\$30,874	66.4%	24.9%
Merrill	\$11,322	\$16,677	\$27,614	\$31,293	87.6%	13.3%
Pine River	\$11,333	\$18,449	\$26,451	\$29,488	59.8%	11.5%
Rock Falls	\$12,335	\$18,865	\$25,702	\$29,790	57.9%	15.9%
Russell	\$9,057	\$17,875	\$21,394	\$22,287	24.7%	4.2%
Schley	\$10,142	\$17,460	\$25,017	\$29,175	67.1%	16.6%
Scott	\$12,151	\$19,759	\$31,769	\$35,515	79.7%	11.8%
Skawanaw	\$9,606	\$17,698	\$32,098	\$34,081	92.6%	6.2%
Somo	\$7,991	\$19,374	\$20,384	\$31,287	61.5%	53.5%
Tomahawk	\$11,139	\$16,681	\$25,708	\$34,130	104.6%	32.8%
Wilson	\$9,427	\$16,103	\$23,590	\$33,425	107.6%	41.7%
City of Merrill	\$11,758	\$17,429	\$21,516	\$25,965	49.0%	20.7%
City of Tomahawk	\$11,664	\$17,277	\$21,367	\$23,426	35.6%	9.6%
Lincoln County						
Lincoln County	\$11,282	\$17,940	\$23,793	\$28,603	59.4%	20.2%
State	\$13,286	\$21,271	\$26,624	\$30,557	43.7%	14.8%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

Chapter Three

Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources

This Chapter satisfies the 2001 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 Inventory

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

natural resources such as the 2017-2026 Lincoln County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2021-2035 Lincoln County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and 2016 Farmland Preservation Plan. 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.

gravel, sand, silt, clay, and boulders. Lincoln County lies within the Canadian Precambrian Shield, which consists of granite and metamorphic rocks.

Topography

As shown on [Map 3](#), 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

As shown on [Map 3](#), Magnor-Freeon-Capitola soil association underlies most of the County, this soil association 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 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. Septic systems, building sites, and roadways are generally limited due to wetness, ponding, slope and restricted permeability.

The 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.

The 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. 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.

Newwood-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 to 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.

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. As shown on [Map 3](#), 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 3](#)). 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 3](#), 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 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (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. 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](#)

As shown on [Map 8](#), 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 100,843 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 February 2020, there were 6,315 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 February 2020 there were 159,545 acres enrolled in the MFL program. About 41% 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 slopes exceeding 15% are considered steep slopes. These areas 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 3](#) shows the general location of soils in areas that exceed a 15% slope.

[Surface Waters](#)

As shown on [Map 3](#), 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 5](#) 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 and ospreys. The Eastern Timber Wolf was removed from the endangered species list in 2021 and is now considered a stable population. In part, Lincoln County helped with the revitalization of the wolf population by sponsoring two packs that still thrive today. The Averill Creek Pack is established in the Towns of Harding and Corning and the Ranger Island Pack is located 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 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 3](#) 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.

[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. As shown on [Map 7](#) and [Map 8](#), 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:

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.

[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 2012 and 2017 US Censuses of Agriculture the County increased from 76,727 acres in agriculture to 78,293 while the number of farm operations decreased from 447 to 426. The average farm size went from 172 acres per farm in 2012 to 184 acres in 2017.

Reflecting trends throughout the Nation, Lincoln County showed the number of farms where farming was the principle occupation of the operator has steadily declined and farmers have gotten slightly older. The 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 which fell 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. Continued 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 and existing livestock and dairy farms 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 which is organic 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.

[State of Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program](#)

In 2009, in response to the State's Working Lands Initiative, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted significant alterations to the State Farmland Preservation Program (Chapter 91 of Wisconsin Statutes). These include a wider array of choices for State-certified farmland preservation zoning districts, a new system of calculating State income tax credits for eligible landowners and adjustments to conservation requirements for land owners interested in obtaining tax credits. Another noteworthy component of the update to Chapter 91 is the inclusion of forest management as an agricultural use.

A farmland preservation plan, certified by the State, is an essential first step to enable farmers in designated "farmland preservation areas" to obtain farmland preservation credits on their State income taxes. Lincoln County adopted a Farmland Preservation Plan meeting the standards set forth in Chapter 91, Wisconsin Statutes.

To be eligible for an income tax credit at a rate of \$7.50 per acre, farmers owning lands in planned "farmland preservation areas"

must also be situated in a State-certified farmland preservation zoning district, meet minimum farm income requirements, and be issued a Certificate of Compliance by the Lincoln County Conservationist certifying they are in compliance with the NR 151 Agricultural Performance Standards and Prohibitions incorporated into ATCP 50.

Upon the expiration of remaining individual farmland preservation agreements issued prior to the update of Chapter 91 in 2009, farmers that are not located in a State-certified farmland preservation zoning district may only obtain tax credits (at a lower \$5 per acre rate) if they own land within a State-approved “Agricultural Enterprise Area.” Farmers that are in a farmland preservation zoning district and within an “Agricultural Enterprise Area” are eligible for tax credits at the highest rate (\$10 per acre). However, the “Agricultural Enterprise Area” rates are possible only if the farmer enters into a contract with the State restricting land from development for 15 years. At time of writing, there were no Agricultural Enterprise Areas in Lincoln County.

Provided that they meet all farmland preservation program eligibility requirements, landowners who are enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program are also able to obtain farmland preservation income tax credits. Further, forestland does not need to be enrolled in the MFL program for the owner to be eligible for farmland preservation income tax credits.

In addition to the State Farmland Preservation Program there are several other State public policies that encourage the preservation of the County’s productive lands. The State’s agricultural use-value assessment sets property taxes on farmland

at a very low level and agricultural producers also have access to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Managed Forest Program that provides reduced property taxes for preserving larger blocks of farm woodlots. Eligible farmers can participate in all three State programs simultaneously.

[Locations of Farmland and Farms](#)

As shown in [Map 8](#), 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 7](#) 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 approximately 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 7](#) 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 and Map 7](#) 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”.

Cultural Resources

Preservation of historic and cultural resources fosters a sense of pride, improves quality of life, and provides an 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 in 1889)
- 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 4](#) 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.

[Archaeological Resources](#)

According to the State Historical Society, there were 139 archaeological sites and cemeteries identified in Lincoln County as of January 2000. This includes only those sites that have been reported to the Society, and does not include all the sites that might be present in the County. Less than one percent of the County’s total land area has been surveyed for the presence of archaeological sites and cemeteries. The types of sites that

have been identified in the County include cemeteries (burial mounds and unmarked graves), cabins and homesteads, Native American community sites, and logging camps.

In general, most of the significant archeological sites in Lincoln County are located along the Wisconsin River drainage basin. [Map 4](#) shows the general location of

these sites. Few of the sites reported to the Society have been evaluated for their importance, or their eligibility for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places. Under Wisconsin law, Native American burial mounds, unmarked burials, and all marked and unmarked cemeteries are protected from encroachment by any type of development.

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 initial plan 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.

Economic Development

- 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.
- 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, evidence-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.

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.

Goals 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

Goal 1: Economic Development

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

- Planning and Zoning Department (Lead Agency)
- Land Information and Conservation Department (Lead Agency)
- Forestry Department (Lead Agency)
- UW-Extension (Lead Agency)
- Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association
- Timber Producers Association
- Wisconsin County Forest Association
- Farm Bureau
- 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 Towns Association, where appropriate

private recreational activities that respect the value of those resources to the community.

Agricultural, Natural, Cultural Resources Plan Outline

The following section describes the goals for the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources element in the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan. For each goal objectives, proposed actions, agencies and organization involved, lead group or agency, and a timeline were developed.

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. Timeline: Begin in 2010 or 2011 and become an ongoing activity.

Proposed Action:

- Identify government regulations and grant 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: Improve the coordination of agencies that are intended to either regulate and/or assist in the development of new and established businesses. Timeline: Ongoing effort

Proposed Action:

- 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: Improve the promotion of local rural businesses, cooperatives, etc.

Timeline: Ongoing Effort

Proposed Actions:

- 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. Timeline: Begin in 2014 when County Farmland Preservation Plan is updated.

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective E: Involve local, State and Federal elected officials in the County’s

activities to develop its rural economy.

Timeline: Ongoing

Proposed Actions:

- 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.
- 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.

Goal 2: Resource Management

Organizations and Agencies Involved:

- Forestry Department (Lead Organization)
- Land Information and Conservation Department (Lead Organization)
- Planning and Zoning Department (Lead Organization)
- UW-Extension (Lead Organization)
- 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

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. Timeline: Many of the proposed actions are ongoing. In 2011, 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.

Proposed Action:

- 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 of life and enjoy the environmental benefits. Timeline: The proposed actions will begin in 2011. Developing a list of best management practices will be ongoing and will occur in

the revisions of NR 115. The last proposed action is an ongoing process and will occur when revising Floodplain Zoning in 2011.

Proposed Actions:

- 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.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

- 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.

Objective D: More Decisions that impact our local resources will be made at the County level. Timeline: Unspecified for the

majority of the proposed actions. The second proposed action will be an ongoing process.

Proposed Action:

- 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.

Goal 3: Education, communication, and the Community

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

- UW-Extension (Lead Agency)
- Zoning Department (Lead Agency)
- Land Information and Conservation Department (Lead Agency)
- Forestry Department (Lead Agency)
- Solid Waste Department (Lead Agency)
- North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
- Merrill and Tomahawk Public Schools
- Technical College System
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

- Lincoln County Economic Development

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. Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- 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 educational institutions with news about rural issues.
- Create community forums sponsored by the Towns and County to discuss evolving agricultural, natural, and cultural resource issues impacting the community as well as 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. Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- 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 common

practices and legal codes associated with living and working in rural areas.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

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

1. Continue to adequately support the Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation so that it can meet the economic development needs expressed in the Plan Objectives.
2. Maintain the cost sharing arrangement with the University of Wisconsin-Madison in order to provide for the business management educational needs of farmers, foresters and rural businesses offered through Extension and other University resources.

Resource Management

Agriculture

1. Conserve productive farmland to ensure long term protection of the agricultural economy and rural character of Lincoln County.
2. 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.

Forestry

1. Promote the use of current “Best Management Practices” as standards in

forest management and recognize them in local regulations.

2. Preserve public forest land in the County to provide for multiple use benefits and the management of them to maintain a steady and reliable source of raw materials for the forest products industry.

3. Support the use of appropriate silviculture systems based upon the tree species present, tree quality, soil types, habitat types and future forest goals.

4. Promote efforts to identify and monitor invasive species. Minimize losses to resources through an integrated management plan.

5. Identify and protect geological, archeological, and historical sites as well as rare, threatened, and endangered plant, animal, and community resources in the County.

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:

1. Stormwater and erosion control performance measures will be implemented when certain soil disturbance activities are initiated so as to prevent degradation of surface waters.
2. Seek the restoration and preservation of riparian vegetative buffers to trap sediments and nutrients associated with storm water and snowmelt runoff.
3. Use mitigation strategies within shoreland zoning regulations and development standards to offset potential harms that may result from land development in riparian areas.
4. 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.

5. Promote efforts to monitor and manage aquatic invasive species.
6. Plan for development, with sustainable communities as an ultimate goal and to ensure demands upon surface and groundwater resources do not become overbearing.

[Education, Communication and the Community](#)

1. Allow and encourage County Departments to hold community forums to discuss issues that will impact the County's agricultural and natural resources.
2. Support investments in educating youth and urban populations about agricultural and forestry practices and income opportunities.
3. 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.

[US Department of Agriculture](#)

- Agriculture and Food Related Initiatives (AFRI). Supplies funding for research on agriculture and food related initiatives, geared primarily toward universities or extensions. Link: <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/agriculture-and-food-research-initiative-afri>
- USDA Rural Development Housing Programs. This Federal agency provides housing assistance in the form of low-interest loans to low-income homebuyers; and to very low-income owner occupants, to improve or repair homes, to remove health and safety

hazards, or to make homes accessible to disabled household members. Link: <https://www.usda.gov/topics/rural/housing-assistance>

- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land to owners of land in forest or agricultural production up to a maximum term of ten years in length. These contracts provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices,

that address natural resource concerns, and opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, and related resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland. Link: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/Regional>

Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Created by the 2014 Farm Bill, the RCPP is a partner driven, locally-led approach to conservation. It offers new opportunities for NRCS to harness innovation, welcome new partners to the conservation mission, and demonstrates the value and efficacy of voluntary, private lands conservation. Through RCPP, NRCS and state, local and regional partners coordinate resources to help producers install and maintain conservation activities in selected project areas. Partners leverage RCPP funding in project areas and report on the benefits achieved. Lincoln County is located with the Mississippi River Basin Critical Conservation Area.

- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). CSP is geared to agricultural producers already participating in conservation activities that are interested in doing more. Agricultural producers may apply to enter into five-year contracts providing: annual payments for installation of new conservation practices and maintenance of old practices; and supplemental payments for adopting crop rotation systems. Link: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp/>
- USDA Rural Development Program. This program provides loans, grants and loan guarantees to help create jobs and support economic development and essential services such as

housing; health care; first responder services and equipment; and water, electric and communications infrastructure. USDA provides loans to businesses through banks, credit unions and community-managed lending pools and offers technical assistance to help agricultural producers and cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their operations.

[Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Traded and Consumer Protection](#)

- Grow Wisconsin Dairy Grant is a flexible grant available to producers to retain farms, facilitate operational changes and improve profitability. This grant is customizable to meet the needs of individual farms and can be applied to hire consultants with a range of expertise to address specific business needs. Grant funds are grouped into two categories that focus on changes or efforts related to:
 - Planning and preparation for business management, development and growth
 - Improving profitability through on-farm production and aspects related to the day-to-day farm operation.
 For more information: https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Growing_WI/ProducersDairyDevelopment.aspx
- Something Special from Wisconsin. This program is a trademark marketing program administered by the DATCP. Any business, no matter how large or how small, may participate in the program. Something Special from Wisconsin logos can be applied to a sellable product or service if at least 50 percent of the value is attributable to Wisconsin ingredients, production or processing activities. Link:

<https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/BuyLocalBuyWisconsinGrants.aspx>

- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP is a subprogram of CRP and is administered by both USDA and the state of Wisconsin, participating landowners voluntarily establish conservation practices on environmentally sensitive agricultural land. These conservation practices are intended to decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water, while leaving the majority of the land in agricultural production. USDA pays enrollees annual land rental payments for 15 years, as well as cost-sharing for 50% of the cost of installing conservation practices. Link: https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/CREP.aspx
- Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative, as detailed previously in the Agricultural Resources section. Link: https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/FarmlandPreservation.aspx

[Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources](#)

- Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) grant program. This program offers competitive grants for local governments for the control of pollution that comes from diffuse sources, also called “nonpoint source” pollution. Grants from the TRM Program reimburse costs for agricultural or urban runoff management practices in targeted, critical geographic areas with surface water or groundwater quality concerns. Link: <https://dnr.wi.gov/AID/TargetedRunoff.html>
- The Surface Water Grant Program offers a variety of competitive, cost-sharing grants for surface water protection and restoration. Grants are

available to support surface water management from start to finish. Including: education, ecological assessments, planning, implementation, and aquatic invasive species. Link: <https://dnr.wi.gov/aid/surfacewater.html>

Managed Forest Law Program, as detailed previously in the Forest and Woodlands section.

[Wisconsin Department Safety and Professional Services](#)

- The Wisconsin Fund (when active at state level) provides grants to homeowners and small commercial businesses to help offset a portion of the cost for the repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of existing failing Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems. Eligibility is based upon several criteria, including household income and age of the structure. Link: <https://dsps.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/WisconsinFund/Default.aspx>

[Other Resources](#)

- Organic Growers Support. Provides resources and support to help farmers grow organic successfully. Source: Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service. Link: <http://www.mosesorganic.org/>
- Farm to School Resources. Promotes the direct connection between farms and school lunch programs. Source: Collaboration of different groups. Link: <http://www.farmtoschool.org>
- Lumberjack Resource Conservation and Development Council provides grants for a variety of community and conservation projects. Link: <https://www.lumberjackrccd.org/lumberjack-sponsored-projects-1.html>
- “Food Systems” Development Support. Various programs, research support,

and technical support for projects that help development local food systems. A food system includes all processes and infrastructure involved in feeding a population: growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consumption, and disposal of food and food-related items. Source: UW- Wisconsin Center for Integrated Agricultural Studies (CIAS). Link: <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/category/farm-to-fork/>

- Agricultural Tourism Assistance. Provides resources and support for rural and agricultural based tourism initiative. Source: Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association. Link: <http://www.visitdairyland.com/>
- Agriculture Loan Guarantee. Provides low interest, long term loans to develop or expand production of products using a Wisconsin raw agricultural commodity. Funding can be used for a wide variety of items including equipment, buildings, land, capital, inventory, and refinancing. Source: Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA). Link: <https://www.wheda.com/Business-Lending/Financing-Products/>
- North Central Conservancy Trust is a non-profit organization that works with interested landowners to develop easements that protect and preserve the conservation values of their properties. Link: <https://www.ncctwi.org>

Chapter Four

Housing

Lincoln and Surrounding Counties' Total Housing Units

Table 3-1 below shows that Lincoln County housing unit growth from 2010 to 2017 was similar to surrounding counties with the exception of Price County. Lincoln County's

housing unit growth was also similar to the State's growth during this time. It is estimated that just over 12,500 of the County's housing units were occupied in 2017.

County	2010	2017	Net Change	Percent Change
Lincoln	16,784	17,038	254	1.5%
Langlade	12,360	12,473	113	0.9%
Marathon	57,734	58,817	1,083	1.9%
Oneida	30,125	30,723	598	2.0%
Price	11,120	10,952	-168	-1.5%
Taylor	10,582	10,671	89	0.8%
Wisconsin	2,624,358	2,668,692	44,334	1.7%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

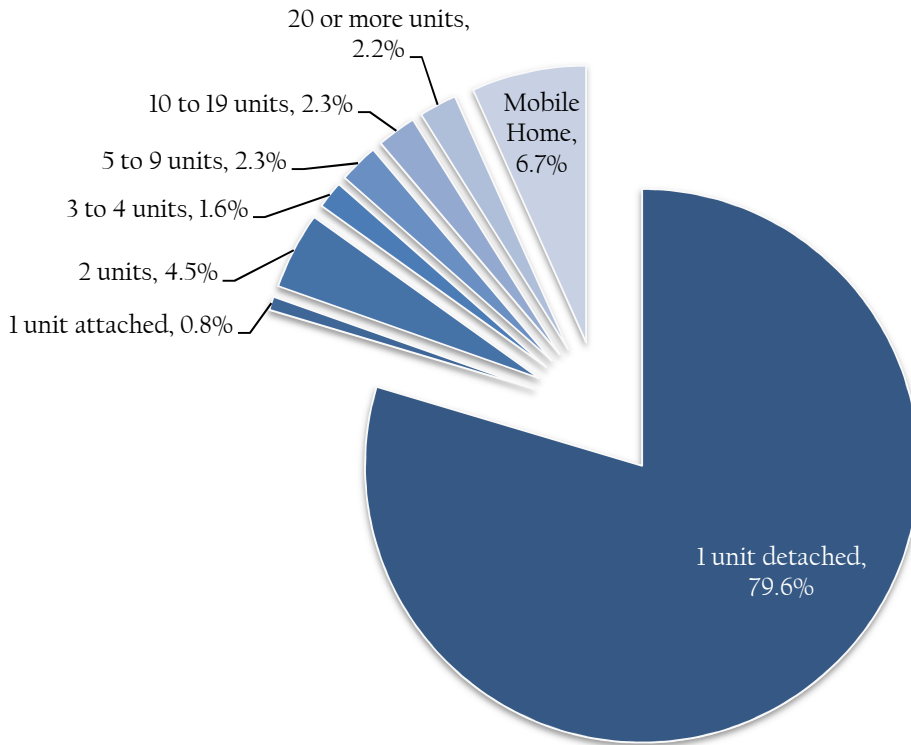
Lincoln County Housing Types

The makeup of Lincoln County housing as depicted in Figure 3-1 has changed little over the past couple decades. As was the case with the 1990 census data contained in the 2001 Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan, the vast majority of Lincoln County housing units in 2017 were still classified under “one unit, detached” meaning that most (79.6%) were single family homes. By comparison, 66.6% of Wisconsin’s housing in 2017 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.

Nearly 7% of Lincoln County housing units in 2017 were mobile homes, slightly lower than in 2010 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Slightly under 4% of all dwellings in the State were classified in 2017 as “mobile

home.” It is also worth noting that about 77.5% of all housing units in the County in that same year were considered “owner occupied.” The remaining were rental units. In 2017, the latest known data from the Census Bureau, about 20% of the total housing stock was classified “seasonal, recreational or occasional use dwellings.” Most of these units in both 2010 and 2017 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 slightly between 2010 and 2017. A major reason for the decrease in percentage during the decade may have been changes in residency status. In 2017, the towns having the highest percentages of “seasonal, recreational or occasional use dwellings” out of the total number of units were Wilson (65%), Tomahawk (54%) and Somo (54%).

Figure 3-1: Lincoln County Housing Types, 2017



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

Figure 3-2 shows that nearly 72% of the County's housing stock in 2017 was 30 or more years old, a slightly higher percentage than the State as a whole. Nearly 27% of the County's housing was built before 1950. In comparison, over 25% of housing units in Wisconsin were built before 1950.

Of the estimated 12,560 occupied housing units in the County in 2017, 49% were heated primarily by utility gas, 25% by bottled, tank or LP gas, and 12% by wood. Since 2010, the number of homes using utility gas or wood heating has slightly decreased.

Value of Owner Occupied Units

Most occupied housing units in the County, as is shown in Figure 3-3, range in value from \$50,000 to \$149,000.

Figure 3-2: Age of Lincoln County Housing Stock

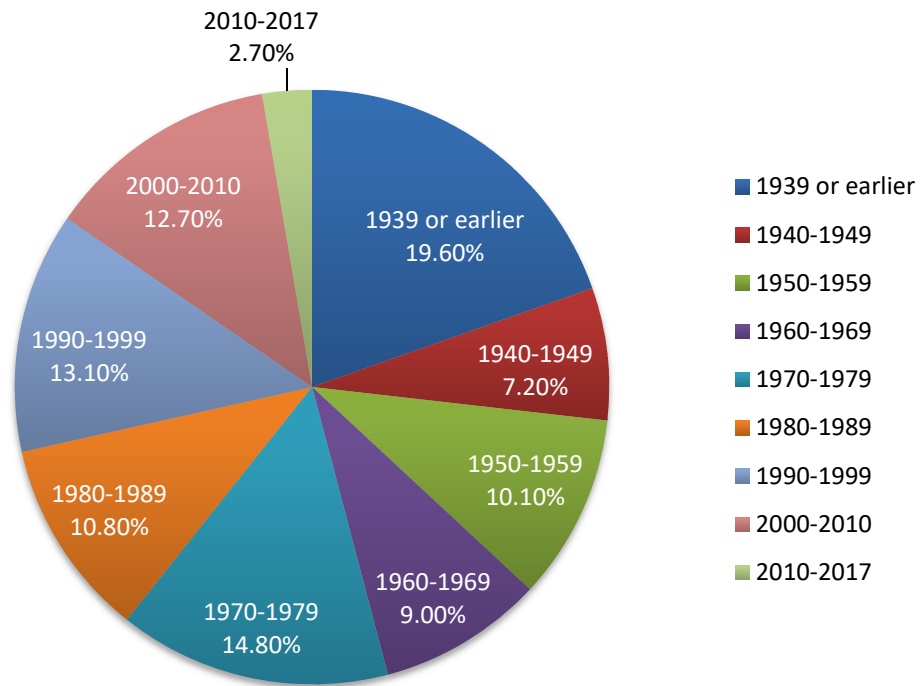
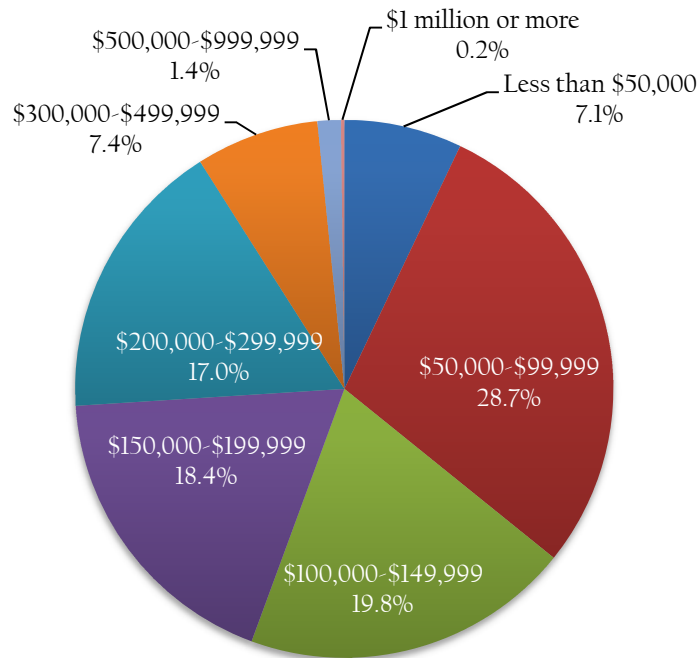


Figure 3-3: Lincoln County Home Values

(Owner Occupied Units)



Home Ownership Rates

Table 3-2 below shows the home ownership rates of central Wisconsin counties and the State. As the table shows, home ownership

rates increased in Lincoln County by 0.6% between 2010 to 2017. Langlade County also experienced a similar increase in home ownership during the same period. The State ownership rate has decreased since 2010.

County	2010	2017	Percent Change
Lincoln	77.0%	77.5%	0.6%
Langlade	76.4%	76.7%	0.4%
Marathon	73.5%	72.8%	-1.0%
Oneida	78.4%	83.7%	6.8%
Wisconsin	68.1%	67.0%	-1.6%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2013-2017

Lincoln County Projected Households

Households are the number of occupied units countywide. The information contained in Table 3-3 was developed from Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center data, shows

that growth of Lincoln County occupied housing units from 2010 to 2040 is projected to be less on a percentage basis than the State and in Marathon and Taylor Counties. Price, Langlade, and Oneida Counties are all projected to experience slower rates of household growth than Lincoln County during this time.

County	2010	Projected 2020	Projected 2025	Projected 2030	Projected 2035	Projected 2040	Net Change	Percent Change
Lincoln	12,094	12,922	13,557	14,046	14,126	13,693	1,599	13.2%
Langlade	8,587	8,913	9,177	9,337	9,337	9,126	539	6.3%
Marathon	53,176	57,394	59,611	61,524	62,958	63,730	10,554	19.8%
Oneida	16,003	16,986	17,796	18,344	18,346	17,892	1,889	11.8%
Price	6,329	6,314	6,350	6,294	6,108	5,675	-654	-10.3%
Taylor	8,388	8,884	9,114	9,309	9,477	9,546	1,158	13.8%
Wisconsin	2,279,768	2,491,982	2,600,538	2,697,884	2,764,498	2,790,322	510,554	22.4%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

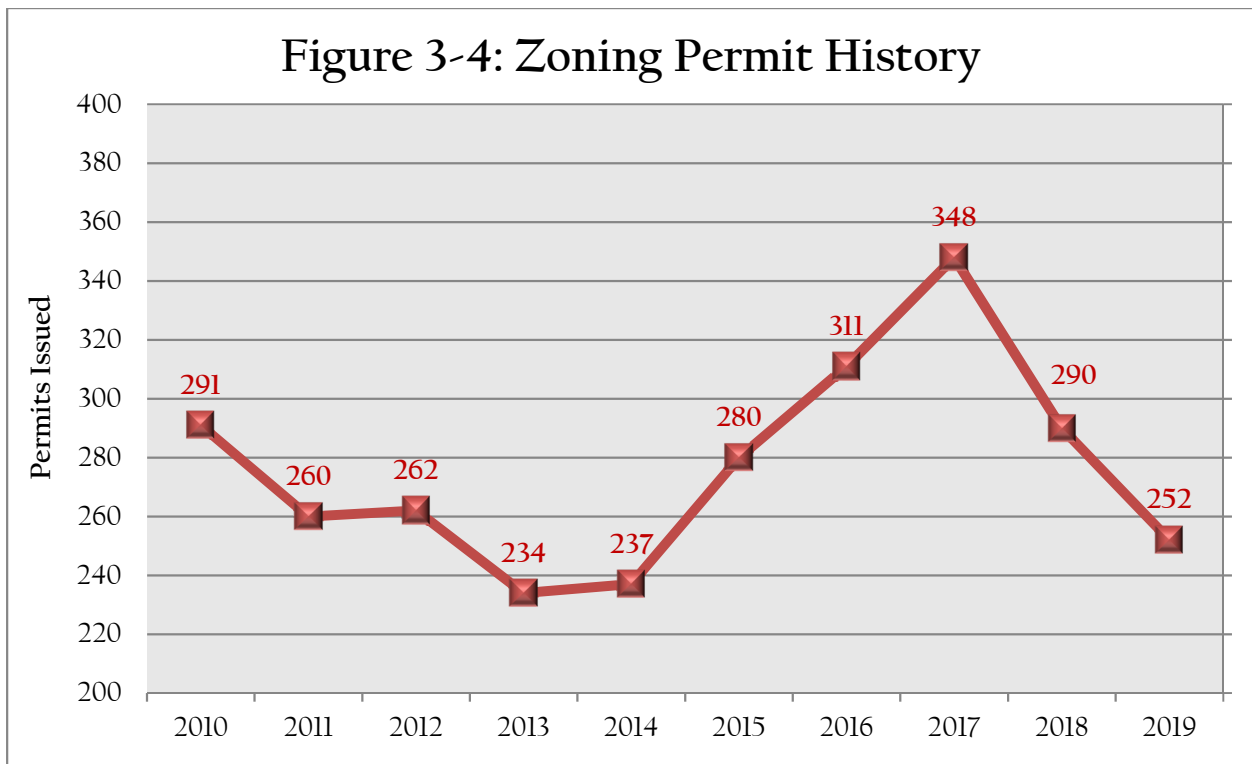
Zoning Permit History

According to the Lincoln County Zoning Department between 2010 and 2019 land use permits by Town ranged greatly based upon zoned and unzoned status. Permit activity

may indicate significant but concentrated growth in just a few rural portions of the County. Permits authorizing structural changes to homes, garages, additions or other types of add-ons, were the most common.

As [Figure 3-4](#) shows the total number of land use permits issued by the county zoning department from 2010 through 2019

declined, though permits issued did fluctuate throughout this time.



In late 2004, the County adopted a new zoning code that was identified as an implementation measure within the 2001 Comprehensive Plan. Although five townships opted out of adopting the code the remainder of unincorporated Lincoln County chose to partner with the County. The code has been an effective tool in helping to ensure that most development, whether residential, commercial, or industrial, take

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:

place in close proximity to where development has already occurred or where Towns have expressed the desire to develop.

[Sanitary Permit History](#)

Sanitary permits also provide an insight on Lincoln County development trends. Between 2008 and 2017, a total of 540 permits were issued for new septic systems, averaging 54 new septic permits per year.

- 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 Realty/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

Housing Plan Outline

The following section describes the goals for the housing element of the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan. For each goal objectives, proposed actions, agencies and organization involved, lead group or agency, and a timeline were developed.

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.

Agencies and organizations Involved:

- Lincoln County Zoning Department (Lead Agency)
- University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County (Lead Agency)
- Possibly both area chambers of commerce (Lead Agency)
- 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.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- 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.
- 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. 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: Create regular networking opportunities for local organization and agency representatives dealing with housing issues.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

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: Explore and take advantage of collaborative funding opportunities with agencies such as United Way, WHEDA, local CDBG housing dollars administrators, etc.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

Agency use of the networking 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 County Board approval).

Goal 2: Improve older homes to increase affordable housing and especially so 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.

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

- Lincoln County Zoning Department (Lead Agency)
- University of Wisconsin-Extension (Lead Agency)
- City of Merrill Housing Authority (Lead Agency)
- Merrill Area Development Corporation
- Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation
- Tomahawk Area Development
- Lincoln County Social Services
- North Central Community Action Program (CAP)
- Bankers
- Lincoln County Housing Authority (entity administering two senior housing complexes in 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.)

Objective A: Determine which older homes in the county (20+ years) are in need of repair and/or renovation

Timeline: Ongoing.

Proposed Action:

- 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 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)

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

- 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.)

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

- 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.
- 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)

- 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).

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

- None

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.)

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

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 persuade/recruit developers to take on projects).

- 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.

Timeline: 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, in 2015.

Proposed Actions:

- 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 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.

- 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).

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- 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.

Policies

1. Create centralized mechanisms to deal with housing issues on a County wide basis.
2. Look for and take advantage of opportunities to collaborate or partner with existing housing related agencies to further community plan housing goals.

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

3. 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.

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.

4. 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).

5. Promote rural character by “hiding” development from main roads through natural topography, vegetation, and setbacks.

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

7. 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 Energy, Housing and Community Resources, provides grants 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 lent 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) Single Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants:

These home improvement loans and grants are for individuals/households making less than 50% of the County median income (\$35,850 for a household of 1-4 people in 2020). Eligible individuals/families must also be living in rural communities of less than

35,000 residents. Those eligible for grants must be at least 62 years old. If projections come to fruition, approximately 31% of the County's total population will be between the ages of 60 and 89 by the year 2040.

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 low to 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. This program provides payment assistance to increase an applicant's repayment ability. Eligible families must have an adjusted income that is or below the low income level. In 2020, the low income level for a family of four was \$57,350. 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 \$15,000 are made to current homeowners who have made mortgage payments consistently on time for at least at least six months. Money is lent for home repair, remodeling projects, and additions, energy updates (permanent in nature), and for the purchase and installation of Energy Star rated appliances.

Wisconsin Department of Administration HOME Rental Housing Development (RHD).

The RHD program is a State administered program that distributes federal funds throughout the State. The RHD program targets activities to expand the rental housing market available to low and moderate income individuals. Grants are available for acquisition rehabilitation and new construction of rental housing units. The program has a first come, first serve, set aside for rural housing projects. Applications are generally due in early June.

Section 8 Program.

This Federal program provides rent assistance to eligible low-income families based on family size, income, and fair market rents. Typically, the tenant's share of the rent payment does not exceed 30% of annual income.

Wisconsin's Weatherization Assistance Program.

This program provides funding for energy saving improvements to homes primarily occupied by the elderly, handicapped and children under age 6. Energy audits are completed to determine what weatherization services are needed, the identified improvements are then made by agency crews and subcontractors. The Wisconsin's Weatherization Assistance Program is administered by Home Energy + in Madison.

Habitat for Humanity.

Habitat for Humanity offers homeownership opportunities to people of moderate or low incomes. Habitat asks able-bodied purchasers to help build their new home and in return participants receive low interest loans.

Movin' Out.

Movin' Out is a regional Community Housing Development Organization dedicated to assisting lower income individuals with disabilities find safe, affordable housing.

U.S. Veterans Administration Programs.

The VA provides low-cost loans and other housing assistance to veterans.

Chapter Five

Utilities and Community Facilities

The utilities and community services provided by Lincoln County, the 16 towns and 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 adopted in 2017. Two City plans that were still in effect in 2017 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, 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 24 years, there is still much to do to achieve the goals mentioned in it. The plan is updated to reflect potential, new development. Updates include matters such as whether the area will require additional infrastructure to support the proposed development.

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 1.10 million gallons per day. The treatment plant was last upgraded in 1992. Effluent is discharged into the Wisconsin River. The

City is too small for the State to mandate adoption of a sewer service area.

The primary goal identified in the City's 2017 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.
- Provide public access to government information, and enable citizen participation through online discussions.

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, Lincoln County contracts with the City to provide EMS/ambulance to the southern portion of the County.)
- 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? (a state of the art 21,750 square foot fire station has been constructed since preparation of the Strategic Plan)
- How do we increase staffing levels and create departmental efficiencies using methods like a paid on call (POC) model/combo 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.

The City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan (effective to the end of 2022) recommends continued support of the River District Development Foundation of Merrill to expand the River Bend Trail, connecting parks with trails, grow the Merrill Park Endowment Fund, continue ADA improvements, and review snowmobile trail location. This plan also recommends several city park system capital improvement projects and development of a skatepark.

[City of Tomahawk](#)

Recent plans that outline “Utilities and Community Facilities” goals for the City of Tomahawk are the City’s 2017 Comprehensive Plan, Wellhead Protection Plan, 1998, Sewer and Water Study, 2000, and City of Tomahawk Outdoor Recreation Plan (2020).

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

Town Facilities and Services

The location of each Town Hall in Lincoln County and many other community facilities is shown in [Map 4](#). 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

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-Madison, 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

900,000 million gallons per day. The City has one 400,000-gallon storage tank. Due to the close proximity of the two municipal wells, the City is currently searching for an additional well site.

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.

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, and the Aging and Disability Resource Center..

Pine Crest Nursing home located adjacent to the Health and Human Services building. In 2019, Lincoln County entered into an agreement with the North Central Healthcare for the management of the facility. At its maximum capacity, the facility serves 180 residents.

Fairgrounds

In 2015, ownership of the Fairgrounds was transferred to the City of Merrill and renamed from "Lincoln County Fairgrounds" to "Merrill Festival Grounds".

The Merrill Festival Grounds are located on a 26-acre parcel of land located on the east

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 August.

[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 18

patrol deputies, 24 correctional officers, a recreation officer, four sergeant investigators, ten 911/ dispatch personnel and associated lieutenants. Sheriff's Office equipment includes eight 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, an emergency response snowmobile, an ATV, a mobile command trailer with associated truck, and a BearCat rescue vehicle..

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 2018 of 71,169 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. According to Wisconsin Department of Instruction figures, the T.B. Scott Library had a total circulation in 2018 of 164,610 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, urgent care, heart care, surgery, gastrointestinal services, rehab services, outpatient care, oncology services, extended care, and hospice. It is a Level IV trauma center providing stabilization to transport to advanced critical care. Since 2005, the hospital has been affiliated with Ministry Health Care. Residents in the northeast part of the County generally 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 5](#) depicts 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 2019, timber sales from County forest land amounted to nearly \$2.5 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 trails (over 300 miles of snowmobile trails and over 200 miles of winter ATV trails (no UTVs allowed) maintained by snowmobile clubs, over 47 miles of summer ATV/UTV trails, 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; New Wood Camp 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 Kahlle and Thiesen Parks in the Town of Bradley.

[City Facilities](#)

The City of Merrill maintains 11 parks and open space facilities within its jurisdiction. The largest facility is the Merrill Memorial Forest 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 Fishery Area located along the Prairie River in the Towns of Russell and Harrison, the Bill Cross Rapids Wildlife Area (1,500 acres), the New Wood Wildlife Area (4,600-acre) in the west/central portion of the County, Menard Island Resource Area (1,700 acres) and the Lily Lake State Natural Area 80-acre 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 trails, cross-country ski trails, and shelter buildings. [Map 5](#) 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 5](#) 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.

[Private Facilities](#)

Several areas owned by private individuals are open to the public for recreational uses.

The Wisconsin Public Service Corporation owns large parcels throughout the County, most notably the Grandfather Falls Recreation Area near the dam site. This area has parking, boat and canoe access, and nature trails.

The Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company operates recreational facilities along both the Rice and Spirit Reservoirs in Lincoln County. It operates three access sites with parking, restrooms, picnic areas, and handicapped access on both reservoirs.

Many private corporations or citizens hold forested land enrolled in the State's Forest Crop Law or Managed Forest Program. Large companies hold extensive tracts throughout the County. This land is used primarily for logging, however, lands in the Forest Crop and Open Managed Forest programs are required to be open to the public for hunting, fishing, skiing, and wildlife observation.

[Utilities and Community Facilities Plan Outline](#)

The following section describes the goals for the utilities and community facilities chapter. Objectives, policies, and recommendations were developed to support this goal. For the policies and recommendations, see the 2001 Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan Volume Two.

[Goal: Lincoln County supports the effective delivery of community utilities, facilities and services corresponding to the expectations of residents—both in terms of service levels and costs. Community utilities, facilities, and services should focus on preserving quality of life and satisfying core needs for public safety, health, education, social services, and recreation. They should also support other County goals for land use, growth management, and natural resources.](#)

[Objectives:](#)

A. Coordinate community facilities and utility systems planning with land use,

transportation, and natural resource planning.

B. Direct more intensive development to areas where a full array of utilities, community facilities, and public services are available.

C. Provide the appropriate level of high quality community services and administrative facilities and practices, while maintaining a low tax levy.

D. Protect public and environmental health through proper waste disposal.

E. Provide quality and accessible parks and recreational facilities and services for all residents, including persons with disabilities and the elderly.

F. Protect the lives, property, and rights of all residents through law enforcement and fire services.

G. Support high quality educational opportunities for all residents.

Chapter Six

Transportation

Rural transportation development, including the maintenance of existing infrastructure and the consideration and eventual development of new modes to 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

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

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.

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 the extension of U.S. 39/51; 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 [Map 6](#) indicates were County K, Routes 8, 64, 17 and 86 in that order. [Map 6](#) shows Lincoln County traffic counts in 2020.

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 Transportation Goal #1.



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. The Wisconsin DOT indicates that, as of 2018, the department was maintaining 271 miles of County centerline road and 156 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 as shown in the image.

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 are 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

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:

- US 51, removal and replacement of asphalt pavement from the Marathon County line to CTH K, project also includes overpass roadways between CTH Q and CTH K (2020-2023)
- US 8 repaving and culvert replacement (2020-2024)

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 71 miles of local roads.

In the City of Tomahawk, which maintains about 40 miles of local roads, the 2017 Comprehensive Plan identifies the need for establishing a second road into the Sacred Heart Hospital from the west and installation of traffic signals at the intersections of Sumo Avenue and North 4th Street as well as Mohawk Drive and North 4th Street.

Lincoln County ATV and Snowmobile Trails

As shown on [Map 5](#), over the past several years, ATV and snowmobile usage has increased throughout the County. Near the beginning of this County Plan implementation cycle, the Cities of Tomahawk and Merrill approved an ordinance to open city roads to ATV/UTV traffic. The primary purposes for doing so were to increase ATV/UTV rider access to local businesses and to make travel from one rural trail to another shorter.

Snowmobile clubs maintain over 300 miles of snowmobile trails and over 200 miles of winter ATV trails as part of the statewide recreational trail program. Winter ATV trails are run in conjunction with the snowmobile trails. UTVs are not allowed on winter ATV trails in Lincoln County. Clubs are eligible to receive reimbursement for trail maintenance through the state trails programs administered by the County. Snowmobile clubs also maintain “club trails” that are not eligible for the state trails

program. 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. As of 2020, Lincoln County maintains just over 47 miles of summer ATV/UTV trails as part of the state trails program. Most of these trail miles are on Lincoln County Forest with a few short connectors through private land. These trails connect with the Oneida and Langlade County trail systems. 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.

In 2010, the County Board also designated 31 county highway miles as ATV routes. 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.

Since the 2010s, discussion and planning around the issue of connecting/lengthening existing pedestrian and bike trails and new development has occurred. 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 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.

In the City of Merrill, the Riverbend District Development Foundation has been active since 2011 in increasing trail access in the City of Merrill. Their primary goal of construction of a trail along the Wisconsin River in the City of Merrill has mainly been achieved and the Foundation has broadened their scope by examining regional trail connections.

In 2017, the City of Tomahawk completed an update to the City's Comprehensive Plan which recommended the following trail improvements which are also reflected within the State Trail Networks Plan:

- Segment 69: Tomahawk to Crandon: This abandoned rail corridor would link these two communities via an off-road connector. This corridor intersects the Langlade County to Michigan corridor at Pelican Lake and links the Argonne to Shawano corridor in the east with the Tomahawk to Wausau corridor in the west. This short linking corridor provides opportunity to access the very popular Hiawatha- Bearskin Trail from other corridors to the east.

The corridor runs primarily through heavily forested lands in Lincoln and Langlade Counties.

- Segment 18: Tomahawk to Wausau (Northern Region): From the end of the Bearskin/Hiawatha Trail in Tomahawk, this corridor would extend south to Merrill, and then into the West Central Region terminating in Wisconsin Dells. Part of State Highway 107 has wide shoulders to accommodate bicycles and was identified in the Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020. When the remaining section of highway is reconstructed, wide shoulders will be included.

The City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan also identified a need for construction of a walking path from SARA Park to the Tomahawk Library.

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Plan (2018) identifies multiple bicycle corridors between the Cities of Tomahawk and Merrill, with STH 107 being rated the best for bicycling. The Plan also identifies a bicycle corridor between Merrill and the Underdown Recreation Area in Gleason.

In 2015, the City of Merrill adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The Plan provides a summary of current infrastructure available for non-motorized transportation and outlines improvements that promote pedestrian and bicycle movement throughout the City.

The City of Merrill Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan recommends several educational programs to normalize walking or biking and minor infrastructure improvements that

could reduce barriers to non-motorized transportation. The Plan also lists several specific areas where improvements are needed including, the Third Street Bridge over Prairie Drive, the intersection of Center Avenue and Main Street, and the intersection of First Street and Scott Street. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan also outlines the need for designated and signed bike routes throughout the City.

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 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.

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

Airports

The Merrill Municipal Airport and the Tomahawk Regional Airport serve Lincoln County businesses and residents. The Wisconsin State Airport System Plan classifies both facilities as medium general aviation airports serving a local market.

The Merrill Municipal Airport serves businesses and recreational flyers, while the Tomahawk Regional Airport has a more diverse group of users including flight training, search and rescue, and medical flights.

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, 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.

Also part of this plan should be the increased availability and use of senior transport vans 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.

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 and a new terminal was completed in 2015. The Tomahawk Airport also received federal dollars to help expand its runway system in the effort to attract more business related clients.

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). 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.

Truck Transportation

Although Lincoln County lost nearly 20% (about 200) 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 the City of Merrill established themselves in close proximity to the route as a way to help 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. CTH K has capacity for additional traffic. In many places CTH C does not, meaning that much more could and should be done to improve that road despite budget constraints. 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.

Lincoln County Transportation Plan: Goals and Objectives

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
- 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.

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, 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 growth 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 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 during the initial County Comprehensive Plan process, it is clear that stakeholders 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.

If transportation priorities are done correctly, they should maintain a 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.

Transportation Plan Outline

The following section describes the goals for the transportation element in the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan. For each goal objectives, proposed actions, agencies and organization involved, lead group or agency, and a timeline were developed.

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.

Agencies and Organization Involved:

- Depends on the project, but in most cases it will have to be the County Highway Department (Lead Agency)
- Federal Highways
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Natural Resources
- Army Corps of Engineers (depending on project)
- Lincoln County
- Private developers
- Towns in the County

- Cities in the County
- County Forestry Department (help locating funding sources)

In most cases, the WisDOT and the County partner to take the lead on bridge projects. Federal highway department creates bridge repair and development priority list.

Objective A: Explore and take advantage of feasible revenue programs and grants that will improve different modes of transportation and our ability to link them
 Timeline: Ongoing over the course of the 10 year plan period. Proposed Actions:

- Monitor and apply for State and Federal transportation grants
- 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.

Timeline: Timing of bridge and road construction depends on priority order and available funding

Proposed Action:

- Will be determined by the Lincoln County Highway Department with appropriate partners and in consideration of specific project requirements

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.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

- 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.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

- 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 economic activity.

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

- Forestry Department (Lead Agency)
- Highway Department (Lead Agency)
- 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' 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.

Objective A: Explore and take advantage of revenue programs and grants that will improve different modes of transportation and our ability to link them.

Timeline: Ongoing process.

Proposed Actions:

- 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.
- A database of grant opportunities is maintained by lead agencies. Lead agencies stay in constant communication with volunteer groups and clubs to both convey and collect information about grant making institutions.
- A committee of stakeholders is established to identify which grant opportunities should be pursued and who should prepare the grant.
- When feasible, ongoing exploration and implementation of user fees to help support linkage efforts.

Objective B: Plan and promote multiple modes of transportation as part of road repair and construction.

Timeline: On going.

Proposed Actions:

- Create an inventory of what trails to connect and where (County Zoning with Forestry and Cities of Merrill and 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). This could be included as part of the scenic auto and bicycle route through the County.
- 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).
- Work with the local Ice Age Trail Chapter to complete the Trail within Lincoln County.

Objective C: 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)

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- Coordinate efforts with City of Merrill proposed riverfront and Highway 51 development projects.
- Coordinate efforts with Tomahawk Parks and Recreation Plan.
- 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.)

Goal 3: County departments will coordinate the development of a plan that effectively promotes Lincoln County trail systems.

Agencies and organizations Involved:

- County Forestry Department along with Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation. Work in conjunction with Tomahawk and Merrill chambers of commerce. (Lead Agency)
- 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
- University of Wisconsin – Extension
- State of Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Public Service (owners of river shoreline)
- Groups enforcing American Disabilities Act

Objective A: Explore and take advantage of when feasible revenue programs and grants that will improve different modes of transportation and the County’s ability to link them.

Timeline: Ongoing

Proposed Action:

- 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: Develop inventory of existing trail systems to determine what is most important and feasible to market.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- 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.
- Coordinate efforts with Tomahawk Parks and Recreation Plan.

Objective C: Organize and begin discussing with stakeholders how to market tourism on a countywide level.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- Gather and summarize relevant information that is already available. Communicate the summary during the first stakeholder meetings.
- Identify the County's 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 the 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 opportunities. (Perhaps an Ice Age Trail walk.)

Objective D: Establish a Lincoln County welcome or visitors' center near a County entrance

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

Develop and implement a plan to establish a Lincoln County Visitor's Center. As part of the plan, identify a location (existing building, land, etc.), how this center will be

different from what the Chambers of Commerce already offer, building design, and what marketing materials should be placed in the center. (Staffing)

Goal 4: *Infrastructural development of the Merrill, Tomahawk, and local private airports will be strengthened to foster more long-term economic growth.*

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

- Economic Development Corporations (Lead Agency)
- County Zoning (Lead Agency)
- Land Use Department (Lead Agency)
- Forest Department (Lead Agency)
- 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)

Objective A: 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

Timeline: To be completed within the first two years of the 10 year community plan period.

Proposed Action:

- 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: Explore and take advantage of when feasible revenue programs and grants that will improve different modes of transportation and our ability to link them.

Timeline: To be completed within the first three years of the 10 year community plan period.

Proposed Action:

- Monitor specific funding opportunities (Federal, State, etc.)

that will facilitate airport expansion to attract more use by business.

Objective C: Determine what land use and zoning changes are needed to help accommodate airport growth

Timeline: To be completed within the first year of plan adoption.

Proposed Action:

- Investigate the positives and negatives of potential zoning changes.
- Continually revise existing airport plans and change expansion strategies to better accommodate business needs

Objective D: Study the feasibility of lengthening runways to accommodate passenger service.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

- Reports will include potential costs, estimated levels of use, impacts on surrounding land, and zoning issues.

Policies

A. 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.

B. 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.

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

D. 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.

E. Encourage the further development of transportation choices that serve the aging

population, especially 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 elderly, disabled, and children.

F. Carefully plan new development to minimize new 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.

G. 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 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 Plan. Stakeholders are encouraged to supplement what is here with their own research.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation – Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) allocates Federal funds to transportation improvement projects that “expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment.” TAP is a legislative program authorized in 2012 by Federal transportation legislation, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21).

TAP combines three programs that were separate under previous legislation (SAFETEA-LU): Safe Routes to School, Transportation Enhancements, and the

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program. The categories of eligible TAP projects are:

- Trail facilities for non-motorized transport
- Constructing safe routes for non-drivers
- Converting abandoned railroad corridors for non-motorized transportation
- Constructing turnouts, overlooks and viewing areas
- Community improvement activities
- Any environmental mitigation activity
- The Recreational Trails Program
- The Safe Routes to Schools program
- Projects in the right of way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways

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. For more information go to <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/aid/tea.aspx>.

**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 <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/highway/stp-rural.aspx>

**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 <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/highway/hsip.aspx>.

**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 <https://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/atvTrails.html>.

**Wisconsin Department of Natural
Resources – Snowmobile Trail Aids:**

Eligible projects include major bridge construction/reconstruction, rehabilitation of funded trails, and acquisition of land. Counties are eligible to apply. More information can be found at <https://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/MotorStew.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, construction of new trails, and acquisition of easements and land. Support for rehabilitation of existing trails is top priority. For more information go to <https://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/RTP.html>.

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/>.

Chapter Seven

Economic Development

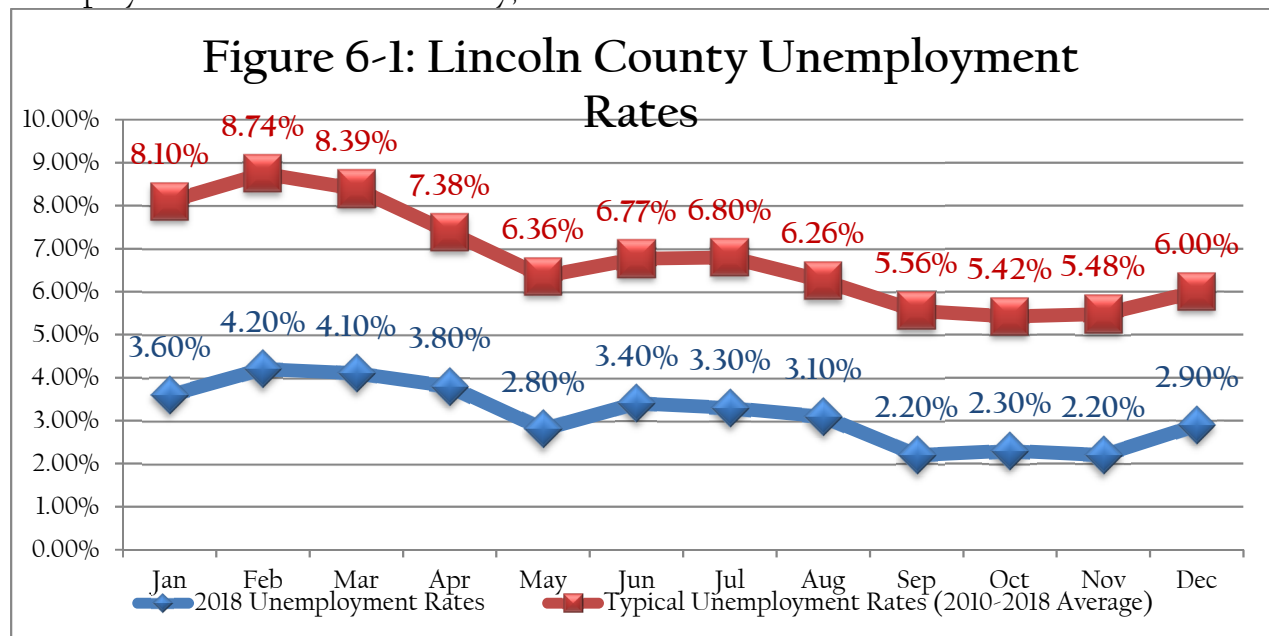
General Economic Conditions of Lincoln County (existing conditions)

Economic Base

Since 2010, unemployment rates within Lincoln County have been decreasing as evidenced in [Figure 6-1](#). In 2018, the unemployment rate in Lincoln County was 3.2%, down from 11.3% in 2010, and lower than the average unemployment rate of 6.8% between 2010 and 2018. February has typically been the month with the highest unemployment rate in Lincoln County, with

an average unemployment rate of 8.7% between 2010 and 2018. October has typically been the month with the lowest unemployment rate in Lincoln County, with an average unemployment rate of 5.4% between 2010 and 2018.

The graph below shows a comparison of unemployment, January through December, in 2018 with typical unemployment rates for the same months from 2010-2018.



[Table 6-1](#) shows employment change and industry sector growth in Lincoln County from 2010 to 2018. During the period, there was an 8.6% increase in the total number employed. Between 2017 and 2018, the number employed increased 0.4%, with the largest increases coming in the Natural Resources and Education & Health sectors. Between 2010 and 2018, the Natural Resources sector experienced the most

robust growth, with a 39.3% increase during this time. The Professional & Business Services sector and the Construction sector also experienced robust growth during this time, with each sector increasing by over 36% during this time. Only two sectors, Information and Other Services, experienced decreases in total employment during this time.

Table 6-1: Employment by Industry Sector

Industry Sector	Average Employment (2010-2018)	2010	2017	2018	% Change 2010-18	% Change 2017-18
All Industries	10,604	10,214	11,045	11,090	8.6%	0.4%
Natural Resources	184	150	191	209	39.3%	9.4%
Construction	419	361	516	494	36.8%	-4.3%
Manufacturing	2,546	2,497	2,632	2,638	5.6%	0.2%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	2,113	2,048	2,176	2,137	4.3%	-1.8%
Information	93	99	85	82	-17.2%	-3.5%
Financial Activities	1,010	941	1,066	1,059	12.5%	-0.7%
Prof. & Business Services	403	327	444	453	38.5%	2.0%
Education & Health	1,652	1,648	1,643	1,712	3.9%	4.2%
Leisure & Hospitality	923	880	1,023	1,021	16.0%	-0.2%
Other Services	258	315	247	239	-24.1%	-3.2%
Public Administration	1,003	948	1,022	1,046	10.3%	2.3%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

In 2018, nearly 24% of employed Lincoln County residents were employed in the Manufacturing sector, the highest percentage of any sector. The second highest amount of employees in 2018 had jobs in the Trade, Transportation, & Utilities sector, with this sector accounting for 19% of employment. The Education & Health sector also accounted for a large percentage of employment in 2018, accounting for 15% of jobs within the County.

From 2011 through 2018, the number of Food Share recipients in Lincoln County decreased by over 25%. [Figure 6-2](#) shows that the number of Food Share Caseload recipients has been steadily decreasing since 2012, when the number of Food Share Caseload recipients reached a peak of 4,072 recipients.

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 was much too slow, see [Figure 6-4](#).

In the same survey, employment opportunities, as [Figure 6-5](#) depicts, were also rated low.

Even when jobs are available it is usual that, as [Table 6-3](#) shows, the typical worker in the County no matter what industry they are in receives an average annual wage that is considerably lower than the State's average annual wage.

**Figure 6-2: Food Share Caseload Recipients
Lincoln County**

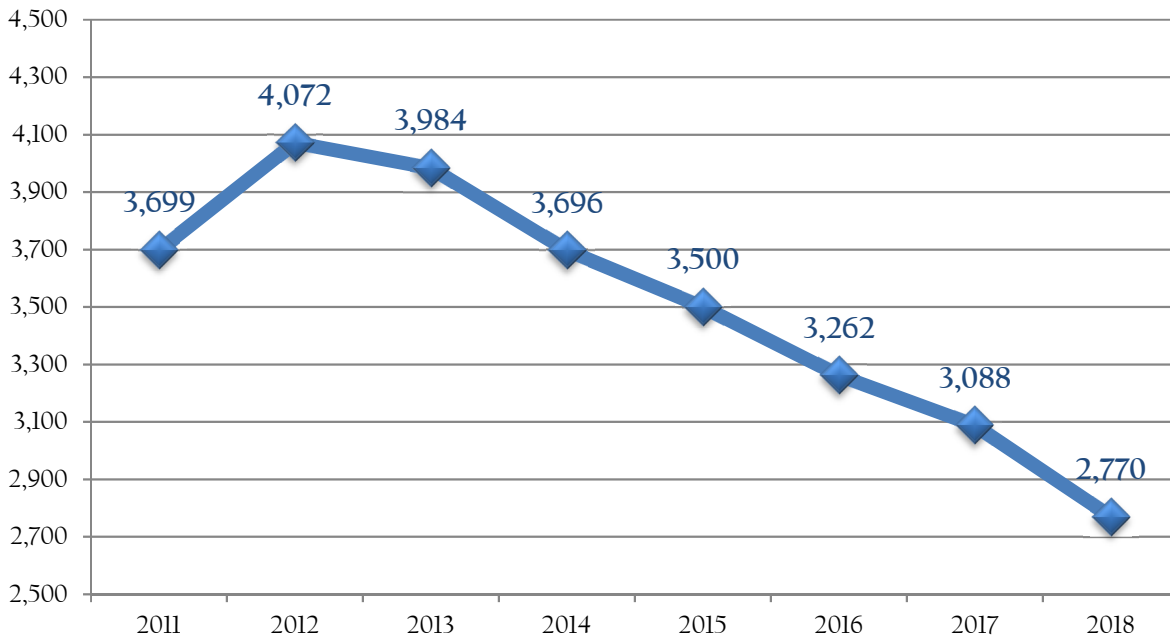


Table 6-3: Average Annual Wage

Industry	Lincoln County	Wisconsin	County as a Share of Wisconsin
All Industries	\$41,230	\$48,891	84.3%
Natural Resources	\$31,911	\$39,444	80.9%
Construction	\$50,550	\$61,909	81.7%
Manufacturing	\$52,182	\$58,048	89.9%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	\$31,619	\$41,901	75.5%
Information	\$27,349	\$73,577	37.2%
Financial Activities	\$65,765	\$71,474	92.0%
Prof. & Business Services	\$38,146	\$60,729	62.8%
Education & Health	\$40,051	\$49,185	81.4%
Leisure & Hospitality	\$12,124	\$18,757	64.6%
Other Services	\$25,206	\$30,674	82.2%
Public Administration	\$42,295	\$47,859	88.4%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, QCEW, June 2019

Figure 6-4: Pace of Job Growth in Merrill

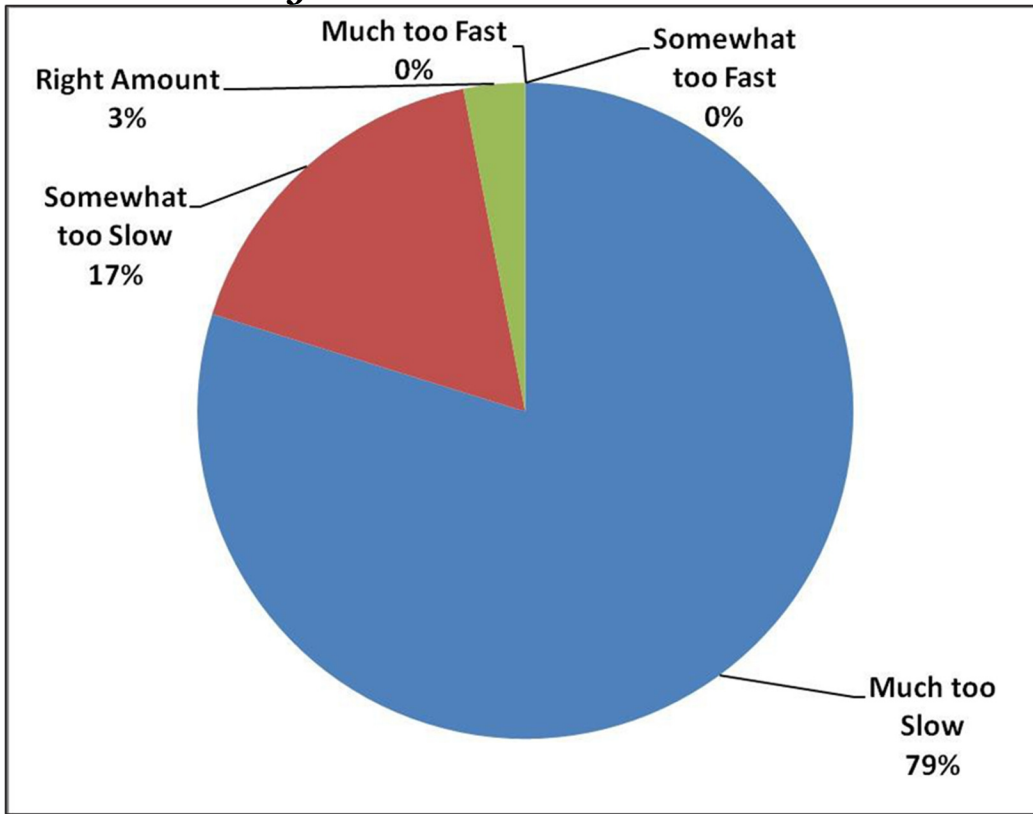
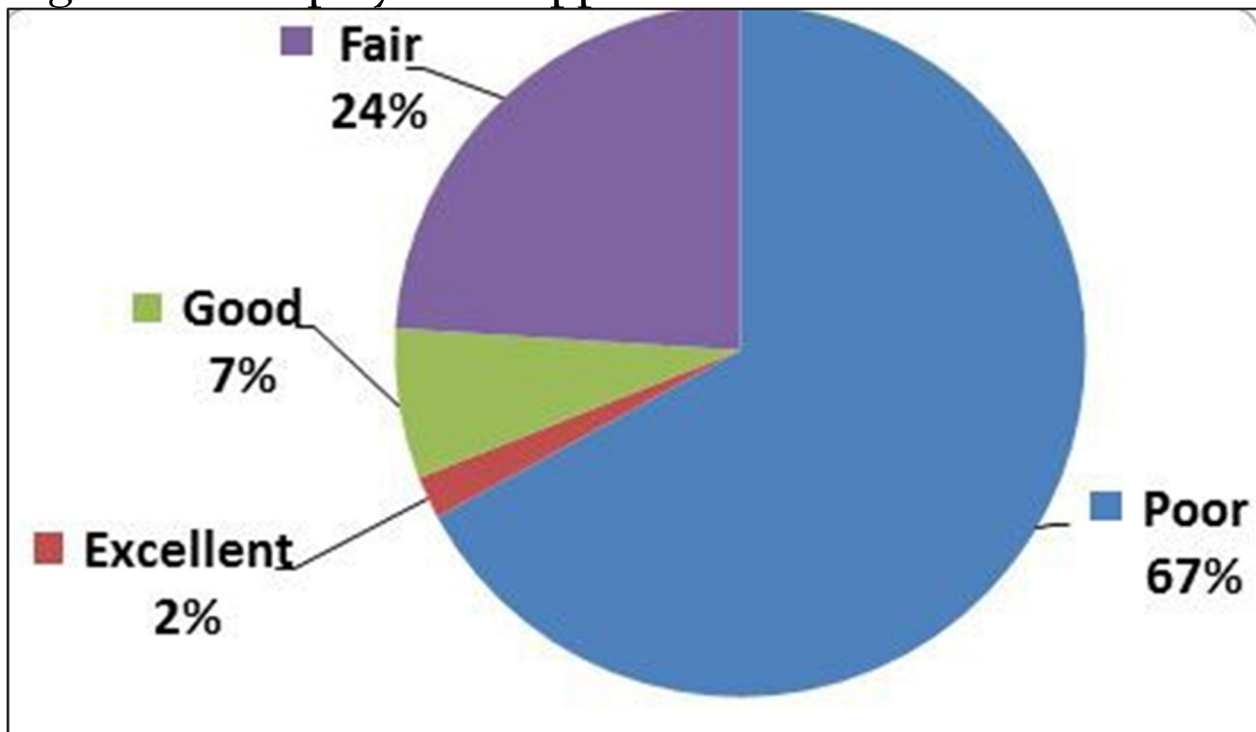


Figure 6-5: Employment Opportunities



Commuting Patterns

Each workday, just over a third of Lincoln County's workforce leave the County to work elsewhere, according to information compiled by the State's Department of Workforce Development in the 2019 Workforce Profile for Lincoln County. The vast majority of these commuters are working in Marathon County to the south—many in Wausau. Oneida County to the north is the second most popular workplace destination for Lincoln County commuters. By contrast, about 24% of workers commute into Lincoln County each workday from neighboring counties. The largest contingent of commuters comes from Marathon County, the second largest from Oneida County. The Cities of Merrill and Tomahawk are the main magnets for commuting workers from other areas.

The relatively high percentage of commuters, when compared to the County's total labor force, seems to indicate that higher paying, full-time employment may be secured more easily outside of Lincoln County than within. It also suggests that many County residents employed in other areas prefer the lifestyle in Lincoln County.

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). In the City of 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 Department of Commerce, 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. The Lincoln County Revolving Loan Fund is currently administered by a pooled Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund, 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.

The City of Merrill and City of Tomahawk 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 this strategy.

The 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 2017, the City of Merrill had eight active TIF Districts, five of which were open to help fund infrastructure needed to accommodate new development. Also, as of 2017, the City of Tomahawk had three active TIF Districts.

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). 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 July 2020 there were 12 open Lincoln County sites listed in the database. All but three of the sites are located in the Cities of Merrill and Tomahawk. Sites not located in either of the Cities are in 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 BRTTS 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. The highest amount of revenues supporting the organization comes through fundraising. The Main Street program served to strengthen both primary business districts in the City of Tomahawk. As of July 2020, the City of Merrill had neither a business improvement district nor Main Street designation.

Economic Development Plan: Goals and Objectives

Below is the 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 Koppelman (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 section.

Economic Development Plan Outline

The following section describes the goals for the economic development element in the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan. For each goal objectives, proposed actions, agencies and organization involved, lead group or agency, and a timeline were developed.

Goal 1: 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.

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

- University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County (Lead Agency)
- Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation (Lead Agency)
- Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce (Lead Agency)
- Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce (Lead Agency)
- Tomahawk Development Corporation
- Merrill Area Development Corporation
- Lincoln County Zoning

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.

Timeline: Ongoing throughout the life of the comprehensive plan

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective B: Increase the knowledge and visibility of the County's resources available for sustained economic development.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- 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 wide variety of businesses.

Objective C: Improve the level of knowledge of aspiring and established businesses on core financial management skills and successful strategies for business growth, development and transition.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

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.

[Goal 2: Invest in the County's infrastructure](#)

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

- Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation (Lead Agency)
- Private Developers (Lead Agency)
- Local Government (Lead Agency)
- 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)
- 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 (broadband, wind energy, solar, wireless, etc.)

Objective A: Adapt to slowly aging population by retaining our young people and attracting new young singles and families to the County.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- 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. Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- 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.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

- Focus on areas such as health, housing, and recreation

[Goal 3: Plan for the County's economic development future taking into account how to adapt to the changing regulatory climates.](#)

Agencies and Organizations:

- Lincoln County Zoning (Lead Agency)
- City of Merrill Zoning (Lead Agency)
- Town planning and zoning commissions/committees (Lead Agency)
- UW-Extension
- North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
- Private planning consultants
- Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation

- Merrill Area Development Corporation
- Tomahawk Development Corporation
- City of Tomahawk Zoning

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.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective B: Create an atmosphere that fosters units of government that work together and are flexible when it comes to regulations.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Action:

Include a wide variety of stakeholders, including all municipalities 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.)

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective D: Promote the use of incubators to help foster new business growth.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective E: Make certain that all existing and planned industrial parks develop comprehensive plans.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective F: Do everything possible at the local level to minimize regulations for start-up businesses that were originally intended to regulate the negative impacts of larger, more established businesses.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective G: Promote effective housing density that improves the efficiency of providing services but is balanced with the community's desire to maintain a rural atmosphere.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective H: Develop clearly stated, visible and viable housing and infrastructure plans.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

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.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective J: Capitalize on the 100,000 acres of County forest land.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- Biomass
- Traditional wood based industries

Goal 4: Make certain that Lincoln County promotes a positive atmosphere and attitude

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

- Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce (Lead Agency)
- Tomahawk Regional Chamber of Commerce (Lead Agency)
- All Lincoln County Departments
- Merrill Marketing Group
- North Central Technical College
- Lincoln County Drug Free Coalition (Social Norms Project)
- Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation
- Merrill Area Development Corporation
- Tomahawk Development Corporation
- UW-Extension

Objective A: Take measures to promote positive attitudes among County residents

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective B: Demonstrate a positive business environment

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- 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.
- 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.)

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- Communicate this vision on signage that promotes and identifies the community.

Goal 5: Access financial tools for business development

Agencies and Organizations Involved:

- Local banks
- USDA programs
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
- City of Merrill
- City of Tomahawk
- Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation
- Merrill Area Development Corporation
- Tomahawk Development Corporation
- Community foundations
- Wisconsin Angel Network

Objective A: Provide better communication about loans and funding opportunities for both new and existing businesses.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective B: Effectively use economic development tools such as TIF districts to demonstrate the community’s interest in supporting business development.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective C: Apply for and effectively use grants that will help support business development.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Objective D: Provide funds to “nurture” new enterprises with advice and resources.

Timeline: Unspecified

Proposed Actions:

- None

Goal 6: 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 such as, 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 can provide a foundation for additional education.
- 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

A. Plan and conduct economic development projects that have the potential to maintain or increase jobs while preserving Lincoln County’s rural and natural character.

B. Promote higher density development where municipal services are available and supported by the community.

C. 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.

D. Provide educational opportunities of numerous kinds using a variety of delivery systems to reach diverse audiences interested in starting or expanding local businesses.

E. 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.

F. 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, financial institutions, existing businesses (including retail), home-based business entrepreneurs, government councils and boards, government departments, private developers, engineers, and planners.

G. 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.

H. Utilize TIF districts to attract a variety of new development to the urban areas of the County.

I. Build off of regional efforts to increase broadband and wireless communication technologies throughout the north central portion of Wisconsin.

J. Provide support to entities wishing to develop business and labor opportunities geared toward serving the County's increasing aging population.

K. Continue to work with towns participating in county zoning that wish to foster home-based business development.

Possible Funding Sources

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

Business Development

Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund:

The Central Wisconsin Economic Development Fund (CWED) Revolving Loan Program works with entrepreneurs and lenders to structure financing packages for start-up and expanding businesses to encourage economic growth in the area. CWED loans usually have low interest rates, reduced collateral requirements, and flexible terms.

Fund Objectives”

- Encourage business development that supports job creation
- Raise personal incomes by providing opportunities for employee growth

- Promote creation, retention, and expansion of existing businesses
- Leverage private investment throughout the region.

CWED loans generally match project funding provided by the owner and can be used for building, land or fixed equipment acquisition, working capital, site preparation, and technology investment. Additional information is available on the Lincoln County website: <https://co.lincoln.wi.us/economic-development/page/central-wisconsin-economic-development-fund>

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. The Façade Fund provides eight-year loans of up to \$15,000 that can be used to enhance the visual appeal of small businesses. The Merrill Revolving Loan fund and Micro Loan

fund provide gap financing to area small businesses. 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 their local WHEDA lender. (The program is similar in concept to the Small Business Administration's Guaranteed Loan Program). Home based businesses are eligible to apply. For additional information: <https://www.wheda.com/lending-partnerships/business-lending/getting-started>

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA), Agribusiness Guarantee:

WHEDA has five lending products for eligible agricultural producers including low interest guaranteed loans for businesses that expand the production of products using Wisconsin's raw agricultural commodities. For further information consult <http://www.wheda.com/root/BusinessPartners/SmallBusinessLenders/Dynamic.aspx?id=833>.

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) 504 Loans: The 504 Loan program is administered through Certified Development Corporations located throughout the State. This finance tool 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. For additional information go to <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans>.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans: Loans can be used for things like 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 <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-industry-loan-guarantees> for more information.

Small Business Administration (SBA) 7(a) 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 bank in Lincoln County offers some variety of SBA lending. Various other loans are also offered through the SBA. For further information go to <https://www.sba.gov/partners/lenders/7a-loan-program/types-7a-loans>

[General Economic Development](#)

Wisconsin Department of Administration, 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 <https://doa.wi.gov/Pages/LocalGovtsGrants/CDBGPublicFacilitiesEconomicDevelopmentProgram.aspx>.

Wisconsin Department of Administration, 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 State 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. For more information go to <https://doa.wi.gov/Pages/LocalGovtsGrants/CDBGPublicFacilitiesProgram.aspx>

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation Brownfields Grant Program: Grants are available for local governments, businesses, and individuals to help assess and remediate underused or abandoned contaminated sites. A 50% match is required for projects and Phase 1 and 2 Environmental Reports need to be completed to be eligible for this program. More information can be found at <https://wedc.org/programs-and-resources/brownfields-grant-program/>.

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Enterprise Zone Tax Credit: This program provides tax incentives to

expanding, new, or relocating businesses. Refundable tax credits can be earned through job creation, job retention, capital investment, employee training, and supply purchases from Wisconsin vendors. See <https://wedc.org/programs-and-resources/enterprise-zone-tax-credit/> for additional information.

Chapter Eight

Land Use

Summary of Land Use “Designations” and “Categories”

Map 1 outlines and maps numerous land use designations to describe the desired type and location of different land uses. In some instances, 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 list of land use designations from which to choose, although not every designation was used in every town. This single list 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 and subsequent updates, 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 to participate in County zoning.

The various planned land use designations are grouped into three general categories:

Rural/ Environmental, Residential, and Non-Residential (see **Map 1**). 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 Town and County was not required to develop 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 “Rural Lands” designation to the “Agriculture” designation.) Such changes to **Map 1** 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 Town 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.

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.

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. Through this review, it was determined a planning category was inconsistent with the prescribed zoning district 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 approved said amendments via Ordinance 2010-01-549 on January 19, 2010.

During the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Update each town in Lincoln County was offered the opportunity to update their Planned Land Use maps and to correct any mapping errors. During this process the vast majority of towns made little or no changes to their planned land use maps. The Towns generally affirmed that their land use plans reflected the current vision for development within their jurisdiction.

Detailed Descriptions of Land Use Designations

The various land use designations used in [Map 1](#) 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.

[Rural/Environmental Designations](#)

Rural Lands:

Description: Includes privately owned undeveloped lands, small woodlots, grasslands, forestland, and open lands in agriculture, aquaculture, or commercial forestry uses. Continued open space uses (including farming and forestry) are generally recommended for these areas.

Appropriate development includes seasonal and permanent single family residences with a density generally

between 1 new residence per 10 gross acres and 1 new residence per 40 gross acres (including undevelopable natural areas), associated home occupations and small family businesses which do not interfere with the interests of nearby property owners, small-scale forest production and processing, public access motorized and non-motorized recreational uses where permitted by the Forest Crop Law or Managed Forest Law programs, and the keeping of animals in numbers appropriate to the size of the lot. Within some areas under the Rural Lands category, existing development at slightly greater densities may already be in place.

Appropriate Implementing Zoning Districts. When considering future rezone requests, the Lincoln County zoning districts most compatible with the Rural Lands category is

the RL2 Rural Lands “2 per 40” district and the RL4 Rural Lands “4 per 40” district. The primary difference between these two districts is the density of new residential development. As indicated in their respective names, the RL2 zoning district permits a maximum density of two residences per 40 acres, while the RL4 zoning district permits a maximum density of four residences per 40 acres.

Agriculture:

This designation includes privately owned lands, predominantly in agricultural production. Appropriate uses include agricultural and related uses including livestock grazing, dairy farming, cropland uses, orchards, cranberry bogs, exotic animal farms, 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 3](#) and [Map 7](#). 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 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.

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.

Residential Designations

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.

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.

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.

Non-Residential Designations



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.

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

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, 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.

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 on the next page).



space uses, in which community character is protected through building scale, appearance, landscaping and signage.

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 on left).



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 above on right).

Extraction:

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

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.

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 recommends certain maximum densities for residential development within some of the “Rural/Environmental” and “Residential” planned land use designations. Specifically, the plan recommends:

- A density of two homes per 40 acres under the Rural Lands 2 designation.
- A density of four home per 40 acres under the Rural Lands 4 designation.
- A density of one home per 35 acres under the Agriculture designation.
- A density of between one home per 30,000 square feet and one home per 20

acres under the Rural Single Family Residential designation.

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 addition to minimum lot sizes) is often referred to as “density-based zoning.” The diagrams below describes alternative approaches to dividing land for development under a density-based zoning approach

using a “one home per 20 acre” standard, such as under the Rural Lands 2 designation.

[Alternative Development Approaches Under Density-Based Zoning](#)

The graphic on the next page (Predevelopment Site Conditions) shows a hypothetical 160-acre parcel with site conditions common to Lincoln County. Assume the parcel is shown on [Map 1](#) (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.

The graphic on the next page (Conventional Development Option) 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.

The graphic on the next page (Conservation Development Option) 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).

[Land Use Plan Outline](#)

The following section describes the goals for the land use chapter of the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan. Objectives, policies, and recommendations were developed to support this goal. For the policies and recommendations, see the 2001 Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan Volume Two.

[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.](#)

[Objectives:](#)

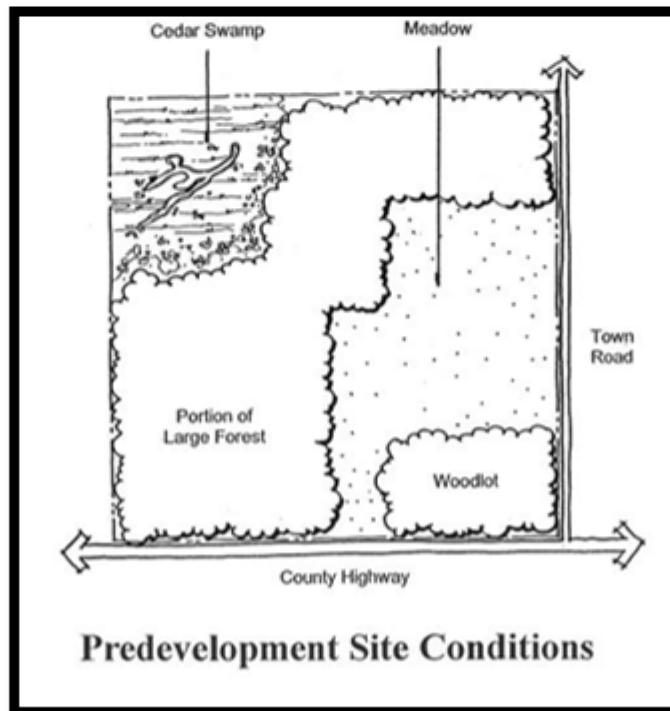
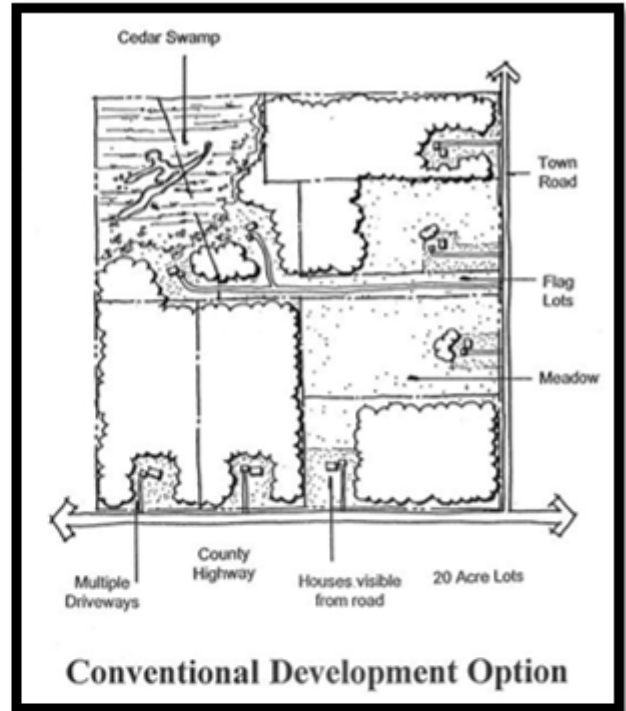
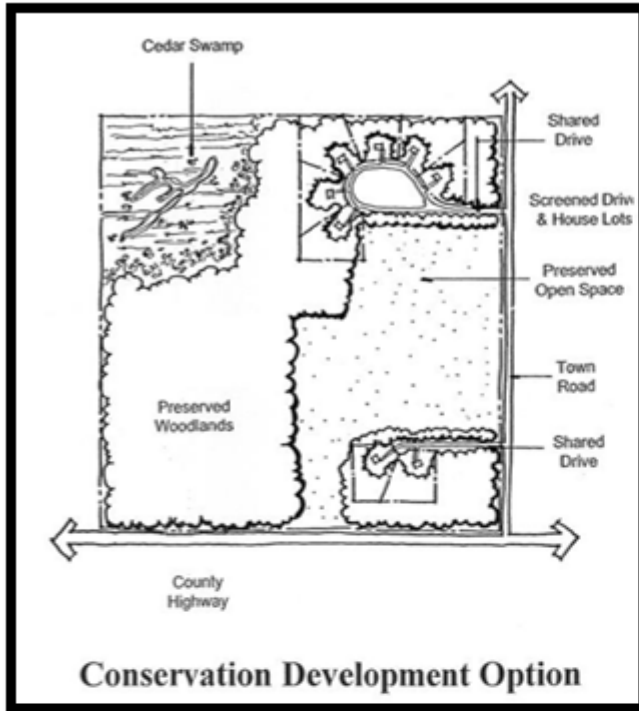
A. Promote new land development that is consistent with this Comprehensive Plan, the component Town Land Use Plans, and more detailed planning efforts.

B. Working directly with towns and cities, plan for a compatible land use pattern throughout the County.

C. Guide the location, mix, and quality of private development to meet both private and public land use objectives.

D. Assure that the pace of development does not exceed the capacity of utilities, roads, and community facilities.

E. Manage public lands in a manner compatible with land use goals, objectives, policies, and plans.



[Planned Land Use Map:](#)

The Planned Land Use map shows the recommended future land use pattern for the County over the 20-year planning period. The Map is a composite of the town-adopted Town Land Use Plan maps prepared as part of this comprehensive planning process. The Planned Land Use map does not include planned land use recommendations for the two cities and two of the towns in Lincoln County. These communities have locally-adopted plans, but do not use the same planned land use designations as the County.

[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 (2017) and the City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan (2017).

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 1](#)) 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 1](#), 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 1](#) 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 revised at the development of the county updated comprehensive plan.

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. Summaries of all Lincoln County Town Land Use Plans from 2000/2020 can be found in Appendix A.

Chapter Nine

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The 2007-2009 Great Recession and the sluggish recovery that followed forced many businesses throughout the Country to become more fiscally conservative. 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.

These conditions are also an opportunity for local governments to examine ways to cooperatively provide public services. Several departments within Lincoln County government already work together 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. The Technology Department also provides a similar service for the Aging Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin. 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 administered in partnership with 11 of the 16 townships.

Although these are just some of the most notable examples of intergovernmental cooperation between County government and municipal 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.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals:

Goal 1: 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

Goal 2: 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.

Goal 3: 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.

Goal 4: 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).

Intergovernmental Cooperation Plan Outline:

The following section describes the goals for the intergovernmental cooperation chapter in the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan. Objectives, policies, and recommendations were developed to support this goal. For the policies and recommendations, see the 2001 Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan Volume Two.

Goal: Lincoln County's goal is to establish mutually beneficial intergovernmental relations with other governmental jurisdictions, both within and outside the County. The advantages of improved intergovernmental relations include better understood and smoother land use decision making, better coordinated growth management and preservation efforts, more efficient delivery of services, and taking advantage of economies of scale.

Objectives:

A. Work with local governments, State agencies, the North Central Regional Planning Commission, and school districts on land use and community development issues of mutual concern.

B. Engage in support processes to resolve conflicts between the plans of governments with overlapping jurisdictions.

C. Provide town governments with a regular, meaningful role in County land use decision making.

D. Encourage cities and towns to enter into joint planning initiatives, including intergovernmental land use, service, and boundary agreements.

E. Enter into and promote shared public service agreements where such agreements will provide improved services at lower costs.

Potential Conflicts and Processes to Resolve Them:

The 2001 Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan Volume Two contains a section covering potential conflicts and processes to resolve them. The potential conflicts include conflicts:

- Between the "General Framework Plan" and local plans,
- Between other County plans and town land use plans,
- Among town land use plans in Lincoln County,

- Between towns and cities in Lincoln County.
- Between the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan/town land use plans and plans of adjoining counties and towns, and
- Among county, school district, regional, and State plans.

Chapter Ten

Implementation

Formal Approval

It is recommended that following plan review by the Lincoln County Land Services Committee, the Lincoln County Board formally approves the document. Without formal approval, the chances that this Plan will be implemented becomes unlikely.

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 will be accessible to all local governments in Lincoln County.

Plan Amendments

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.

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.

Appendix I

Maps

Map 1

Map 1 will be added to this document once the Comprehensive Plan/Planned Land Use has been updated on the Lincoln County GIS Mapping.

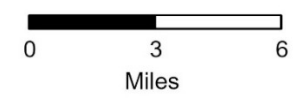
Map 2

Lincoln County
Comprehensive Plan

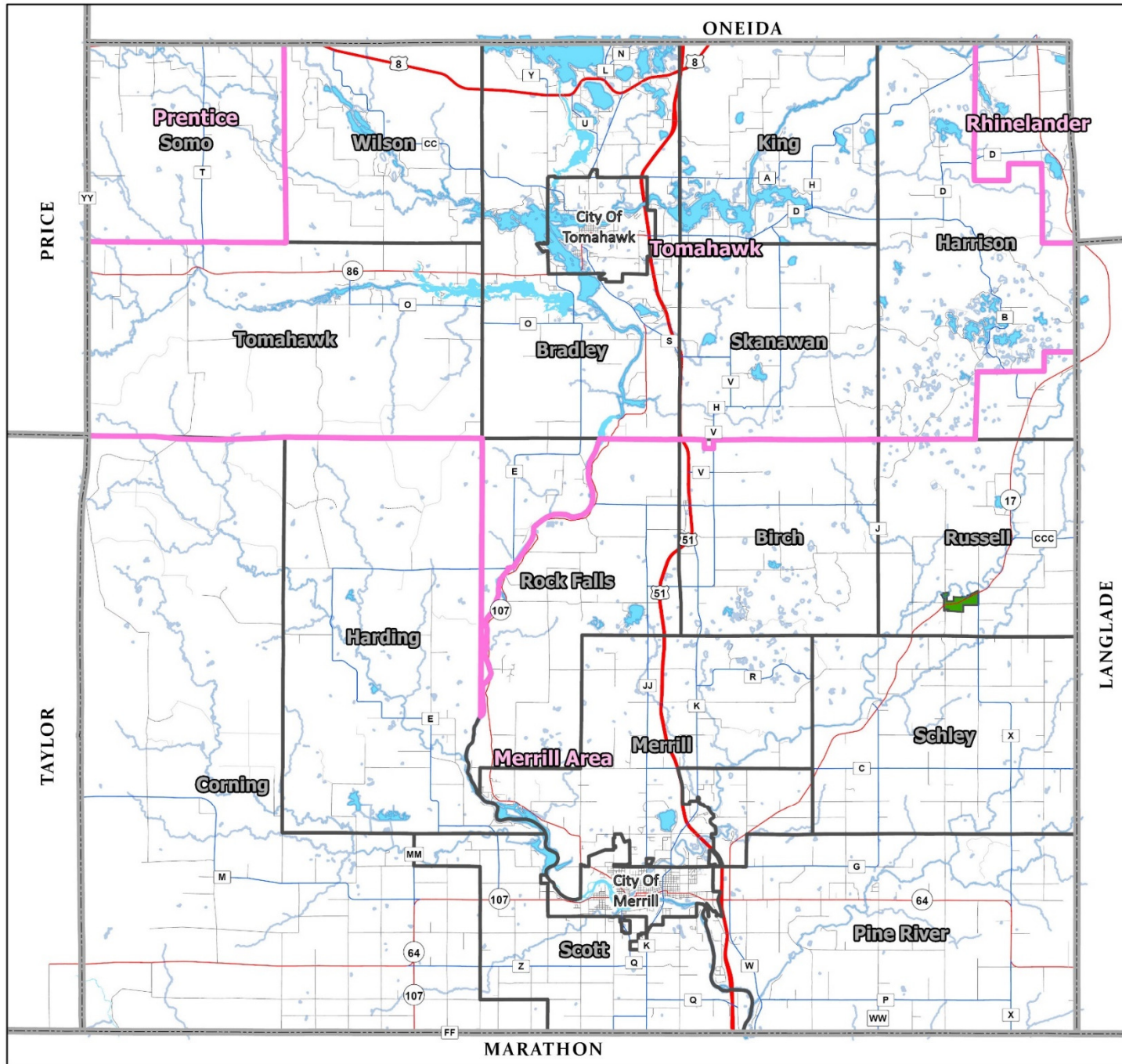


Jurisdictional Boundaries

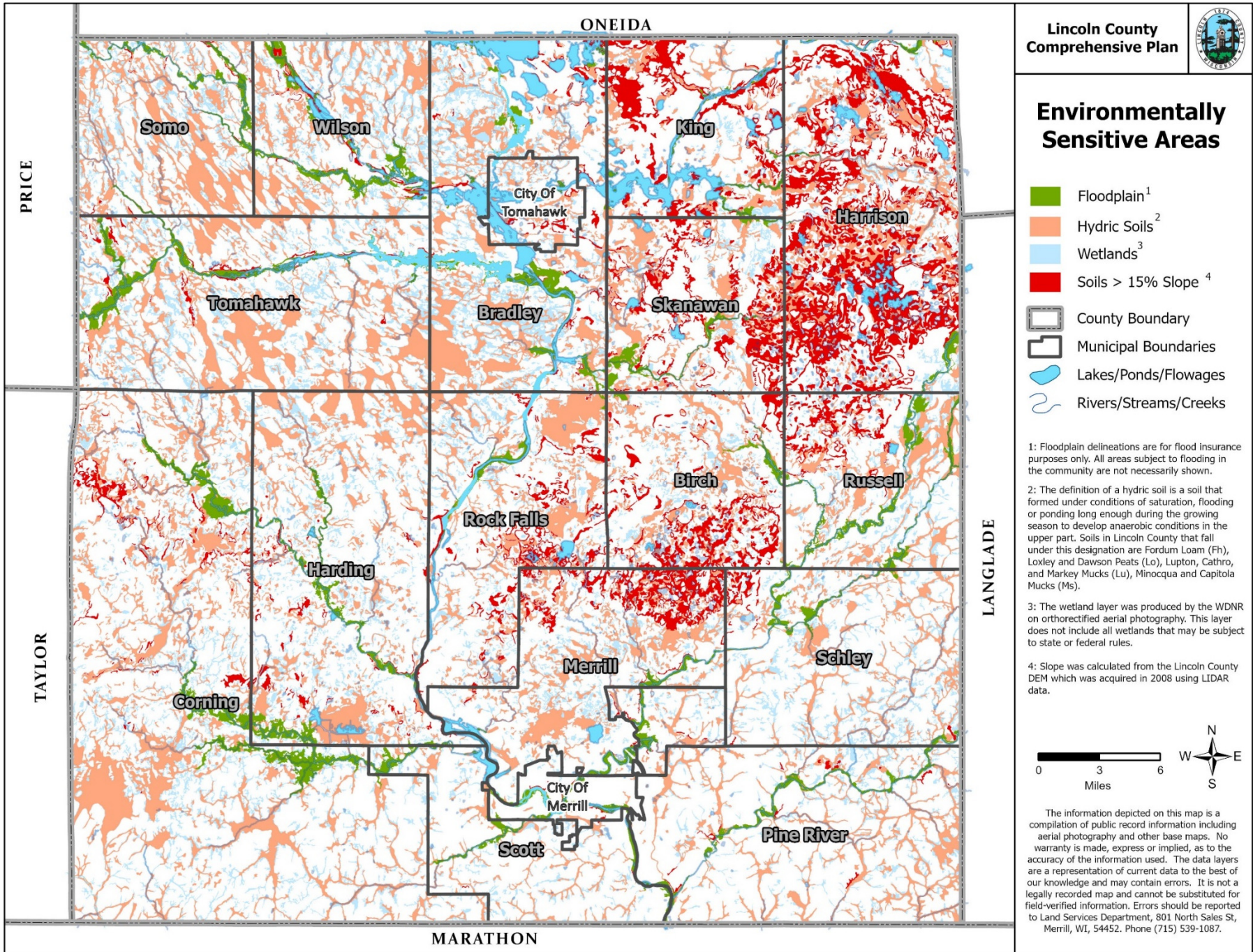
- School District Boundaries
- Municipal Boundaries
- Gleason Sanitary District
- Lakes/Ponds/Flowages
- Rivers/Streams/Creeks
- US Highway
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Town and City Road



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. Errors should be reported to Land Services Department, 801 North Sales St, Merrill, WI, 54452. (715) 539-1087.



Map 3



Map 4

Lincoln County
Comprehensive Plan

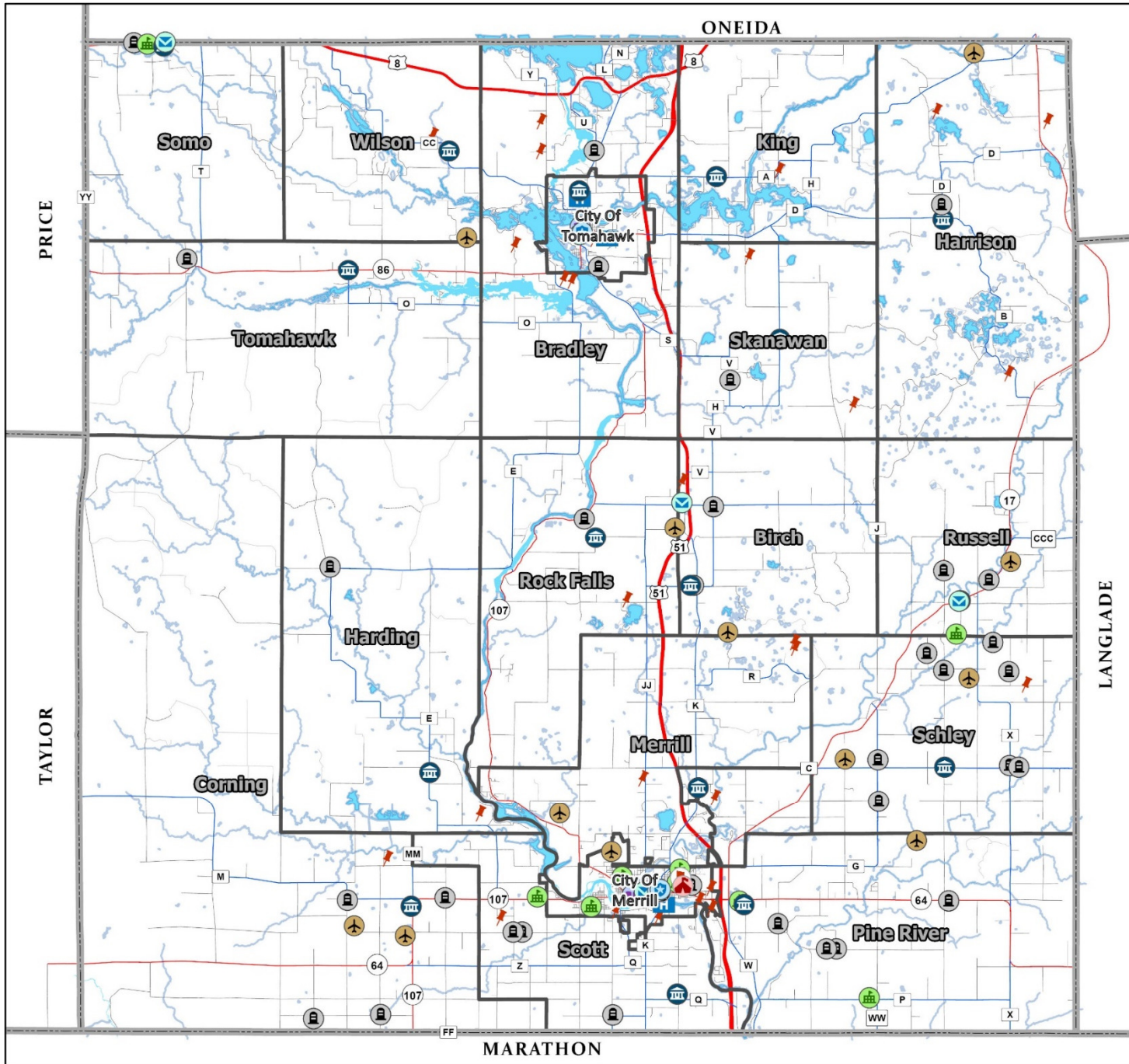


Community Facilities and Historic Resources

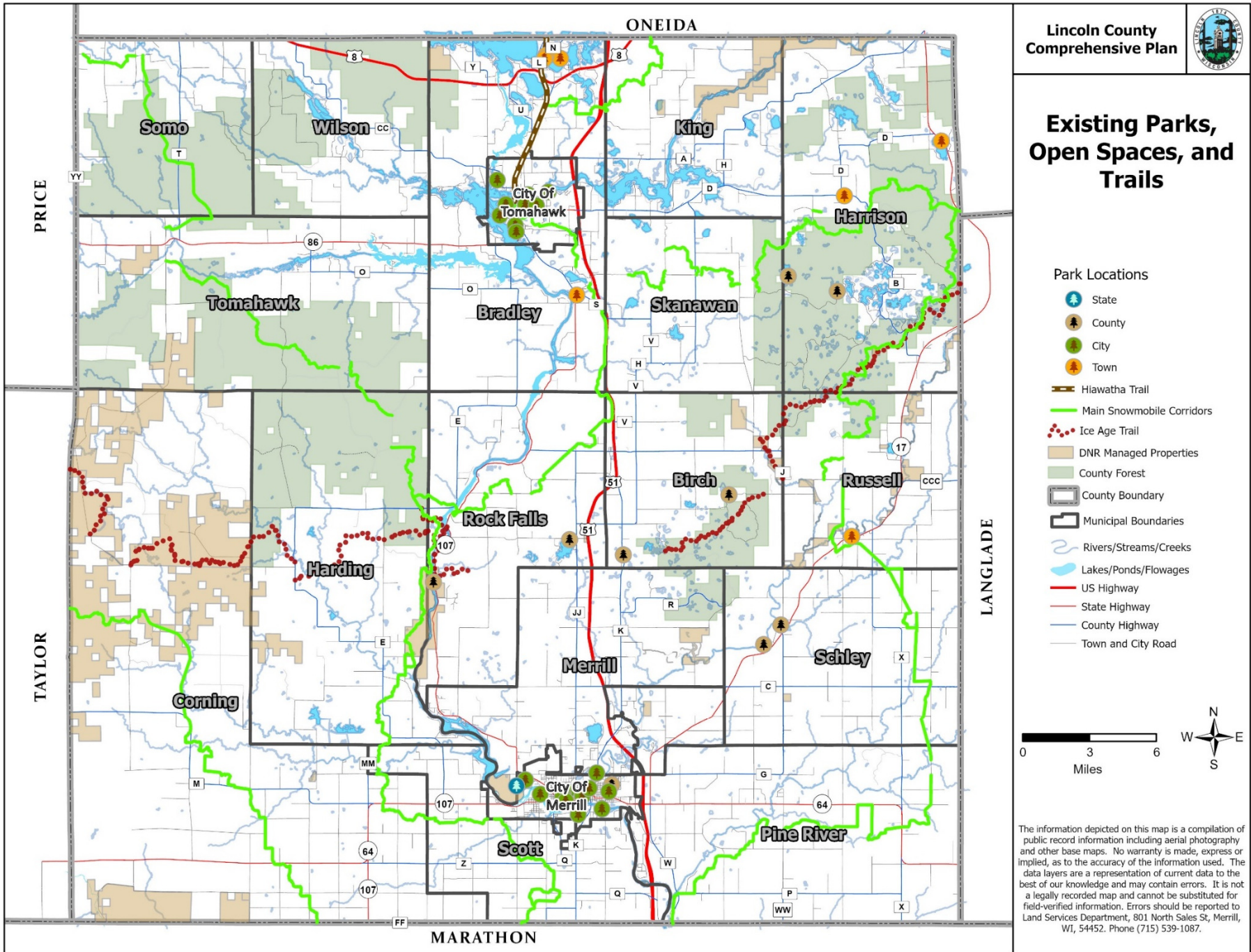
- Law Enforcement
- Airport
- Cemetery
- Hospital
- Library
- Post Office
- School
- Town Hall
- Fair Ground
- Court House
- Landfill
- County Boundary
- Municipal Boundaries
- Rivers/Streams/Creeks
- Lakes/Ponds/Flowages
- US Highway
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Town and City Road



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Map 5



Lincoln County
Comprehensive Plan

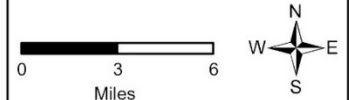


Existing Parks, Open Spaces, and Trails

Park Locations

- State
- County
- City
- Town

- Hiawatha Trail
- Main Snowmobile Corridors
- Ice Age Trail
- DNR Managed Properties
- County Forest
- County Boundary
- Municipal Boundaries
- Rivers/Streams/Creeks
- Lakes/Ponds/Flowages
- US Highway
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Town and City Road



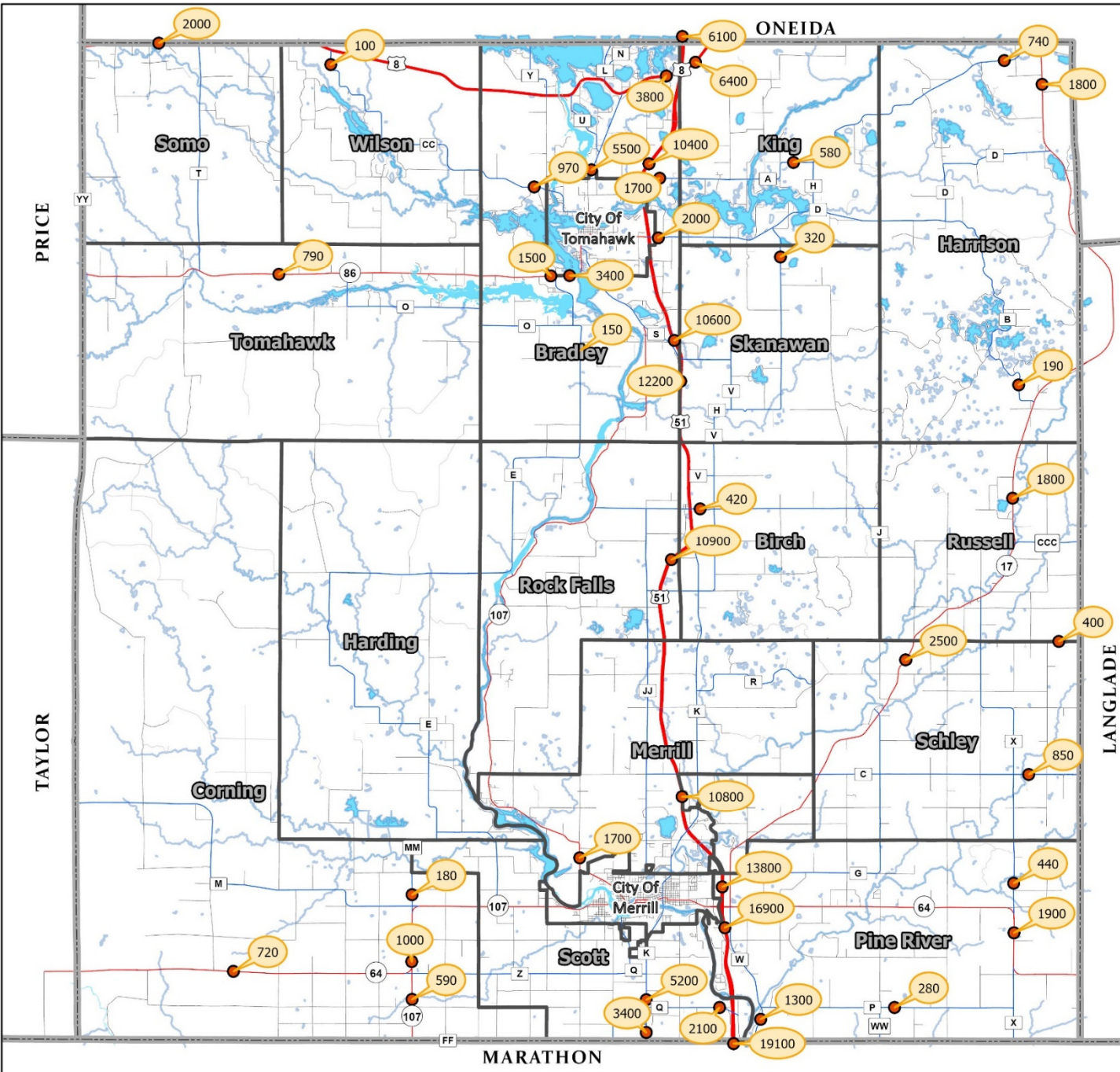
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Map 6

Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan

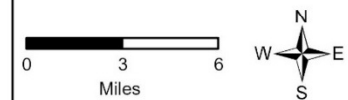


Roadway Network and Traffic Counts



- Traffic Count Points
- County Boundary
- Municipal Boundaries
- Rivers/Streams/Creeks
- Lakes/Ponds/Flowages
- US Highway
- State Highway
- County Highway
- Town and City Road

The numbers displayed are the average annual daily traffic (AADT) units. Traffic counts are reported as the number of vehicles expected to pass a given location on an average day of the year. The info displayed is collected and analyzed by the WI DOT.



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Map 7

Lincoln County
Comprehensive Plan



Agricultural Suitability

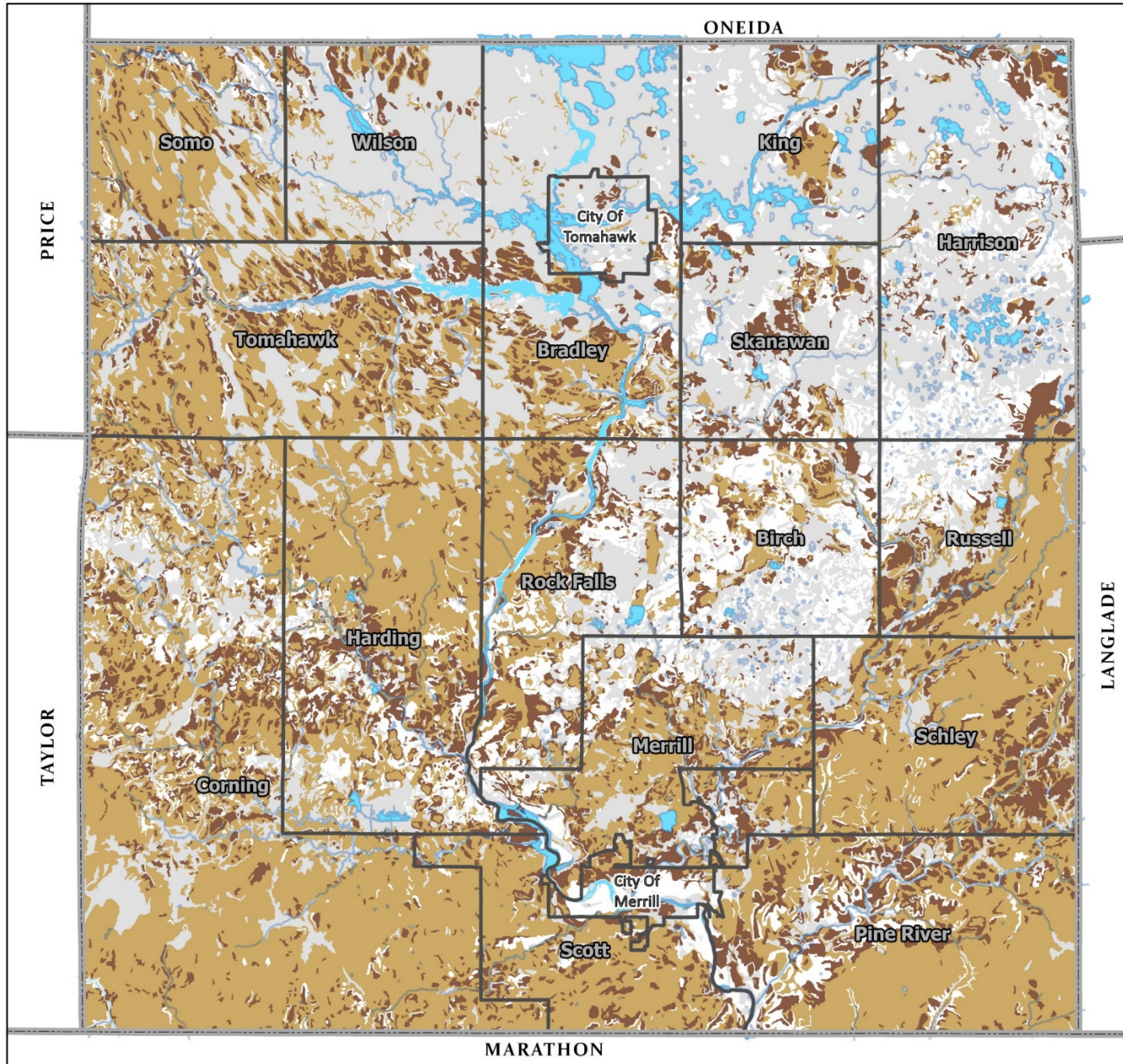
Farmland Soils

-  Prime Farmland
-  Prime Farmland If Drained
-  Not Prime Farmland
-  County Boundary
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Lakes/Ponds/Flowages
-  Rivers/Streams/Creeks



Miles

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Map 8

Lincoln County
Comprehensive Plan



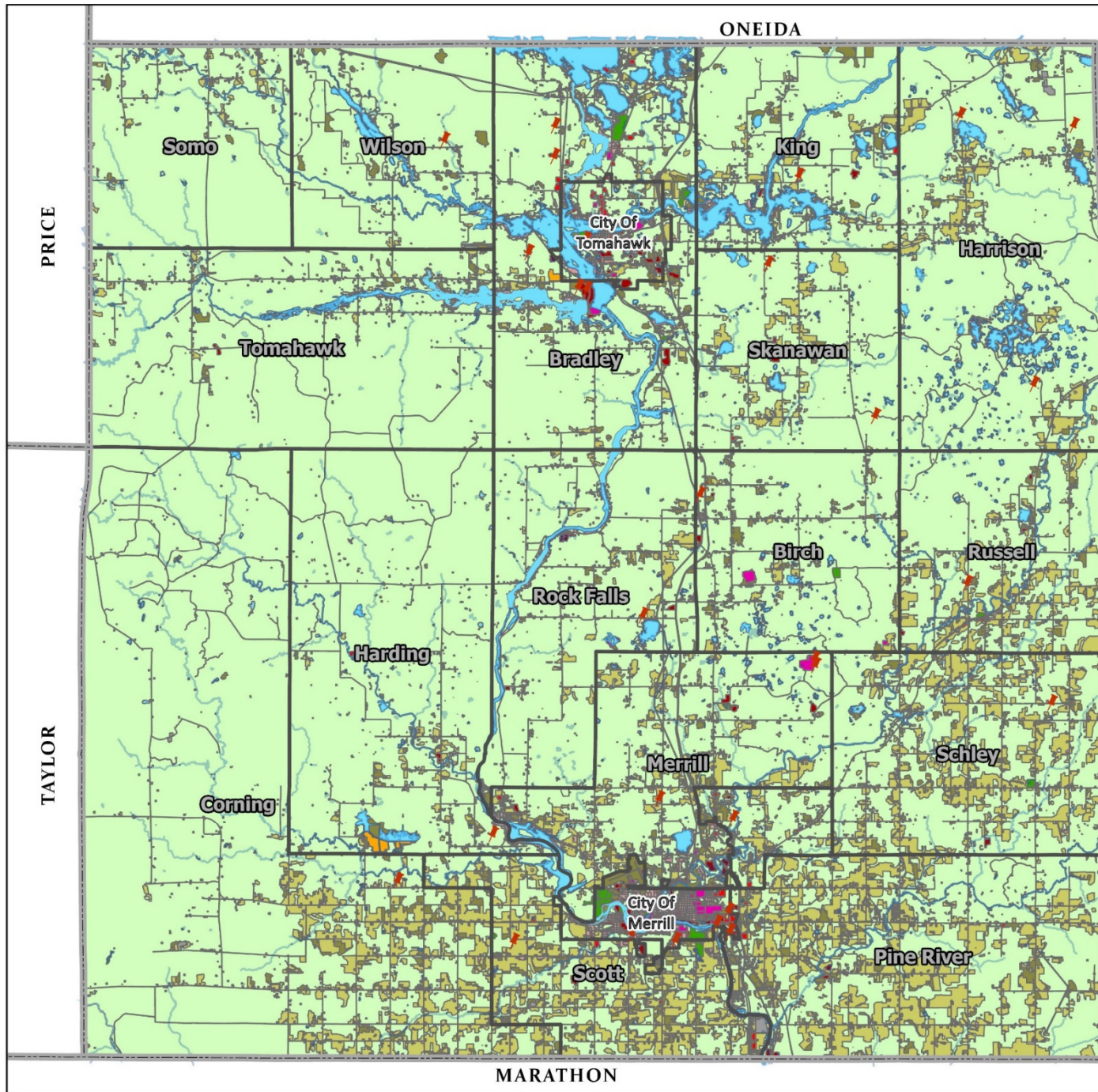
Current Land Use

Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Cranberry Bog
- Governmental / Institutional
- Industrial
- Open Lands
- Outdoor Recreation
- Quarry
- Residential
- Transportation
- Utility
- Water
- Woodlands
- County Boundary
- Municipal Boundaries
- Lakes/Ponds/Flowages
- Rivers/Streams/Creeks



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Appendix II

Town Land Use Plans

TOWN OF BRADLEY (ADOPTED MAY 30, 2001)

- **2020 Update - Mapping Amendment**

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.”

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve rural character and lakes

Objectives:

- A. Plan orderly growth.
- B. Identify sensitive character and lake classifications.
- C. Work cooperatively with and inform realtors and developers.
- D. Improve communication among entities, including but not limited to Towns, Cities, County, Lake Districts and Lake Associations.
- E. Enforce sign and billboard regulations.
- F. Encourage the dispersal of information about noise and light pollution to minimize these problems.
- G. Prevent annexation of Town land by the City of Tomahawk.

Goal 2: Maintain a small town character

Objectives:

- A. Attain a viable balance of land uses that reflect the community’s desire to maintain their rural character.
- B. Develop and implement land use plan.
- C. Enhance zoning regulations.
- D. Encourage involvement of residents and engage them in open meetings.
- E. Consider the clustering of new development to preserve green space.
- F. Establish building façade standards.
- G. Manage growth.
- H. Concentrate small business and industry in specific locations.
- I. Regulate signage.
- J. Minimize the appearance of public service lines.

Goal 3: Improve water quality and minimize pollution

Objectives:

- A. Continue intergovernmental cooperation and the shared provision of services between the Town of Bradley and the City of Tomahawk.
- B. Address COMM 83 implications.
- C. Increase the enforcement of existing regulations.
- D. Improve communications among communities that share boundaries and natural features.

- E. Preserve environmental corridor features including waterways, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, woodlands, and scenic areas through the adoption and implementation of zoning and ordinances.
- F. Identify and address failing septic systems.
- G. Assemble a wastewater treatment center.
- H. Maintain water-testing program.
- I. Raise environmental awareness and issues of compatibility.

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

Objectives:

- A. Facilitate the strong leadership of the Town to encourage public involvement.
- B. Utilize Town communication assets to disperse information and to engage residents.
- C. Reestablish resident confidence in government.
- D. Develop system to communicate with landowners.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on **Map 1**.

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.

- **2020 Update - Mapping Amendment**

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:

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

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

Objectives:

- Enhance the Town’s fire protection services.
- Maintain government accessibility.
- Increase employment opportunities.
- 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:

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

Goal 4: Protect and enhance the Town’s identity

Objectives:

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

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on **Map 1**.

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.

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:

- A. Establish regulations to control land use and development.
- B. Encourage new development in locations, forms, and densities which support the preservation of rural character.
- C. Encourage new development along existing Town and County roads.
- D. Support farmland preservation programs.
- E. Continue communication between the Town and the Wisconsin Public Service Corporation to resolve issues related to access and recreational use on WPS lands.
- F. Protect the Town’s environmentally sensitive areas.
- G. Manage the pace of growth.

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

Objectives:

- A. Enhance communications between Town residents and Town government on issues related to land use planning and administration.
- B. Periodically review the Town’s land use plan and refine as needed.
- C. Encourage public input in the Town planning and plan implementation process.
- D. Continue the Town newsletter.
- E. Identify and resolve issues between permanent and seasonal residents.

Goal 3: Promote the Town’s unique identity

Objectives:

- A. Construct a neighborhood “welcome” sign in the Lake Alexander area.
- B. Construct a Town “welcome” sign on County Highway E.
- C. Encourage tourism-related development that compliments Harding’s “Northwoods” character.
- D. Work with County on ensuring proper maintenance of private property.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted in **Map 1**.

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.

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:

- A. Adopt and enforce new zoning regulations, particularly around lakes.
- B. Improve public understanding of zoning ordinances, particularly related to lakes.
- C. Strengthen zoning ordinances to ensure that a desirable mix of land uses is achieved.
- D. Develop new and enhance existing ordinances that specifically address commercial and residential uses.
- E. Examine effective practices of neighboring counties.
- F. Increase county staff or contract out services to assist in planning and zoning matters.
- G. Conduct regular review of ordinances.

Goal 2: Support recreational opportunities in the Town

Objectives:

- A. Provide Town input into proposed public recreational facilities and uses on County forest land.
- B. 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:

- A. Provide for the continued availability of public utility and school capacity.
- B. Enhance levels of police and fire service.
- C. Pursue facilities for the disposal of garbage.
- D. Enhance public awareness of Town issues.
- E. Strengthen communication between the Town government and Town residents.
- F. Encourage public participation in Town and County decision-making.

Goal 4: Protect natural resources and unique physical features.

Objectives:

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

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

Objectives:

- A. Encourage small business tailored to local needs.
- B. Ensure that residential and commercial development is of high quality and reflects the “Northwoods” atmosphere of the Town.
- C. 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).
- D. Provide clear guidelines to ensure minimum property maintenance standards are adhered to and ensure that these standards are enforced.
- E. Establish density controls, especially around lakes.
- F. Plan for a controlled and sustainable amount of growth.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on [Map 1](#).

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.”

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:

- A. 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.
- B. 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:

- A. Develop and enforce all zoning codes in a fair and consistent manner.
- B. Require development plans that incorporate the principles of good site design.
- C. 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:

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

Goal 5: Strengthen local government.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage public participation in planning and making decisions that affect the Town.
- B. Establish fair and consistent decision-making based on the Town’s goals and objectives.
- C. 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 1**.

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:

- A. Prepare an industrial development marketing strategy and partner with other entities interested in industrial development.
- B. Cooperate on the siting of a modern business park near Highway 51 with Lincoln County and the City of Merrill.
- C. Encourage the redevelopment of aging commercial/industrial sites near the Highway K and C intersection.
- D. Where public utilities are not available, allow businesses without significant water or waste disposal needs.
- E. Promote businesses run by local entrepreneurs, with assistance from the University of Wisconsin and technical colleges.
- F. Promote high-quality site design, building design, signage, and landscaping for all new nonresidential developments.
- G. Allow home-based businesses where there is no impact on surrounding homes.
- H. 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:

- A. Attain a balance of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial, and industrial uses in the Town.
- B. 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.
- C. Encourage new development in locations, forms, and densities which support the preservation of rural character.
- D. Create and cooperate on new and updated zoning and subdivision regulations to support implementation of this Plan.
- E. Preserve and provide adequate recreational space to serve Town residents.
- F. 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:

- A. Protect environmentally sensitive areas, including but not limited to the Prairie River bottom, marshes, waterfronts, and areas of steep slope.

- B. 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.
- C. Ensure the adequate and safe disposal of sewage to protect ground water quality.
- D. 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:

- A. Strengthen communication between Town government and Town residents.
- B. Promote Town meetings and events through better advertising.
- C. Attempt to increase resident participation through techniques such as committee appointments.
- D. Work to strengthen “civics” curriculum in schools.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on [Map 1](#).

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.

• **2019-2020 Update – Text and Mapping Amendment**

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 land owners’ property rights

Objectives:

- A. Maintain the Town’s solemn commitment to support and protect its residents’ right to self-determination in utilizing their own property while respecting their neighbors’ right to do the same; and without interfering in adjacent property owners’ right to enjoy their own properties.
- B. Preserve and exercise the Town’s sovereign right of autonomy through local control and governance for the benefit and protection of the Constitutional liberties of its residents.
- C. Uphold and respect these important community values as updates and changes to the Town Zoning Ordinances are considered.
- D. Avoid excessive regulations which drive up costs for housing, land development, and site development.

Goal 2: Promote a balanced approach towards development while preserving rural character

Objectives:

- A. Encourage growth. The Town of Pine River is a great place to live and work. Both homes and businesses are welcome!
- B. Conduct a full review and update of Town Zoning Ordinances.
- C. Uphold the “good neighbor” ideal by maintaining adequate buffers between commercial and adjacent residential properties.
- D. Include regulations in the Town Zoning Ordinances which will shield residential properties from commercial lighting, noise, and offensive odors.
- E. In rural areas of the Town, establish limitations on noise and requirements to adequately shield residential properties from lights on adjacent properties which conduct business during nighttime hours in the Town Zoning Ordinances.
- F. Follow through with residents’ desire to reduce lot size from the current 5 acre minimum in rural areas (RR2) while maintaining setbacks and ensuring smaller parcels are self-sufficient in regards to having adequate space for a well and septic system.

Goal 3: Utilize a proactive approach to encourage economic development

Objectives:

- A. Identify specific categories of businesses which are compatible with the Town’s Vision and the preservation of its rural character.
- B. Contact Highway 51 corridor land owners with properties suitable for commercial development to identify those who are interested in selling.

- C. Prepare a promotional packet for prospective businesses to acquaint them with the Town and the benefits of locating within the Town of Pine River.
- D. Develop a marketing plan to communicate development opportunities within the Town.
- E. Promote the Town to specific businesses which are a good fit for the Town emphasizing highly desirable location, visibility, lower tax structure, and less regulations.
- F. Maintain an attractive lower tax structure.
- G. Encourage entrepreneurial business startups.
- H. Encourage projects which cater to the Town's aging population.
- I. Explore the possibility and benefits of offering municipal bonds to aid business development within the Town.
- J. Consider establishing relationships with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA), and any other similar organization deemed appropriate to aid in achieving increased economic development.

Goal 4: Promote Agritourism

Objectives:

- A. Consider establishing a Farmers Market to promote local agriculture and goods while serving as a means to improve access to fresh produce for residents, as an attraction for visitors to the Town, and to provide a financial benefit for the merchants.
- B. Create an "Agritourism Guide" brochure identifying Agritourism businesses and attractions with descriptions of products or services offered and map these locations within the Town.
- C. Create a webpage supporting the Town's Agritourism directory.
- D. Distribute Town Agritourism brochures to area hotels, motels, businesses, tourism offices, and also have it available for downloading on the website.

Goal 5: Transportation

Objectives:

- A. Continue to invest in an annual roadway maintenance schedule to efficiently utilize tax dollars.
- B. Continue utilizing the Road Equipment Fund to set aside monies in a segregated account for future large equipment purchases.
- C. Consider providing signage at the main entrances to the Town along State Road 64 (east and west), County W (south), and on Highway 17 (north).
- D. Continue to monitor roadway signage to ensure good visibility and safe vehicle travel within the Town.
- E. Continue to monitor traffic accident data to identify any problem intersections or roadway sections.

Goal 6: Protect Water Resources

Objectives:

- A. Develop Town Zoning Ordinances for metallic and non-metallic mining consistent with State law which will protect water resources while preserving rural character.
- B. Consider establishing adequate building setbacks for wetland areas while updating the Town Zoning Ordinances.
- C. Consider the creation of a Flood Plains Zoning Ordinance.

Goal 7: Encourage Public Engagement

Objectives:

- A. Continue to provide opportunities for public comment at all Town and Committee meetings.
- B. Continue the long-standing tradition of following the Town's annual meeting with a luncheon for community members in attendance.
- C. Increase public awareness of the Town's website as a hub for information, special announcements, various downloadable applications, meeting agendas, contact details, and other pertinent resources.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on **Map 1**.

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:

- A. Encourage new residential development to “cluster” in locations, forms, and densities which support the preservation of rural character, particularly near Gleason.
- B. 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.
- C. Require Town Board review and approval of all site design plans for residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional development.
- D. Analyze the capacity of existing Town utilities and services to determine the appropriate pace and location of new development.
- E. Preserve farmland, farming opportunities and forestland.
- F. Promote Gleason and the Town of Russell.
- G. Provide formal local input on County Forest planning issues.

Goal 2: Encourage economic development and expand tourism opportunities

Objectives:

- A. Expand the Town’s retail and tourism base by planning for future commercial development areas, particularly in Gleason.
- B. Promote the Town’s natural resources, particularly the Prairie River trout fishery, to attract tourism- related businesses.
- C. Support the Town’s existing local businesses and services.
- D. Closely coordinate future development with the provision of new or improved roads.
- E. Plan for light industrial development in the Gleason area.
- F. Work with the County and State in identifying redevelopment opportunities for lands that are environmentally contaminated.
- G. 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:

- A. Protect private property rights while maintaining the health, safety, and general welfare of all Town residents.
- B. Work with the County in updating zoning regulations and strengthening the enforcement of those regulations.
- C. 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 1](#).

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.

- **2020 Update – Text Amendment**

Vision Statement:

“Through the year 2040, 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:

- A. Preserve farmland, farming opportunities, forest land, and sensitivelogging.
- B. Work to keep property taxes as low as possible.
- C. Encourage new development in locations, and densities which support the preservation of rural character.
- D.
- E. Protect environmentally sensitive areas, including but not limited to the Prairie River, tributary creeks, and marshes.
- F. Identify, maintain, and preserve historic sites and buildings.
- G. Maintain and encourage a healthy mix of rural businesses, including home-based businesses.
- H.

Goal 2: Promote and enhance recreational opportunities in the Town

Objectives:

- A. Continue support of accessible recreational land in the Town.
- B. Encourage property owners to donate land or provide easements for recreational use.
- C. Collaborate with the County on improvements to existing recreational lands, including the Prairie Dells Scenic Area and Hay Meadow Park.
- D. Cooperate on developing a recreational trail system in the Town.
- E.
- F. Support state and county efforts to restore the Prairie River.
- G. Promote recreational safety in the Town.

Goal 3: Enhance the appearance of properties

Objectives:

- A.
- B. Work with the County on clear minimum property maintenance standards, citizen complaint procedures, and enforcement practices.
- C. Establish high quality development standards, particularly for commercial uses, mobile homes, and institutional uses.
- D. Collaborate with the County 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:

- A. Enhance communications between Town residents and Town government on issues related to land use planning, including future amendments to this Plan.
- B. Encourage community involvement in planning, development, and maintenance of the recreational system in the Town.
- C. 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 1**.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Schley Plan include:

- Consider implementing a driveway ordinance and design standards to encourage the appropriate siting of homes in areas along Town roads 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.
- 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*.

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:

- A. Encourage a planned development pattern providing residential, recreational, service, retail, and employment opportunities in appropriate locations.
- B. 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.
- C. Closely coordinate land use planning and development with the provision of new or improved roads.
- D. 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.
- E. 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:

- A. Work to keep intact large blocks of productive farmlands with prime soils.
- B. Direct intensive new development away from large areas in active farming.
- C. Designate buffer zones between agricultural and residential uses.
- D. Encourage the clustering of a limited number of home sites on less productive soils in farming areas.
- E. Implement use value assessment to reduce the property tax burden for farmers.
- F. Create opportunities for rural businesses serving the local community, including small non-farm businesses on farm properties.
- G. 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:

- A. Protect the scenic beauty of Town, including the Joe Snow Road vista, other rolling hillsides, and river and stream valleys.
- B. Encourage new development in locations, quantities, forms, designs, and densities which support the preservation of rural character.

- C. Work with the City of Merrill to assure that large-scale development proposals do not detract from the Town's rural character.
- D. Preserve access to and promote sensitive development near the Wisconsin River.
- E. Continue to support and participate in efforts to protect and restore the Devil Creek watershed.
- F. Provide recreational and "gathering" spaces for Town residents.

Goal 4: Promote mutually beneficial intergovernmental relations with surrounding communities

Objectives:

- A. Research and understand the land use plans of adjacent communities, and share this Town Land
- B. Use Plan with adjacent communities.
- C. Establish a regular working relationship between Town and City planning and land use officials.
- D. 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.
- E. Participate in cooperation efforts with all surrounding communities to promote shared services where appropriate and resolve conflicts.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on [Map 1](#).

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.

- **2020 Update – Text and Mapping Amendment**

Vision Statement:

- Conserve and maintain the quiet, peaceful, and rural atmosphere currently enjoyed by its residents.
- Importantly, to keep upfront, are the rights of individual residents and landowners as well as the well-being of the community as a whole.
- Promote economic development and growth compatible with Skanawan's rural lifestyle.
- Keep the community informed and updated through a variety of communications opportunities such as posted notices at the Town Hall and Oak Hill Cemetery, on the Town's website, or through newsletters, radio, and newspaper notices, and to provide open communication with Town Board members through emails, phones, and direct conversations.
- Develop and implement resolutions and ordinances as needed to be compatible with future goals set by the Township and work toward preserving our natural resources so that future generations will have a clean and safe environment.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Conserve the rural character of the Town.

Objectives:

- A. Protect the lands best suited for agricultural and forestry use in the Town so that the family farm and the Town's distinctive rural character and economic base may be conserved.
- B. Achieve good soil and water conservation practices, reduce runoff erosion, and protect stream, lake, and ground water from pollution.
- C. Prohibit development in all floodplains, shorelands, steep slopes, and wetlands in order to mitigate future impact from storm events and prevent servicing, developmental, and environmental problems.
- D. Participate in any future updates of the Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan, Farmland Preservation Plan, Land and Water Resource Management Plan, and 5-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- E. Promote development, forestry, and agricultural practices which protect surface and ground water quality, including proper erosion control, manure management, and stormwater management strategies.
- F. Continue to encourage Town residents to test their groundwater quality in order to monitor local groundwater conditions.
- G. Encourage the management of woodlands in an effort to promote further value for timber and wildlife and work with private landowners to prevent the spread of oak wilt and emerald ash bore in the Town's woodland areas.

Goal 2:

- Protect private property rights while maintaining the health, safety, and welfare of the Town.
- Develop and maintain an efficient and sustainable land use pattern.

Objectives:

- A. Through the adoption of a Town Ordinance, establish a Town of Skanawan Plan Commission that regularly meets to implement this Plan and assess the need for future ordinances. Plan Commission members should be approved by the Town Board.
- B. Use the Town of Skanawan Plan Commission to review residential, commercial, and industrial use development proposals to determine if they fit the Town's vision and goals.
- C. Support Lincoln County zoning and subdivision regulations that are intended to minimize incompatible land uses.
- D. Collaborate with Lincoln County on future Zoning or Subdivision Ordinance revisions.
- E. Encourage collaboration between the Town of Skanawan, Lincoln County, and neighboring jurisdictions with regard to planning initiatives and development policies.
- F. Coordinate land development with transportation system improvements.
- G. Utilize Lincoln County Zoning and the Town's Non-Metallic Mining Ordinance to regulate new or expanding non-metallic mining operations.
- H. Work with Lincoln County and neighboring jurisdictions to improve enforcement of minimum property maintenance standards.
- I. Utilize the Lincoln County Highway 51 Overlay Zoning District to enhance aesthetic appeal, protect community character and scenic beauty, and provide guidelines to orderly development along the corridor.
- J. Identify existing gaps in broadband access in the Town and utilize that information to work with local service providers in improving the access, consistency, and coverage of the area.

Goal 3: Improve communication and coordination between the Town, County, and residents.

Objectives

- A. Improve and continuously maintain the Town's website to convey information, provide updates, and increase access to information. All Town Plans, Ordinances, meeting agendas and minutes, and Town Board contact information should be easily accessible on the Town's website.
- B. Coordinate with Lincoln County to ensure consistency between the Town and County's websites.
- C. Develop a cost-saving strategy for dispersing information to residents including sending literature with tax mailings.
- D. Encourage residents to be in contact with Town Board members and attend Town Board meetings to stay informed on Town initiatives and provide feedback.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on **Map 1**

Other Recommendations

See 2020 Town of Skanawan Comprehensive plan for specific goals /objectives regarding housing, transportation, utilities and community facilities, agricultural/forestry, natural, and cultural resource, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, and land us.

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:

- A. Protect forestlands and wildlife areas by limiting non-residential development in these areas.
- B. Enhance the Town’s role in County forest planning.
- C. Discourage the fragmentation of large parcels of forest land. The Town of Somo wishes to acquire some County land for town use.
- D. Maintain the Town’s existing mix of land uses, and the small town character of the Tripoli area.
- E. 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:

- A. 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.
- B. Promote a preservation strategy for the Town’s historical and archeologically significant properties.
- C. Investigate funding strategies for preservation activities.
- D. Encourage planned development in the community through land use planning.
- E. Direct development away from environmental corridors.
- F. 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:

- A. Balance private property rights while promoting the public health, safety and general welfare of the community.
- B. Increase the Town’s young adult population by developing a strategy for retention.
- C. Increase public awareness and involvement in Town issues.
- D. Encourage maintenance and continuance of Tripoli School.

Goal 4: Residential development

Objectives:

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

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on **Map 1**.

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:

- A. Adopt site design review criteria.
- B. Require site plan review for all residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.
- C. Ensure required permits are obtained before development occurs.
- D. Require substantial setbacks from main roads.
- E. Require aesthetic buffers along roads.
- F. Regulate type, location, and density of development particularly of forest land and near flowages.
- G. Preserve undeveloped land.
- H. Maintain flowages and natural shoreline.
- I. Encourage preservation and expansion of forest and farmland.
- J. Authorize the use of cluster subdivisions and mixed use planned development, where appropriate.
- K. Establish differing minimum lot sizes for off and on water developments.
- L. Discourage development in areas that cannot be easily or efficiently served with available municipal utilities and public services.
- M. Regulate waterfront development.

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

Objectives:

- A. Establish standards to promote high quality development.
- B. Provide clear guidelines to ensure minimum property maintenance standards are followed and ensure that these procedures are enforced.
- C. Establish guidelines for mobile home sites.

Goal 3: Encourage public participation and awareness

Objectives:

- A. Adopt a strategy to promote public awareness of issues that affect the Town.
- B. Provide information about what the Town government can provide to respond to public expectations that may be unrealistic.
- C. Create programs that foster neighbor relations.
- D. Increase public involvement in making decisions that affect the Town.
- E. Address any issues of community health hazards.

Goal 4: Enhance and maintain community assets

Objectives:

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

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on **Map 1**.

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)

- **2020 Update – Text Amendment**

Vision Statement

- Preserve the beauty of our Town, and the waters and forests for hunting and fishing.
- Provide a balance between maintaining the quiet and peaceful nature of our Town and encouraging the various recreational activities that many of our residents / part-time residents want to engage in.
- Promote communication between the county and our Town Board.
- Encourage input by the citizens of Wilson to the Town Board.
- Work for more consistent land use.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Preserve scenic beauty and unique Town features

Objectives:

- A. Regulate and manage growth.
- B. Improve the enforcement of existing rules.
- C. Preserve the Town as a good place to live and retire.
- D. Preserve recreational opportunities, including but not limited to ATV/UTV and snowmobile trails, the Somo Fish and Game Club, hunting, and fishing.

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

Objectives:

- A. Maintain a viable mix of land uses.
- B. Promote adherence to ordinances establishing proper boating etiquette and safety given the importance of Somo Lake and the Little Somo River to the Town.
- C. Establish uniform signage on Somo River.

Goal 3: Encourage citizen input in Town and County processes

Objectives:

- A. Continue to coordinate and establish County and Town communications.
- B. Encourage citizen input, promote meetings and special activities, and publicize Town business using our website and virtual meetings.
- C. Create and distribute a survey to all taxpayers for public input regarding Town objectives and improvements.

Goal 4: Enhance zoning and development standards

Objectives:

- A. Assign specific areas for commercial development.
- B. Regulate building inspections and strengthen enforcement.
- C. Create, strengthen, and update development ordinances.
- D. Review, regulate, and enforce proper land use.
- E. Identify and resolve non-conforming land uses.
- F. Require Town Board action on conditional uses.
- G. Regulate Town Road driveway permits, ordinances, and design standards.

Planned Land Use Map

As depicted on **Map 1**.

Other Recommendations

Key recommendations in the Town of Wilson plan include:

- 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.
- 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 Committee 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.