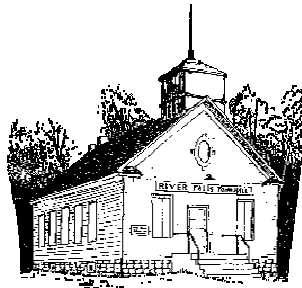


Town of

River Falls

*Issues and Opportunities
Element*



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Contents

Issues and Opportunities Element
Town of River Falls



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s. 66.1001(2)(a) Wis Stats

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

s. 66.1001(2)(a) Wis Stats:

The Issues & Opportunities Element is to provide background information on the local unit of government and a statement of overall objectives, policies, goals and programs to guide the future development and redevelopment of the local governmental unit over a 20-year planning period. Background information shall include population, household and employment forecasts that the local government unit uses in developing its Comprehensive Plan, and demographic trends, age distribution, educational levels, income levels and employment characteristics that exist within the local governmental units.

As prescribed by Wisconsin's Smart Growth legislation, this plan will address the nine (9) required plan elements as follows:

1. Issues & Opportunities
2. Agricultural, Natural & Cultural Resources
3. Housing
4. Economic Development
5. Utilities & Community Facilities
6. Transportation
7. Land Use
8. Intergovernmental Cooperation
9. Implementation

Introduction

Issues and Opportunities Element Town of River Falls

Introduction

The Pierce County area was explored during the 1670's by Father Louis Hennepin and French traders. The first settlement was made at Prescott, the junction of the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers, in 1827. The County was created in 1853, and while not generally timbered, logging was carried on in the Rush, Eau Galle, and Kinnickinnic River valleys. By 1855, the county was settled for farming, and dairy cattle were introduced. Rich fertile soils with a minimum amount of clearing required made the land ideal for rapid development. Wheat, corn, and oats became the principal field crops. Excellent river transportation provided ready means of moving farm products to market. Ellsworth was established as the county seat and became the initial population center of the county. The original courthouse was built in 1879, the present one in 1905.

The Town of River Falls is a community of 2,316 located in the St. Croix River Valley, approximately 30 miles east of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area. The Town is located adjacent to the City of River Falls, and about 8 miles northeast of the City of Prescott. Although the Town has a rural atmosphere, it is served by and well connected to larger urban areas by its transportation routes. The major arteries of transportation are State Highway 35 (connecting River Falls to I-94) State Highway 29/35 (connecting River Falls with Prescott), and 65 which connects the area to Ellsworth (SE). Other improvements to the surrounding roadways are planned and it is suspected this will only increase the incidence of rural non-farm housing. The Town has been experiencing significant growth in recent years, and has concerns about the impact of this new growth and the need to better plan for and manage it. In recognition of these issues, the Town has responded, deciding to prepare a Comprehensive Plan.

-
- “The Town of River Falls is a community of 2,316 located in the St. Croix River Valley, approximately 40 miles east of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area.”

River Falls was originally organized as a township in 1854 and named “Greenwood” in honor of Clark Green and Captain Joseph Wood who arrived in 1853. Since the name “Greenwood” was already in use elsewhere in the state, the township changed its name to River Falls in 1858.

Joel Foster was the earliest settler arriving in 1848 at the junction of the Kinnickinnic River and the South Fork. Other early pioneers instrumental in the development of the Town include James and Walter Mapes and D. McGregor arriving in 1849, J. M. Cowan, Hosea Bates and S. M. Davis.

River Falls was mostly prairie and forest at the time of white settlement with the Kinnickinnic, South Fork and Trimbelle Rivers crossing through. When first created, the township took in parts of present-day Clifton and Oak Grove as well. Its good soils

Introduction

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

attracted “Yankees”, Irish and Bohemians alike, as well as other ethnic groups. The Irish built the Donegal School in 1865 and were later replaced by Bohemian immigrants in what became known as the Cherma settlement south of the City of River Falls.

In 1854, the village of Kinnickinnic was platted by N.N. and O.S. Powell; the name was changed to River Falls in 1855 with the establishment of a post office. The City of River Falls has always played a significant role in the history of the township as is exemplified by the many mills constructed along the banks of the Kinnickinnic and South Fork. By 1860, there were thirteen mills in River Falls; 4 grist mills, 8 sawmills, and one tanning mill. The first store was built and operated by the Powell brothers

Education was very important to the early settlers of River Falls with the first schoolhouse being built in 1854 at a cost of \$500. Helen Flint conducted this first school. The early elementary schools were soon followed by the establishment of the River Falls Academy in 1857, and the State Normal School in 1874, the latter now being the University of Wisconsin – River Falls.

Until 1854, religious services were sporadic and conducted by ministers passing through the area. The Congregationalist began to organize in this year with a series of meetings. Early members of the Methodist faith were part of the St. Paul district of Minnesota. Other early churches included the Baptists and Catholics, the latter being first represented by the Irish of Donegal and then the Bohemians at Cherma. The Omaha Line Railroad was completed between River Falls and Ellsworth in 1885, transferring both raw materials and passengers to and from the township

Notable pioneers of River Falls include J. P. Adams, Frank G. Baird, George M. Bredahl, Thomas C. Browell, Valentine A. Bunce, Mrs. Rachael Cass, Philip A. Glass, Lyman and Ezra Healy, James Hunt, Thomas Lauder, William Lovell, Manuel Robey, Sherman Staples, Ransom Wilcox, and Samuel Wesley Williams.

Census figures for the year 1860 show a total of 3,252 acres of improved land and 6,007 acres of unimproved land in River Falls Township. Wheat farming led to considerable prosperity in Pierce County at this time with grain being shipped down the Mississippi River from Prescott. Over 19,800 bushels of wheat were produced in River Falls in 1860, along with 11,495 bushels of (Indian) corn, and 10,690 pounds of butter. Wheat farming eventually gave way to dairying in the 1900’s as the primary agricultural pursuit.

The 2000 census reports a population in the Town of 2,316 residents. Its rural character and proximity to the Twin Cities Metro Area, the St. Croix River and other sites of interest continue to contribute to the Town’s high quality of life. However, the influence of the Twin Cities Metro Area also presents challenges. As time has passed, access to and from the region has been greatly enhanced through the construction of the State, County and local roadway system. With this increased access, many are looking to the Town and the region as a place to live, work and recreate. In an effort to guide growth now and in the future in a manner that is consistent with the vision of River Falls residents, the Town is preparing this Comprehensive Plan. The Issues and Opportunities



Introduction

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

Element provides background information about the Town, analyzes current trends, and identifies the issues important to residents of the Town of River Falls. It forms the base from which the community develops the remaining Plan elements.

Background Information: Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis

Issues and Opportunities Element
Town of River Falls

Vision Statement

Agriculture is the main land use in the Town of River Falls. The Town's traditions are rooted in agriculture. Its citizens support preserving the rural character of the Town because its rural character is the foundation for the family, community, and ecological values of the Town. The Town fully recognizes that this rural character is indispensable to the community and that the value of homes and land in the Town is tied to the beauty of the rural landscape.

Rural character may mean many different things to many different people. For the purposes of this plan, however, rural character has been defined by the Town as: "An area has rural character when it has a rustic, country look and a peaceful, calm atmosphere."

The rural character of this Town is inherently reflected in agriculture and its related activities. It is tied to the environment and ecology. The "rustic, country look and peaceful, calm atmosphere" are found in the Town's farms, woods, meadows, wetlands, streams, and the wildlife thereon, and these features depend upon the stewardship of Town residents for their existence and preservation. The definition of rural character recognizes the intrinsic value of the natural environment as a full partner of this community.

The Town recognizes and accepts the challenge of preserving rural character through progress. Ensuring the long-term benefits that accompany rural character may require sacrifice by the community. We have a duty and responsibility as caretakers to preserve the finite ecological and environmental resources that exist in the Town, placing limits on expansion where necessary to protect those resources and our rural character.

We understand that we as children and adults cannot enjoy the benefits of this rural character during life and upon old age divest ourselves of the duty to preserve that which enriches our lives.

In addition to maintaining the rural atmosphere and preserving the prime agricultural land, the Town supports:

1. A strong conservation program for both agricultural and rural residential areas.
2. A water management plan that will protect surface and ground water quality including the rivers and wetlands.
3. A cooperative inter-governmental working relationship with the city of River Falls in the Extraterritorial Zone (ETZ).

...A town is saved, not more by the righteous men in it than by the woods and swamps that surround it. A township where one primitive forest rots below—such a town is fitted to raise not only corn and potatoes, put poets and philosophers for the coming ages.

Henry David Thoreau
WALKING (1862)

Background Information: Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis

Issues and Opportunities Element
Town of River Falls

4. The discouragement of urban sprawl by managing development.

Background Information: Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis

Before the Town can effectively plan for its future, an understanding of current conditions and trends is essential. The following demographic information and background data provides a snapshot of the Town's historical and recent development trends.

Population

Historic Trends

The population of River Falls reached an early peak after the Civil War with the influx of both easterners and immigrants, only to be followed by a steady decline after the turn of the century. Up until the 1950s, the majority of River Falls residents were farmers, but with advanced technology came less of a need for manpower on the farm, hence, a decline in the overall population. Other factors including the Great Depression and Second World War also contribute to this decline. Since the 1950s, the Town of River Falls has witnessed a steady increase in population growth that has already surpassed the initial peak of the 1890s. However, due to annexation by the City of River Falls, between 1970 and 1990 the population in the Town of River Falls decreased by 10 percent.

Annexation has been an important factor in the population shift throughout the entire county. The total change for all other townships in Pierce County shows a 5 percent decline since 1980. However, the county as a whole shows a 5 percent increase since 1980. Pierce County estimates a total increase of 14 percent over the next 20 years. Much of this growth can be attributed to a growing shift from agricultural land use to rural non-farm development due to the close proximity of the Twin Cities and a desire for rural residency. The City of River Falls reached a total population in 1990 of 8,841 residents, an increase of 17 percent since 1980.

Between 1990 and 2000, Pierce County's population grew by just over 4,000 or 12%. Similarly, the Town of River Falls grew at a rate of 19% or 372 persons over this decade. The statewide growth rate during this same period was 10%.

Background Information: Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis

Issues and Opportunities Element
Town of River Falls

| Population Trends - Region and State | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|------------------------|
| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | # Change (90-00) | % Change (90-00) |
| Town of River Falls | 1,642 | 2,168 | 1,944 | 2,316 | 372 | 19% |
| Pierce County | 26,652 | 31,149 | 32,765 | 36,804 | 4,039 | 12% |
| St. Croix County | 34,354 | 43,262 | 50,251 | 63,155 | 12,904 | 26% |
| Minn./St. Paul MSA | 1,965,159 | 2,137,133 | 2,538,564 | 2,968,806 | 429,972 | 17% |
| State of Wisconsin | 4,417,821 | 4,705,642 | 4,891,769 | 5,363,675 | 471,906 | 10% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics

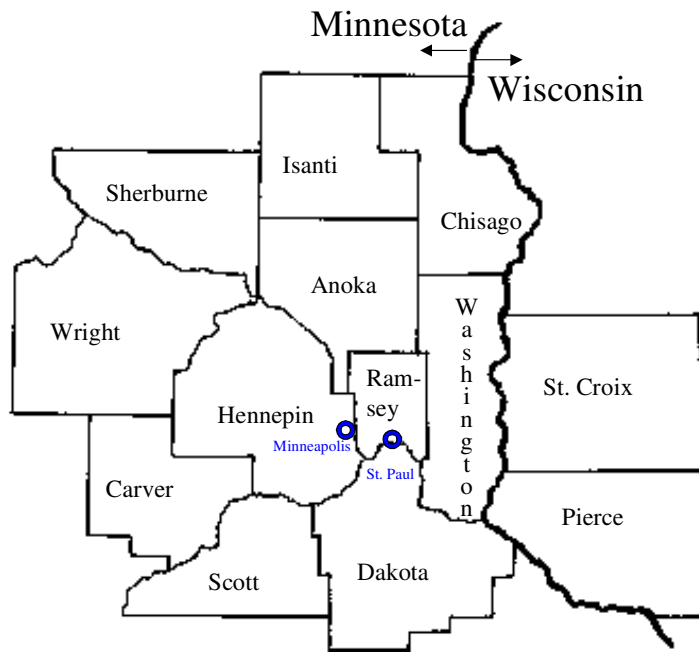
Due to the increasing population in the Twin Cities and the proposed improvements in the roadways it can be assumed that the Town of River Falls will have constant pressure from potential development and non-farm use. It is imperative the residents and the Town Board work closely to ensure the land use plan is adhered to and that all considerations are met in order to preserve the resources and character of the Town of River Falls.

The influence of economic opportunities and residential migration from the Twin Cities was recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1993 when Pierce County was added to the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). MSAs are defined as a county or counties with a central city of at least 50,000 people, a total population over 100,000, and the existence of significant social and economic ties between the central city and included counties. Growth and expansion of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area is influencing growth patterns of nearby communities in Wisconsin.

-
- “Growth in the Town of River Falls is attributable to the Town’s proximity to the Twin Cities Metro Area.”

Background Information: Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis

Issues and Opportunities Element
Town of River Falls



Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN--WI MSA

As expected, communities in northern and western Pierce County, closer to the Metro Area, have experienced higher rates of growth than other parts of the County during the last ten-year period. Several communities along the St. Croix River also experienced higher growth rates. Neighboring St. Croix County has experienced similar trends. While the Town of River Falls has experienced strong growth at 19%, the County's northwestern most Town, Clifton, experienced the highest growth at 48%. Similarly, the Town of Isabelle, along the county's southern border experienced a 47% increase in population.

Conversely, communities on the eastern side of Pierce County experienced much slower rates of growth, with a few municipalities seeing a slight loss of population from 1990 to 2000. In rural townships, this decline may be the result of community efforts to preserve rural and agricultural character, and/or the loss of population due to annexations by cities and villages. Other factors at play include an overall trend of decreasing household size and increased diversity in family types, migration patterns and births/deaths. As noted above, the slower rate of growth is likely also attributable to these communities being farther out from the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metro Area.

Background Information: Existing Conditions and Trends Analysis

Issues and Opportunities Element
Town of River Falls

| Town of River Falls and Vicinity - Population Data | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------------------------|
| Municipality | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | % Change (1990-2000) |
| Town of River Falls | 1,642 | 2,168 | 1,944 | 2,316 | 19% |
| Town of Clifton | 612 | 975 | 1,119 | 1,657 | 48% |
| Town of Ellsworth | 1,260 | 1,408 | 1,030 | 1,064 | 3% |
| Town of Martell | 733 | 864 | 866 | 1,070 | 24% |
| Town of Oak Grove | 783 | 936 | 1,120 | 1,522 | 36% |
| Town of Trimbelle | 1,225 | 1,420 | 1,482 | 1,511 | 2% |
| Town of Kinnickinnic | 755 | 1,051 | 1,139 | 1,400 | 23% |
| Town of Pleasant Valley | 330 | 360 | 384 | 430 | 12% |
| Town of Troy | 1,517 | 2,326 | 2,850 | 3,661 | 28% |
| Village of Ellsworth | 1,983 | 2,143 | 2,706 | 2,909 | 8% |
| City of River Falls | 6,247 | 7,521 | 8,841 | 12,560 | 42% |
| City of Prescott | 2,331 | 2,654 | 3,243 | 3,764 | 16% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The communities surrounding the Town of River Falls are experiencing differing growth patterns. For instance, the Town of Clifton experienced a 48% increase in population between 1990 and 2000, while the Town of Trimbelle increased by only 2% during this same period. The City of River Falls increased by 16%. It will be important to maintain and enhance relationships with these communities. The Town of River Falls, the City of River Falls, and the surrounding towns of Clifton, Kinnickinnic, and Troy have established a cooperative boundary commission, and hope to draft a Cooperative Boundary Plan. As the communities grow and address boundary issues, they will clearly benefit from intergovernmental coordination and cooperation.

The concurrent nature of these planning efforts provides an opportunity to address issues of mutual concern. The extraterritorial jurisdiction boundary of the City of River Falls brings the need and opportunity to discuss future land use and how to manage it on the periphery of the City while, at the same time, respecting the rural identity associated with the Town.

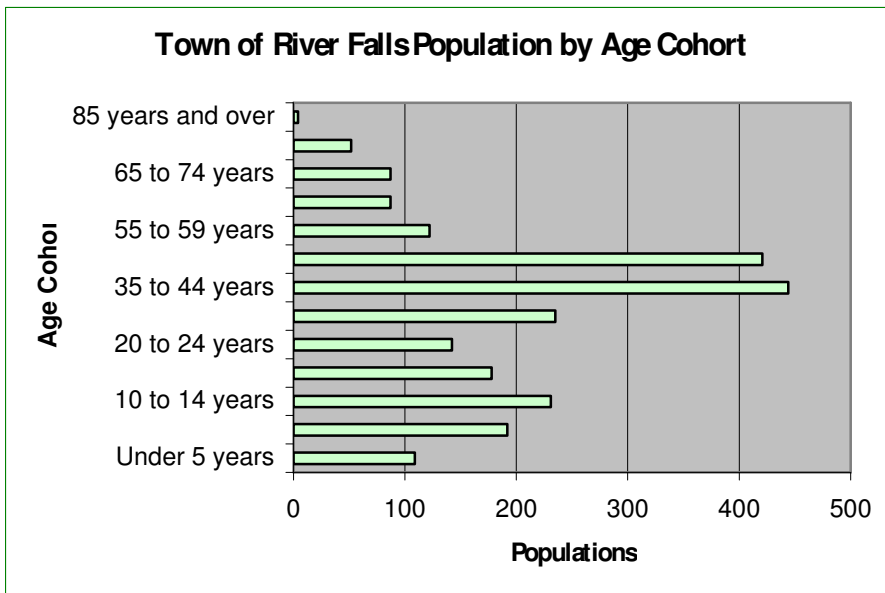
Age and Gender Distribution

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

Age and Gender Distribution

The median age of residents of the Town of River Falls is 36.8, compared to 32.1 for Pierce County and 36 for the State. The following graph illustrates the City's population by age group. The 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 age cohorts are substantially larger than any other age group.



Source: Census 2000

Housing

The total number of housing units in the Town increased from 644 in 1990 to 821 in 2000 – a 29% increase. Pierce County also experienced a 17% increase over this time period, from 11,536 housing units in 1990 to 13,493 in 2000.

Occupancy and value of these units breaks down as follows:

| Town of River Falls Housing Occupancy | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|----------|------------|----------|
| Tenure | 1990 | % (1990) | 2000 | % (2000) |
| Owner occupied | 524 | 81.3% | 682 | 83.1% |
| Renter occupied | 105 | 16.3% | 120 | 14.6% |
| Vacant Units | 15 | 2.3% | 19 | 2.3% |
| Total Units | 644 | | 821 | |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000

Age and Gender Distribution

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

| Median Housing Values (MHV) and Rent Levels | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1990 MHV | 2000 MHV | 1990 Rent | 2000 Rent |
| Town of River Falls | \$92,200 | \$167,600 | \$454 | \$638 |
| Pierce County | \$65,600 | \$123,100 | \$387 | \$542 |
| Wisconsin | \$62,500 | \$112,200 | \$331 | \$540 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics: 2000

Household Income

The 2000 median household income in the Town of River Falls was \$65,721. This figure compares to \$49,551 for Pierce County and \$43,791 statewide. The table below compares household income in the Town to that of the entire county.

| 2000 Household Income | River Falls (%) | Pierce County (%) |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| < \$10,000 | 0.9% | 5.2% |
| \$10,000 - \$14,999 | 3.2% | 3.9% |
| \$15,000 - \$24,999 | 3.7% | 11.3% |
| \$25,000 - \$34,999 | 6.4% | 12.3% |
| \$35,000 - 49,999 | 13.3% | 17.6% |
| \$50,000 - 74,999 | 32.8% | 27.7% |
| \$75,000 - \$99,999 | 19.8% | 12.4% |
| \$100,000 - \$149,999 | 13.5% | 7.0% |
| \$150,000 - \$199,999 | 2.7% | 1.3% |
| \$200,000 or more | 3.6% | 1.2% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Table DP-3, Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000

Population Projections

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) and the Mississippi River Regional Plan Commission (MRRPC) prepared population projections for the Town based on data up to and including the 2000 Census. Each set of projections suggests continued growth, with the MRRPC projecting slightly higher rates of growth than the DOA.

| Official Population Projections – Town of River Falls | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Agency | 1990* | 2000* | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 |
| Wisconsin DOA | 1,944 | 2,304 | 2,391 | 2,502 | na | na | na |
| MRRPC | 1,944 | 2,304 | 2,414 | 2,525 | 2,635 | 2,745 | 2,856 |

* U.S. Census Bureau

The Department of Administration population projections based on 2000 Census data are currently only available through 2010. Based upon 2000 Census data, recent growth trends, development interests, and the proximity to the Twin Cities, it appears that new projections for the Town are warranted. DOA updates to official population projections are expected to become available soon. Until this update occurs, the following projections are offered for consideration to assist with the preparation of this

Age and Gender Distribution

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

Comprehensive Plan. If updated projections are issued during the course of this process this information can be updated and amended as needed.

| Revised Population Projections – Town of River Falls | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|------|
| Growth Scenario | U.S. Census | | | | Projections | |
| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 |
| Rapid Growth | 1,642 | 2,168 | 1,944 | 2,304 | 2731 | 3362 |
| 10-Year Trend | 1,642 | 2,168 | 1,944 | 2,304 | 2692 | 3248 |
| Moderate Growth | 1,642 | 2,168 | 1,944 | 2,304 | 2548 | 2843 |
| Reduced Growth | 1,642 | 2,168 | 1,944 | 2,304 | 2495 | 2701 |
| 20-Year Trend | 1,642 | 2,168 | 1,944 | 2,304 | 2409 | 2479 |

Source: Vierbicher Associates, Inc.

Projection Methodology:

The following methodology was employed to produce the population projections listed in the above table. The projections are simple and only intended to provide a range of potential growth scenarios for the Town. New projections developed by the DOA are likely to employ more scientific methodology and should be consulted after they are updated to beyond 2010.

Rapid Growth: Looking at Twin Cities Metropolitan Area population and housing trend data it is apparent that more and more families are choosing to move into outlying communities. Access and quality of life are primary drivers behind this trend. Population projections were generated by assuming that population growth rates will continue to increase, beyond the average annual increase from 1990-2000. The average annual growth rate used for these projections is 2.1%.

10-Year Trend: The Town experienced a large increase in growth during this decade. The average annual growth rate during this period was 1.9%. Population projections in this category were generated assuming that this average annual growth rate would continue.

Moderate Growth: There is a significant difference between the 10-year growth rate and the 20-year growth rate. This category projects the average of these two trends (1.1%).

Reduced Growth: Looking at the most recent population estimates, it appears that the rate of growth has begun to slow down. Growth in this category was calculated by assuming an average annual rate of 0.8%, which is the average annual growth rate from 2000 to 2003.

20-Year Trend: Because the Town experienced a decrease in population from 1980 to 1990, the overall growth rate for the 20-year period is significantly lower than the 10-year trend. The average annual rate over this 20-year period

Age and Gender Distribution

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

| Town of River Falls | | | | | | | | |
|--|----|------|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Forecasts for Population and Housing Units: 2004 to 2023 | | | | | | | | |
| Population Added During Period | | | Parameter at Specified Annual Average Growth Rates | | | | | |
| | | | 0.3% | 0.8% | 1.1% | 1.3% | 1.9% | 2.1% |
| 2004 | to | 2008 | 35 | 95 | 133 | 157 | 233 | 260 |
| 2009 | to | 2013 | 35 | 100 | 140 | 168 | 255 | 287 |
| 2014 | to | 2018 | 35 | 104 | 148 | 179 | 280 | 318 |
| 2019 | to | 2023 | 35 | 108 | 157 | 191 | 309 | 354 |
| 2004 | to | 2023 | 140 | 407 | 578 | 695 | 1077 | 1219 |
| Housing Units Needed During Period | | | | | | | | |
| Population Added During Period | | | Parameter at Specified Annual Average Growth Rates | | | | | |
| | | | 0.3% | 0.8% | 1.1% | 1.3% | 1.9% | 2.1% |
| 2004 | to | 2008 | 23 | 45 | 58 | 67 | 95 | 104 |
| 2009 | to | 2013 | 24 | 48 | 64 | 73 | 106 | 118 |
| 2014 | to | 2018 | 24 | 50 | 67 | 79 | 117 | 132 |
| 2019 | to | 2023 | 25 | 53 | 72 | 86 | 132 | 149 |
| 2004 | to | 2023 | 96 | 196 | 261 | 305 | 450 | 503 |
| Notes: | | | | | | | | |
| Between 1990 and 2000, the population of the Town grew at a rate of 1.9% per year. | | | | | | | | |
| Assumptions | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Average household size declines from 2.87 in 2000 to 2.7 in 2023 | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Occupancy rate remains the same throughout the period (97.6%) | | | | | | | | |
| 3. The ratio of those living in households to those not living in households (e.g., nursing homes, group homes, etc.) remains the same throughout the period (99.7% household population, 0.3% non-household population) | | | | | | | | |

Education

The River Falls School District operates seven schools:. 2000 Census data indicates school enrollment for Town students as follows:

| Town of River Falls – School Enrollment | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| Population 3 years and over enrolled in school | 720 | 100% |
| Nursery School, preschool | 38 | 5.3% |
| Kindergarten | 47 | 6.5% |
| Elementary (grades 1-8) | 358 | 49.7% |
| High School (grades 9-12) | 143 | 19.9% |
| College or graduate school | 134 | 18.6% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000

Age and Gender Distribution

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

| Town of River Falls – Educational Attainment | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| Population 25 years & over | 1,456 | 100% |
| Less than 9 th grade | 30 | 2.1% |
| 9 th to 12 th grade | 33 | 2.3% |
| High School graduate (including equivalency) | 387 | 26.6% |
| Some college, no degree | 305 | 20.9% |
| Associate degree | 91 | 6.3% |
| Bachelor's Degree | 335 | 23.0% |
| Graduate or Professional Degree | 275 | 18.9% |
| Percent high school graduate or higher | 95.7% | |
| Percent bachelor's degree or higher | 41.9% | |

Source: U. S. Census Bureau. Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000

Local business training needs are primarily met through programs of the Wisconsin Chippewa Valley Technical College in the City of River Falls and the University of Wisconsin– River Falls. Educational institutions in the Twin Cities Metro Area are accessible to Town residents as well.

Employment

Although farming employment has been decreasing, agriculture continues to be a dominant part of the Town's economic base. There are also a number of local businesses, mostly employing fewer than 20 people. However, most of the Town's work force commutes to jobs in outlying areas, including the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The Manufacturing industry and the educational, health and social service industries employ the largest percentage of the Town's labor force. The Town also has a higher median household income than either the county or the region. More information on employment characteristics is included in the Economic Development Element.

Relevant Plans, Policies and Programs

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls



Relevant Plans, Policies and Programs

The following relevant plan list is not exhaustive in detail but provides a general overview of the framework through which local plans and programs can be developed. Continuity across units of government can streamline processes and more efficiently use resources.

City of River Falls Sewer Service Area Water Quality Management Plan

The City of River Falls Sewer Service planning area includes the City of River Falls, and the Towns of Troy, Kinnickinnic, River Falls, and Clifton. The plan is intended to serve as the community statement of direction for physical development, conservation, and a plan for providing services in an environmentally sound manner. It provides guidance for development proposals, capital improvements, annexation, and the extension of services. In addition, it is intended to meet the requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act and N.R. 121 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code.

River Falls Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

The intent of this plan is to create policies and facilities in the City and Town of River Falls, particularly urbanized areas, that will enhance bicycling and walking opportunities. The increasing population and automobile traffic that the area is experiencing also has an impact on the rural, small town character that is attractive to many residents and visitors. This plan outlines the benefits of bicycling and walking, selects and evaluates corridors for their suitability for bicycling and walking, and recommends strategies for making improvements.

Pierce County Land Management Plan

The Pierce County Land Management Plan is a general guide to the regulation of land use in the 17 townships of the county (but not in the incorporated municipalities such as River Falls or Ellsworth). Its goals and objectives provide general policy direction to the major land use questions facing the County, and its policies and plan map are the basis for a new County zoning ordinance and zoning map. The County zoning ordinance is the legal tool by which the Land Management Plan can be carried out. This plan was created in 1996 with a great amount of participation by citizens from every township. The Town of River Falls chose not to adopt the plan and administers its own zoning.

Town of River Falls Master Plan

The Town of River Falls adopted a Master Plan on April 3, 2000. The Master Plan reflected the opinions of residents as surveyed in 1993. The Master Plan addresses the Town's land use plans, goals, and objectives. It has been used to guide decisions made by the plan commission and town board and forms the basis for the present Comprehensive Plan.

Relevant Plans, Policies and Programs

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

River Falls Sewer Service Area Water Quality Management Plan (SSAP)

The Town of River Falls, in cooperation with the adjacent towns, the City of River Falls, the Department of Natural Resources, Trout Unlimited, and the University of Wisconsin River Falls will implement a regional water quality plan. The plan will accommodate anticipated community development and continue sustainable agricultural practices while controlling the quality of stormwater runoff and properly manage and protect groundwater resources as well as the physical habitat of the Kinnickinnic River tributaries and all other rivers and streams throughout the Town.

Community Participation/Input

Issues and Opportunities Element

Town of River Falls

Community Participation/Input

Community involvement and input into the comprehensive planning process is essential in developing a plan that is supported by the community and that will address the true needs of the Town. The Town adopted a Public Participation Procedures Manual to guide the public participation process and provide for access to draft plan elements and other materials to the general public, community interest groups, adjoining municipalities and overlapping government agencies. This Manual is included in this Comprehensive Plan as Appendix B. In addition, a number of other activities have been incorporated into the planning process to allow the general public and Town boards and commissions an opportunity to provide input into the development of plan elements and their respective goals, objectives and policies.

Town Survey

In the summer of 2003, the Town of River Falls worked with the UW-River Falls Survey Center to create an instrument by which to survey the opinions of residents with regard to land use, economic development, housing, and other factors affecting residents in the Town of River Falls. The Town mailed 1,700 surveys to residents and non-resident landowners. The Town enjoyed a 35% return rate, with 595 surveys being completed and mailed back.

The Comprehensive “Smart Growth” Plan Advisory committee, the Plan Commission, and the Town Board relied heavily upon survey results in evaluating plan elements as they were prepared by the consultant. The Town’s comprehensive Plan is based closely upon the opinions of residents as reflected in this survey. The survey and results are included as Appendix C.

Photographic Survey

In the summer of 2003, the town Plan commission asked members of the Town and Country 4-H photography project, under the leadership of town resident Jean Ellefson, to photograph scenes and places in the community. Each project member was given a disposable camera and asked to take pictures of the things in the community that he or she liked and did not want to see changed, and also of things he or she did not like and hoped could be changed or prevented in the future. Children were invited to talk with their parents about the project, and because the project involved some driving throughout the community to get pictures, parents became part of the project as well.

Once the pictures were developed, a meeting was held at Mrs. Ellefson’s home to talk about them. The pictures were attached to poster board and each project member talked

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about why he or she had taken the pictures. The poster boards were presented at the June 2003 Town and Country 4-H meeting and also at a smart growth advisory committee meeting. Several adult members of the comprehensive smart growth advisory committee participated in the exercise as well. Many of the photographs and accompanying comments have been saved and are available for viewing at the clerk's office.

SWOT Analysis – Smart Growth Planning Advisory Committee

On April 24, 2003, Vierbicher Associates conducted a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) with the Town of River Falls Smart Growth Planning Advisory Committee. The Smart Growth Planning Advisory Committee is made up of Town Board members, Plan Commissioners, and members of the general public, and deals with the general Comprehensive Planning Program, including the establishment of short and long term community goals. The results of these sessions are summarized below and will become an important resource for the City's Plan Commission in developing goals, objectives and policies under each of the nine required Smart Growth planning elements.

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| Agricultural, Cultural & Natural Resources | Agricultural, Cultural & Natural Resources |
|--|---|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| Items identified: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rural atmosphere. (2) 2. Rural character. (1) 3. Topography. (2) 4. Beauty of natural landscapes. (3) 5. Streams & Rivers. (1) 6. Small Community. (1) 7. Scenery – open spaces & bluffs. (1) 8. Diverse geography – land, waterways, forests, etc. (1) | Items identified: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farmland protection & preservation (1) 2. Loss of small family farms (1) Not enough community togetherness (1) 4. Hard to hold onto small town feeling (1) 5. Lack of public record facilities (1) 6. Loss of historic buildings (1) 7. Not enough parkland that is maintained (1) |

| Economic Development | Economic Development |
|---|---|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| Items identified: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None identified | Items identified: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of business. (1) 2. Lack of business opportunity at south end of city. (1) 3. Loss of Downtown businesses. (1) |

| Transportation | Transportation |
|--|--|
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| Items identified: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiet roads. (1) 2. Proximity to Twin Cities. (2) | Items identified: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of sufficient roads (1) |

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| Utilities & Community Facilities | Utilities & Community Facilities |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| Items identified: 1. Roads. (1) 2. Good schools. (2) | Items identified: 1. None identified. |

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| Housing | Housing |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| Items identified: 1. Close to big cities with sports, theater, and special activities. (1) 2. Large parcels in Town gives us opportunity to plan. (1) | Items identified: 1. Current zoning. (1) 2. Proximity to Twin Cities area. (1) 3. View littered with large homes on hills. (1) |

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|------------------|-------------------|
| Land Use | Land Use |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |

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|---|---|
| <p>Items identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low density. (1) 2. Growing community. (1) 3. Quite. (1) 4. Location. (1) 5. Open space – between houses. (1) 6. Control our own zoning. (1) 7. Farms still in use. (1) 8. Ag land – preservation of it. (1) 9. Agricultural/undeveloped land. (1) | <p>Items identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development pressures, loss of land, and impending growth. (10) 2. Desire for development on land. (1) 3. Town Hall run by the same people & same people on committees year after year. (1) 4. Cannot do what you want with your land. (1) 5. The encroachment of the City. (1) 6. To close to City. (1) 7. Less community environment due to urbanization. (1) 8. Cannot put driveway where you want – Town wants the long way home. (1) 9. The lack of a solid subdivision planning ordinances. (1) 10. Update old ordinances – make development easier. (1) 11. Nature preservation land. (1) |
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| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Intergovernmental Cooperation | Intergovernmental Cooperation |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |

Community Participation/Input

Issues and Opportunities Element

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|---|---|
| <p>Items identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talented people. (1) 2. Strong people involvement in planning process. (1) 3. Congenial people, for the most part. (1) | <p>Items identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divided objectives (1) 2. Animosity & suspicion re relationship between Town and City of River Falls. (1) 3. No permanent legal boundary with City. (1) 4. City of River Falls allowing numerous recent developments. (1) 5. Not having a cooperative boundary with the City of River Falls. (1) 6. The lack of equal consideration by the City – re: transportation, land use, etc. (1) 7. Not a broad base of people governing Town. (1) 8. Have to deal with the county on zoning. (1) 9. Limited planning resources – no permanent staff, no GIS system, few \$. (1) |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Implementation Strengths</p> | <p>Implementation Weaknesses</p> |
| <p>Items identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None identified. | <p>Items identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High taxes. (1) |

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Following the identification of strengths and weaknesses, Vierbicher Associates facilitated a “round-robin” brainstorming session to identify opportunities and threats. Opportunities and threats identified by the group are summarized below.

OPPORTUNITIES in the Town of River Falls

- We have an opportunity to create a legal boundary with the City of River Falls.
- We have an opportunity to create local markets for local farms.
- We have an opportunity to create and adopt a Comprehensive Plan that will then assist with and justify decision making.
- We have an opportunity to plan for providing living quarters for all types of peoples needs in our community.
- We have an opportunity to plan for concentrating housing in to cluster areas instead of allowing continuing sprawl.
- We have an opportunity to see how our current plans will effect the future of our community.
- We have an opportunity to plan for specialized land uses and the provision of utilities.
- We have an opportunity to preserve the town unit form of government.
- We have an opportunity to plan for the preservation of our scenery and our rural character.
- We have an opportunity to save our historic buildings and structures.
- We have an opportunity to not only plan, but to implement our plan.
- We have an opportunity to preserve our local ecology and wetlands.
- We have an opportunity to communicate a clearer picture of what we want to be to the City of River Falls.
- We have an opportunity to involve a lot of town people in this project.
- We have an opportunity to establish ways of preserving productive farmland and woodlands.
- We have an opportunity to work with the City of River Falls to establish a transfer of development (TDR) rights program between our unit of government boundaries.
- We have an opportunity to map the geography and roadways in our Town.
- We have an opportunity to designate future land use areas and land uses by type in our Town.
- We have an opportunity to plan for the development of our Town Park system.

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THREATS to the Town of River Falls

- The City of River Falls is anti-Town.
- There is unlimited and uncontrolled growth currently occurring.
- The current pace of annexation is too great.
- We need to carefully balance our plan and its resulting regulations with just compensation to property owners and their individual property rights.
- There is currently a high level of aggressive developer activity in the Town actively seeking to acquire land from current owners.
- Some will argue that development should not occur only because they have already managed to locate here.
- If we do not take on the implementation of our plan after it is adopted, nothing will change.
- The development decision we make as part of this planning process will have long term impacts.
- City proposed roads in our Town within the extraterritorial area will encourage growth and damage our sense of place and destroy our physical and environmental assets.
- There is a potential that “Big Box” retail establishments will want to locate on the western bypass of the City being proposed by WDOT within the Town.
- The State could potentially reduce the amount of shared revenue they give to us.
- Decisions and plans by the Metropolitan Planning Council have direct impacts on us while we have no input into their considerations.
- We are continuing to lose our family farms in the Town and their associated way of life.
- Current and future development are leading to a potentially congested transportation system.
- Existing and future land activities threaten our water resources.
- Existing and future land activities are a threat to our natural resource base.

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As part of the Town of River Falls comprehensive planning program, the Town is participating on a multijurisdictional planning committee involving the Town of River Falls and the City of River Falls. As part of the City of River Falls comprehensive planning effort this committee has been established to address issues of regional concern and specific issues within the sewer service area of the City as delineated by the City's recently adopted sewer service area plan. On March 31, 2003 a joint meeting was held between the City and representatives of the Town of River Falls. At that meeting the following issues were identified.

- Road system in the Extraterritorial Zone (ETZ) – Example: Potential upgrading of Cemetery Road.
- Sewer Service Area (SSA) boundary
 - How will the City grow within the SSA? 2000 to 2020. Beyond 2020.
 - How should land be regulated outside the SSA?
 - Should numerous small (e.g., one acre) lots with on-sight sewage systems be allowed in the SSA?
 - What might the effect be on groundwater from that practice?
 - Should residential subdivisions in the ETZ be designed to be served with City sewers in the future?
- What design features does the City want to see in a subdivision in the Town?
 - Can or should community shared septic systems be used as interim service before City sewer becomes available?
- What might be the effect of many private wells on the aquifer?
- What development, if any, should be allowed near the Birch Cliff landfill?
- Can the Towns be persuaded to not do things the City is trying to avoid, such as using the ETZ for small residential lots with on-sight sewage systems?
- How much retail development should be allowed outside downtown?
- What should be done to make better use of the Kinnickinnic River, especially in the downtown?
- How to handle Town islands in the City?
- Should there be a standing joint City and Town planning committee?
- Should the Town have ordinances and plans that mirror those of the City for the sake of coordination?
- Should there be a joint City and Town plan for the Kinnickinnic River?
- Should there be a western bypass?
- Should the SSA be used as a receiving area for density that is transferred from the rural area under a transfer of development rights program?
- When, where and under what criteria should land be annexed to the City?
- Should the City pay compensation to the Town for the cost of Town investments in public facilities related to annexed property?
- Should commercial and industrial development be promoted or allowed in the Towns?
- What, if anything, can the City do to ensure local builders get work in new housing projects?
- What should be done by the Town to preserve “rural character”?

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- How is “rural character” defined?

Additional Opportunities for Community Input

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Additional Opportunities for Community Input

As part of **Wisconsin's Smart Growth Legislation**, written procedures must be adopted by the governing body of a local government unit wishing to adopt a Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the Act requires:

“The Governing body of a local governmental unit shall adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services and public meetings, for which advanced notice has been provided, in every stage of the preparation of a Comprehensive Plan. The written procedures shall provide for wide distribution of proposed, alternative or amended elements of a Comprehensive Plan and shall provide an opportunity for written comments on the plan to be submitted by members of the public to the governing body and for the governing body to respond to such written comments.”