



Introduction

Wisconsin's Smart Growth Legislation

Wisconsin's planning legislation, first adopted more than five decades ago, was significantly changed with passage of the state's 1999-2000 biennial budget. On October 27, 1999, Governor Thompson signed 1999 Wisconsin Act 9 into law and two subsequent amendments were made for technical reasons¹. Quite often this new law is referred to as Wisconsin's smart growth legislation. This legislation has a number of important provisions as discussed below.

Comprehensive Planning Local units of government (counties, towns, villages, and cities) are not required to adopt a comprehensive plan. However, if a local unit of government wants to regulate land use after January 1, 2010, it must have an adopted plan and must make land use decisions consistent with the plan. Section 66.1001 of the Wisconsin State Statutes requires that a comprehensive plan will, at a minimum, address the following nine elements: Issues and Opportunities; Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources; Economic Development; Housing; Utilities and Community Facilities; Transportation; Land Use; Intergovernmental Cooperation; and Implementation. These comprehensive plans are to be adopted by the governing body through an ordinance. As such, an adopted plan becomes much more than a reference document with no consistency requirements.

Funding The legislation created a competitive grant program to help finance the preparation of comprehensive plans.

State Planning Goals Although the legislation does not dictate local land use policy, it does include 14 planning goals (Exhibit A-1). State agencies are encouraged to design its programs, policies, infrastructure, and investments to support these local planning goals. In reviewing grant applications under the competitive planning grant program, the Wisconsin Land Council is to consider the extent to which the applicant incorporates the 14 goals into its overall planning program.

State Growth Dividend Aid Program The legislation directs the Departments of Revenue and Administration to submit a proposal to establish and fund a grant program to provide funding to cities, villages, towns, and counties for (1) new housing units constructed and sold/rented on lots

Nine Elements of a Comprehensive Plan

- Issues and Opportunities
- Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use

¹ Amendments were included in AB 872 in May of 2000 and 2001 Wisconsin Act 16 signed in August 2001.



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not exceeding one-quarter of an acre and (2) new housing units sold at no more than 80 percent of the median sale price within the county.

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Purpose of this Plan

This plan was prepared to comply with the state requirements, as outlined above. In the absence of this plan, the Town could not enforce zoning or any other program or regulation that affects land use after January 31, 2010. Exhibit A-2 lists general areas that must comply with a municipality's adopted comprehensive plan. This plan is intended to provide a long-range perspective of 20 years.

“A comprehensive plan is intended to provide a rational basis for making local land use decisions and to serve as a blueprint for communitywide effort to achieve its vision ”

Exhibit A-2. Governmental Actions that Must be Consistent with a Municipality's Adopted comprehensive Plan

▪ municipal incorporation	▪ annexation and detachment
▪ cooperative boundary agreements	▪ municipal boundary agreements
▪ official maps	▪ local subdivision regulations
▪ extraterritorial plat review	▪ zoning regulations
▪ transportation projects done under §84.185 Wis. Stats	▪ agricultural preservation plans
▪ impact fee ordinances	▪ land acquired for recreation & parks under §23.09(20), Wis. Stats.
▪ zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands	▪ erosion control regulations
▪ stormwater control regulations	▪ any other ordinance , plan, or regulation that relates to land

Source: §66.1001(3), Wis. Stats.

Adoption Process

Prior to starting the planning process, the Town Board adopted a public participation plan, consistent with state requirements (§66.1001(4)a, Wis. Stats), to document the ways town residents would be involved in the preparation, review, and approval of the plan.

The Town Board established an advisory planning committee and gave it the responsibility of developing the first draft of the plan. After the committee finished its work, it submitted a draft plan to the Town's Plan Commission, which by statute must adopt a resolution recommending it to the Town Board. The Plan Commission reviewed the draft as prepared by the committee and made changes prior to sending it to the Town Board with its recommendation. The plan was adopted by ordinance, which is included as Appendix A. Following plan adoption, a copy of the adopted plan was mailed to the surrounding towns, Wisconsin Land Council, and others as required by state law. A summary report documenting the major actions relating to this plan was prepared and is on permanent file at Town Hall.

Organization of this Plan

This plan is organized into chapters that, for the most part, follow the elements identified in state law. Goals, objectives, and policies relating to each of the plan elements are included as a separate chapter. This is done to allow a reader to easily cross-reference goals, objectives, and policies and see how they all work together to achieve the plan's vision. The chapter entitled



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“general provisions” includes some of the legal provisions relating to this plan and how it will be used, interpreted, and amended.



Local Planning Goals

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Local Comprehensive Planning Goals

1. Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures.
2. Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
3. Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitat, lakes, woodlands, opens spaces, and groundwater resources.
4. Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.
5. Encouragement of land uses densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental, and utility costs.
6. Preservation of cultural, historic, and archaeological sites.
7. Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
8. Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
9. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
10. Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and industrial uses.
11. Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional, and local levels.
12. Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
13. Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
14. Providing an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

Previous Planning Efforts

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Previous Planning Efforts

Local Plans

In recent years, several plans have been prepared specifically for the Town of River Falls as described below.

- ◆ *Master plans, facility plans, transportation plans, outdoor recreation plans, etc.*

Statewide and Regional Plans

A number of statewide policy plans have also been prepared (Exhibit A-3). Each of these was reviewed as part of this planning effort. These will be discussed in more detail in the remainder of the plan.

Table A-1. Statewide Plans: 1994 to 2002

Title	State Agency	Year
<i>Translink 21</i>	Department of Transportation	1994
<i>Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan: 2020</i>	Department of Transportation	1998
<i>Midwest Regional Rail System</i>	Department of Transportation	2000
<i>Wisconsin State Highway Plan 2020</i>	Department of Transportation	2000
<i>Wisconsin State Airport System Plan 2020</i>	Department of Transportation	2000
<i>State Recreational Trails Network Plan</i>	Department of Transportation	2001
<i>Wisconsin Pedestrian Plan</i>	Department of Transportation	2001
<i>Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2000-2005</i>	Department of Natural Resources	2000
<i>State Rail Plan</i>	Department of Transportation	Pending
<i>Wisconsin Consolidated Housing Plan; 2000-2005</i>	Department of Administration/Department of Commerce	2000
<i>Wisconsin Historic Preservation Plan; 2001–2005</i>	Wisconsin Historical Society	2001
<i>State of Wisconsin Hazard Mitigation Plan</i>	Wisconsin Emergency Management	2001

Plan Monitoring and Amendment

From time to time, it will become necessary to amend this plan. The specific details regarding the amendment process are outlined in the chapter entitled “General Provisions”.

Community Survey

In the summer of 2003, the Town of River Falls worked with the UW-River Falls Survey Center to create an instrument in which to survey the opinions of residents with regard to land use, economic development, housing, and other factors affecting residents in the Town. A written questionnaire was sent to every household in the Town. Of the 1,700 surveys that were mailed out, 595 were returned for a response rate of 35 percent. Survey results are incorporated throughout the plan where appropriate. A copy of the report is on permanent file at Town Hall.