

Town of

River Falls

Land Use Element





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**Land Use Element
Town of River Falls**

s. 66.1001(2)(h) Wis Stats.

Land-use element. A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property. The element shall contain a listing of the amount, type, intensity and net density of existing uses of land in the local governmental unit, such as agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial and other public and private uses. The element shall analyze trends in the supply, demand and price of land, opportunities for redevelopment and existing and potential land-use conflicts. The element shall contain projections, based on the background information specified in par. (a), for 20 years, in 5-year increments, of future residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial land uses including the assumptions of net densities or other spatial assumptions upon which the projections are based. The element shall also include a series of maps that shows current land uses and future land uses that indicate productive agricultural soils, natural limitations for building site development, floodplains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands, the boundaries of areas to which services of public utilities and community facilities, as those terms are used in par. (d), will be provided in the future, consistent with the timetable described in par. (d), and the general location of future land uses by net density or other



Introduction

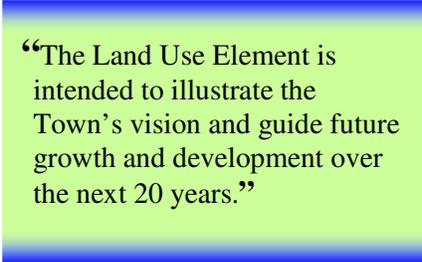
Land Use Element

Town of River Falls



Introduction

The Town of River Falls consists primarily of farmland and residential land uses, mixed with small amounts of commercial and industrial lands. It is a community with a strong rural character, abundant farmland, and natural resources. While growth is inevitable, the Town wishes to position itself to shape and direct this growth. Citizens have expressed a desire to retain open space and preserve the Town's rural character and productive farmland.



“The Land Use Element is intended to illustrate the Town’s vision and guide future growth and development over the next 20 years.”

Among the most effective tools a community possesses to influence its future environment and quality of life is the ability to control and direct future growth patterns through its zoning and development ordinances, and its provision of infrastructure to serve newly developing areas. Misguided use of these tools, however, can lead to undesired results in terms of land use conflicts, inefficient service delivery, and a decreased quality of life. The foundation for sound decision making and implementation of these tools is a clear land use plan based upon sound planning principles and the community's vision for its future.

This land use plan is intended to illustrate the Town's vision and guide the future growth and development over the next 20 years. It will serve as a guide for the Plan Commission and Town Board when making land use, zoning, and infrastructure related decisions. It will also provide direction for property owners and potential developers when making decisions about the future of their properties within the Town of River Falls.

The Town must study the suitability of land in order to effectively plan for efficient and environmentally sound growth. Therefore, the land-use analysis and future land-use plan considers areas that might be appropriate for growth over the next 20 years.

The relationship between the future land-use plan and the other sections of this plan is extremely important, and coordinating this information is essential in developing an effective comprehensive plan that is useful to the Town and its constituents.

As noted elsewhere in this plan, it will be necessary to periodically review and update this plan, and potentially the future land-use map to ensure that local development preferences are maintained.

Existing Land Use

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Existing Land Use

Although the total acreage in agriculture has been declining countywide, agriculture is currently the predominant land use within the Town of River Falls (Table 1). Exclusive agriculture, with a maximum density of 1 unit per 35 acres, is a major land use and is found throughout all areas of the Town. Agricultural/Residential allows for both agricultural uses, and rural residential. Minimum lot size is 2 acres, with a maximum density of four lots per 40 acres. Smaller-lot residential uses are found primarily within the 1.5 mile extraterritorial zone surrounding the City of River Falls. Agricultural/Residential and Exclusive Agriculture are currently the predominant zoning categories in the town.

Commercial and industrial uses are a very small portion of the Town's land area and are concentrated in a few areas. An industrial area is located adjacent to the eastern border of the City of River Falls, south of Highway 29. A smaller light industrial area is located southeast of the city, at Highway 65 and 770th Avenue. A commercial area is adjacent to the southeastern border of the city, adjacent to Highway 65. (See existing land use map)

Table 1. Existing Land Uses and Acreage in the Town of River Falls

Land Use	Total Acreage	Percent of Total (%)
Agricultural / Residential	17,472	59%
Exclusive Agriculture	10,413	35%
Residential	995	3%
Conservancy	265	<1%
Commercial	76	<1%
Industrial	147	<1%
Light Industrial	9	<1%
TOTAL	29,377	

Source: Town of River Falls – Existing Land Use Map

Agricultural Land Use as a Percent of Total Land Use

Although agricultural acreage continues to decrease, it remains the predominant land use in the County, comprising some 68 percent of the land acres.

According to the Department of Revenue assessment record land area in agricultural use within the Town of River Falls accounts for over 61 percent of all land use acreage.

Residential Land Use as a Percent of Total Land Use

Countywide residential land use acreage was reported to be 20,348 acres or 6 percent of all land uses in 2003. In the Town of River Falls residential land uses (both agricultural residential and pure residential) accounted for 3,127 acres or 12 percent.



Existing Land Use

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The current trend indicates an increase in rural non-farm land use for the Town and surrounding communities. In 1980 there were 742 total housing units, an increase of 55 percent since 1970. However, the amount decreased 11 percent in 1990 primarily due to annexation by the City of River Falls. In 2000 the number of housing units rose to 821 according to the US Census.

Commercial Land Use as a Percent of Total Land Use

The Town of River Falls is seeing commercial growth continue to move into the City of River Falls. In 2002 the Department of Revenue identified over 226 acres of commercial land existing within the Town. This number decreased to 97 acres by 2003.

Industrial Land Use as a Percent of Total Land Use

Industrial acreage in the Town of River Falls is 9 acres, or less than 1 percent. This amount continues to remain constant. Industrial and manufacturing land uses have seen a steady decline throughout the State of Wisconsin in recent years, and the Town has seen the same pattern. As manufacturing jobs are sent overseas, fewer workers and facilities are across the nation.

Trends

Commercial land uses have decreased since 2002 (Table 2), while residential land uses have increased as the Town and surrounding areas continue to increase in population (Table 3). Most of this new commercial and residential land has been converted from agricultural and forest uses. The total acreage of the Town decreased slightly due to annexation by the City of River Falls.

Table 2. Land Uses and Acreage in the Town of River Falls (2002 -2003)

Land Use	Acreage		
	2002	2003	2004
Residential	3,038	3,127	3,151
Commercial	226	97	93
Industrial/Manufacturing	9	9	9
Agricultural	15,774	15,785	15,720
Swamp & Wasteland	460	458	1,020
Forest	6,442	6,177	5,575
Other	192	192	189
Total	26,141	25,845	25,757

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Table 3. Population Trends in the Town of River Falls (1999-2003)

Population	1990	2000	2010 est.
Town of River Falls	1,944	2,316	2,502

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

The net density of each land use is estimated based on the number of acres per capita. Based on the 2003 Statement of Assessments and the 2003 population estimate, the net density for each land use is shown in Table 4. If the Town intends to maintain a similar land use mix and density, these figures will estimate future land needs based on population projections.

Table 4. Land Use Density; Town of River Falls: 2002	
Land Use Type	Acres per Capita
Residential	1.300
Commercial	.040
Industrial/Manufacturing	.004
Agricultural	6.7
Swamp & Wasteland	.2
Forest	2.6

As the population continues to grow, additional commercial and residential land will need to be converted from agricultural, forest, and other uses. Table 5 shows the amount of land needed based on current land use densities and various population growth estimates.

Table 5. Future Land Use Needs; Town of River Falls: 2025					
Additional Acreage Needed	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Based on 0.8% Population Growth Rate – Current Growth					
Residential	24.7	26.0	27.3	27.3	28.6
Commercial/Industrial	.95	1.00	1.05	1.05	1.1
Based on 1.1% Population Growth Rate - Moderate					
Residential	33.8	36.4	37.7	40.3	42.9
Commercial/Industrial	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7
Based on 1.9% Population Growth Rate – 10 Year Trend					
Residential	59.8	65	71.5	79.3	87.1
Commercial/Industrial	2.3	2.5	2.75	3.05	3.35

Based on these population growth rates and land use density calculations, there is potential for conflict within the Town as each additional acre of residential and commercial requires that land be removed from agriculture and forest uses. Additional conflict over annexation is likely between the Town and its neighboring city.

Growth rates will be affected by many variables. This land-use plan is developed based on a low-to-moderate growth rate that utilizes current ordinances. The Town wishes to encourage a growth rate that is consistent with survey respondents' preference to preserve rural character.



Trends
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Real estate prices (2004) for single family homes in the area range from \$75,000 to over \$350,000. Vacant residential lots are generally priced between \$20,000 and \$100,000.

Land Use Regulations

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Land Use Regulations

Land Division Ordinance

Land division regulations help to ensure that new buildings are appropriately placed on lots, traffic patterns are not hampered, and new areas of development have access to services. The Town's Land Division Ordinance establishes standards for the division of lots and design standards to guide development form once a proposal has been approved.

Zoning

Zoning is the most common means of regulating local land use in the United States. In Wisconsin the power of Zoning is granted to Counties, Cities, and Villages. Towns may control their own zoning if they have been granted Village Powers and are not under County zoning. Zoning has three main purposes: (1) to separate conflicting land uses, such as industrial and residential; (2) to ensure that new development is located according to a general community plan; and (3) to promote quality development which will not harm the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

The Town Zoning Ordinance consists of six (6) districts:

1. **Residence District (R-1).**
2. **Residence and Planned Mobile Home Development District (R-2).**
3. **Exclusive Agricultural District (A-1).**

The A-1 District provides for exclusive agricultural uses. The intent is to preserve productive agricultural soils, maintain agriculture as a permanent, viable land use and economic activity, control untimely and uneconomical expansion of urban facilities and services, avoid conflicting land uses and comply with the provisions of the Farmland Preservation Law to permit eligible landowners to receive tax credits as per Wisconsin Statutes. Lands to be designated upon the Town zoning map as Exclusive Agricultural District premises shall be only those premises which contain 35 acres or a part of an aggregate containing 35 or more acres.

4. **Agricultural Residential District (A-2)**
5. **Commercial District (C-1).**

The Commercial District provides an area for commercial, business and professional service uses and other areas of compact development served by private or public sewage systems as specified in ILHR 85 of the Wisconsin Administrative Codes.

6. **Industrial District (IND).**

Land Use Regulations

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- Light Industry. The purpose of the Light Industry District is to delineate areas best suited for light industrial development because of location, topography, existing facilities and relationship to other land uses.
- Heavy Industrial.

Sewer Service Area Planning

Portions of the Town of River Falls are located within the City of River Falls Sewer Service Planning Area. The Sewer Service Planning Area encompasses the entire City of River Falls, and portions of the surrounding towns of Clifton, Kinnickinnic, Troy, and River Falls. State law requires that sewer service area plans be developed for communities with a population greater than 10,000. These plans are intended to guide growth and identify resource needs related to wastewater treatment, and should address environmentally sensitive areas. The boundaries of the sewer service area should be delineated to include potential future growth areas, and often extend across municipal boundaries.

Exhibit 1

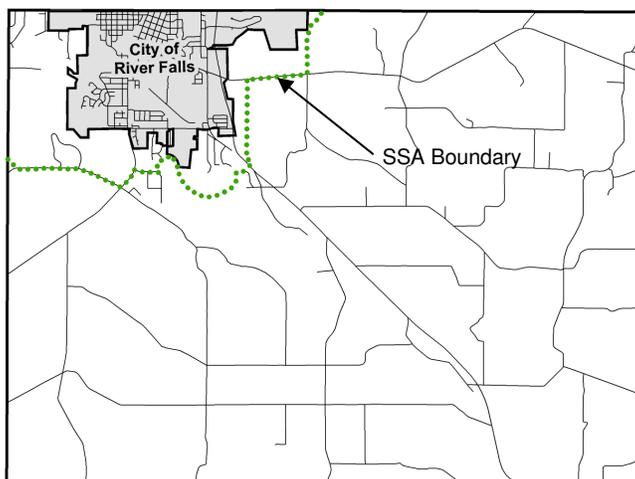


Exhibit 1 shows the sewer service area boundary within the Town of River Falls. Areas within the boundary are expected to develop at higher densities than are typically found throughout the rest of the Town.

The Sewer Service Area plan is an important piece of the land use puzzle for both the City and Town of River Falls. The sewer service planning area boundary can control how quickly the City grows and extends urban services into the surrounding towns. Land use plans and regulations should be consistent with the Sewer Service Area

Plan, and the plan should be reviewed regularly, and amended as necessary. The Town has some influence over this plan through a seat on the Sewer Service Area Plan Committee. The River Falls Sewer Service Area Committee is responsible for plan oversight, and is made up of representatives from the City of River Falls, each of the surrounding towns, WDNR, Pierce County, and St. Croix County.



Land Use Regulations

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Development Factors

As discussed in the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources element, the Town has a large amount of land that is classified as prime farmland, based on soil characteristics mapped by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Prime farmland is found throughout the Town, with the heaviest concentrations found in the southern and eastern portions of the Town (see Prime Farmland Map). The town considers soils classified I, II, or III by the NRCS to be prime farmland.

Many of the areas that are not considered prime farmland fall within the Resource Protection Areas as either floodplain, wetland, shoreland, woodlands, or steep slopes (see Resource Protection Areas Map).

The Town has identified these Resource Protection Areas and prime farmland as resources that should be protected, and the future land use plan reflects the limited amount of residential development that should occur in the majority of the Town.

Future Land Use Plan

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Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan illustrates the potential growth of the Town over the next 20 years based upon existing conditions, discussions at public meetings and direction from the Comprehensive Planning Committee. It is expected that most new growth will be residential, and will occur within the 1.5-mile radius surrounding the City of River Falls. The plan anticipates that much of the remainder of the Town will remain rural.

Table 6. Land Use Density; Town of River Falls: 2002

Land Use Type	Acres as Depicted on Future Land Use
Ag/Res (1 DU/10 AC, equiv. CSD, CSMs)	14,844
Commercial	56
Conservancy	756
Exclusive Agriculture - 1 DU Per 35 AC	8,495
Light Industrial	8
Existing Residential Low (3-6 DU/AC)	24
Existing Residential Very Low (1-3 DU/AC)	505
TDR Receiving Areas	
3-6 Unit	669
1-3 Unit	2,376
1 Unit per 2 Acres	568

The Future Land Use Plan divides the planned land uses in the Town into the following categories:

- 1. Agricultural/Residential**
Large lot residential and/or agricultural uses at a density of 4 lots per quarter-quarter section. Minimum lot size is two acres. A forty may consist of four ten-acre lots, or three two-acre lots and one 34-acre lot, or any combination thereof.
- 2. Commercial**
Provides an area for commercial, business and professional service uses and other areas of compact development served by private or public sewage systems as specified in ILHR 85 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code.
- 3. Conservancy**
Are designated by the WDNR, the town, or the landowner and having been placed under permanent, legal protection from development.

Future Land Use Plan

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4. *Exclusive Agricultural*

At present zoning will continue to allow only one parcel per 35 acres, with agricultural uses being the only permitted uses as per Town of River Falls Zoning Code 17.06 (2).

5. *Industrial*

- a. Light Industry: provides for limited, low-impact manufacturing, assembly, warehousing, storage, contracting, and maintenance uses.
- b. Heavy Industry: All uses permitted in the Commercial District, also light and heavy industrial plants.

6. *Transfer of Development Rights Receiving Area*

Those areas within the ETZ that have been agreed upon by town and city of River Falls as being conducive to future annexation by the city and which should develop at a density and on infrastructure that is compatible with city services. These areas have a base density as designated by the town, with additional density to be purchased by developers from qualifying parcels in the greater town.

The plan also identifies a transitional greenbelt that will separate the TDR Receiving Zone from the remainder of the town, along with a transitional buffer between

At current and projected rates of development (Table 6), the plan probably illustrates much more growth than the town is likely to experience within the 20-year planning horizon under consideration. The plan designates areas of potential future development, but does not necessarily advocate or assume full build out of this area within this 20-year window.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

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Goals, Objectives and Policies

Agricultural Areas: This area includes land that has agriculture as its primary, long-term function. It will provide for the preservation of productive agricultural lands and for the discouragement of non-farm land uses. This designation intends to encourage continued, long-term investment in agriculture.

Policies:

- A. All non –farm development in agricultural areas should be discouraged. Certain agricultural-related uses that need a rural location may be permitted when in accordance with Town ordinances, county codes and state laws.
- B. The Town will maintain agricultural zoning for smaller-scale agricultural enterprises such as small-scale fruit and vegetable stands and truck gardens that can be applied in the agricultural area on a limited basis to smaller parcels and marginal farmlands.
- C. Non-farm residential development should be restricted to areas with soils classed IV through VII (as described in the Pierce County Soil Survey).

Agricultural – Residential Area: This designation provides for a mixing of farm and non-farm residential uses. This area is characterized by low density residential development and represents the most appropriate location for such development in the future.

Policies:

- A. Low density rural residential development shall be allowed in this area along with the existing large and small scale agriculture.
- B. Rural residential lot sizes shall not be less than two acres and shall not exceed four per quarter-quarter section.
- C. All farm practices shall be allowed within this area in accordance with provisions of the Pierce County Zoning Ordinance.
- D. Non-farm residential development should be restricted to areas with soils classed IV through VII (as described in the Pierce County Soil Survey).

Residential Area: This area includes planned residential development that will be primarily urban in character. The application of this designation will generally be limited to areas adjacent to the city of River Falls where service can be extended for city utilities.

Policies:

- A. Lands subdivided within this area should be divided into lots according to specifications of Town of River Falls Land Division ordinance, chapter 18.
- B. Residential developments should be designed so they can be further subdivided and integrated with the urban facilities and services of the adjoining municipality.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

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Commercial Area: This designation provides for limited commercial uses.

Policies:

- A. Commercial development should locate adjacent to existing developed areas.
- B. Commercial development should be compatible with adjacent land uses.
- C. Property screening by the use of plantings, berms, fencing, etc. should be undertaken to eliminate adverse effects on adjacent land uses.
- D. Spot zoning will not be allowed.

Light Industrial Area: This designation is reserved for the location of light industrial operations, storage areas or non-metallic mining operations.

Policies:

- A. The Town should make only limited use of this designation for bulk storage or non-metallic mining operations.
- B. Any non-metallic mining operations shall comply with applicable state ordinance, including the filing of reclamation and operation plans and financial security for their compliance.
- C. The Town should support efforts of its neighboring communities to attract quality industrial development in industrial parks with full urban services.
- D. Proper screening by the use of planting, berms, fencing, etc. should be undertaken to eliminate adverse effects on adjacent land uses.

Industrial Area: This district is established for the purpose of allowing those industrial uses that are more intensive than those uses allowed in the Light Industrial district. The purpose of the district is to accommodate a heavy volume of traffic and the presence of noise and other factors, which could pose a nuisance in other districts. The intensity and use of land as permitted in this district is intended to facilitate the total range of industrial uses.

Policies:

- A. The rural nature of the Town of River Falls is inherently incompatible with heavy industry.
- B. Heavy industry, except as grandfathered or currently existing, will not be allowed in the Town of River Falls except within the ETZ.
- C. The Town should support efforts in its neighboring communities to attract quality industrial development in industrial parks with full urban services.

Conservancy Area: Conservancy areas are established to protect, promote and conserve environmentally sensitive lands such as floodplains, wetlands, shorelands, slopes, bluffs, woodlands and areas of aesthetic value that because of their unique physical and ecological features are deemed desirable to be retained for the benefit of this and future generations. Protection and conservation of these areas are intended not only to manage their environmental

Goals, Objectives and Policies

Land Use Element Town of River Falls

values, but to also protect the Town and County from the costs and consequences, which may be incurred when unsuitable development occurs in such areas.

Policies:

- A. Conservancy areas should be included in appropriate zoning districts under Town and extraterritorial zoning.
- B. The Town should work with the County and adjoining municipalities to prepare more detailed inventories of environmental features to be designated as conservancy.
- C. Where lands designated as conservancy are faced with use conversion, the Town should explore all possible avenues and policies for maintaining and protecting affected environmental features.

Extraterritorial (ETZ) Area: When established in 1987 this area of the Town included that portion within 1 ½ miles from the city limits. This area represents only about 1/3 of Town land area, but consists of over ½ the Town development is in the ETZ. This development consists of residential and commercial.

The Town and the City control the zoning through the ETZ Committee, which consist of three members from the Town and three members from the City. The residents in this area have experienced problems with the development and encroachment of the City of River Falls as property within the ETZ becomes annexed to the City.

Policies:

- A.
 - 1) To control soil erosion and minimize stormwater runoff increases from city development.
 - 2) To preserve natural resources such as wetlands, streams, rivers, and natural wildlife.
 - 3) To preserve, as much as possible, the rural character.
 - 4) To Control flooding by preserving existing dams and reservoirs.
- B. Establish a land use plan within the ETZ
 - 1) Support the existing parcels in preserving the existing town rural development.
 - 2) To protect and stabilize property values that could be undermined by the development of incompatible uses of adjacent or nearby property.
 - 3) To limit congestion on town streets and preserve rustic road character.
 - 4) To preserve open space within and around development.
 - 5) Consider cluster development as part of planning process.

Cluster Development: The Town recognizes the potential of clustering development to provide more efficient and environmentally sensitive development. The Town will consider cluster development where these objectives can be met.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

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Policies:

- A. The Town should develop appropriate policies and standards for cluster development in applicable land use ordinances.
- B. Cluster developments should be subject to periodic, staged reviews.
- C. Cluster developments should meet applicable density and road standards.
- D. Cluster development proposals should include adequate organizational structure, bylaws and covenants to ensure long-term compliance.

Cooperative Boundary and Transfer of Development Rights Program: The Town recognizes the importance of clustering residential development in an attractive, organized fashion adjacent to the City of River Falls, where it eventually may be served by city sewer, water, and other urban services. The Town also recognizes the importance of maintaining rural character in the town. Achieving greater density within the ETZ while preserving rural character outside the ETZ may be accomplished with a cooperative boundary agreement with the City of River Falls. This document may include agreements by the city not to annex lands outside the cooperative boundary until certain conditions have been met, and by the town to require that development in these areas take place with city approval and oversight of installation of infrastructure. Greater density in these areas would be obtained through the purchase, by the developer, of development rights from property owners within the Town.

Policies:

- A. Work to achieve City/Town Cooperative Boundary Agreement
 - 1. City agrees not to annex property unless certain conditions are met
 - 2. Town agrees to allow development only with city oversight and city-compatible infrastructure installed at developer's expense
 - 3. Desired density of development area, as defined by city, achieved through purchase of development rights from town landowners.