

1 Forward

Vilas County is at a critical juncture in its history. The counties of Vilas and Oneida together hold the highest concentration of freshwater lakes in the world. The area is also located in the heart of Wisconsin's beautiful northwoods. Due to the blessed abundance of lakes and forests, residential growth trends over the last ten years lead many areas of the state. As land use pressures increase to both develop and maintain the county's northwoods atmosphere, County leaders chose the inherent responsibility of addressing very complex issues concerning the demands for residential development and economic opportunity while maintaining balance with features of the natural environment that stimulate such demands. The goal is to balance growth, economic opportunity, and individual property rights without negative impacts to water quality, the environment, and community character.

In early 1998, riding the successful conclusion of a county lakes classification and shoreland management program, the focus turned to land use planning as the next step in county-wide growth management. Coupled with significant county financing, Vilas County was fortunate to receive Lake Protection grant money from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to address land use issues county-wide. The county felt however, that planning and land use decisions should be administered at the local level. To that end, the county gave municipalities the option to develop their own land use plan. The premise included that local land use plans would "roll-up" to develop the county plan. The Town of Plum Lake decided to participate and the following pages encapsulate that effort.

The Town of Plum Lake is located in central Vilas County, and is bound by the Town of Conover to the east, the Town of Land O' Lakes to the north, the Town of Boulder Junction to the west, and common borders with the Towns of Arbor Vitae, St. Germain, and Cloverland to the south. The town covers 62,940 acres and has an estimated year 2000 population of 529 permanent residents and an estimated peak seasonal population of over 3,600. Plum Lake is primarily a rural community with concentrated lakeshore development and low density residential radiating from the lakeshore. Many town residents refer to the Town's two unincorporated communities, Sayner and Star Lake, as their community identifiers. The unincorporated community of Sayner has some concentrated development along STH 155 and serves as the town's "downtown" area, with mixed commercial, residential, and community services. Approximately 12% (7,555 acres) of the town is covered by lakes, including 50 named and 95 unnamed. Eighty-five percent of the town is wooded, with a large portion (64%, 40,194 acres) being town, county or state forest.

The purpose of the *Town of Plum Lake Year 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan* is to encourage the orderly use and development of lands within the town. At the same time, the planning effort is also intended to promote and stimulate public participation by identifying local issues and coordinating adopted town land use policy with county growth management administration. As a result of 13 meetings with Foth & Van Dyke, three public informational meetings, one public hearing, and the dedicated effort of the Plum Lake Land Use Planning Committee and Plum Lake taxpayers, the *Town of Plum Lake Year 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan* evolved.

Cooperation certainly must follow understanding. Administration will need to be championed by local officials. Indeed, there are tough choices ahead. Land owners should be free to develop their property, but the development should fit within the guidelines written and understood to be in the best interest of the larger community. The Town of Plum Lake will refer to this document to find guidance for future development, rezonings, and land division decisions. It is through the utilization of this plan the town hopes to achieve its land use vision.

Vision Statement

Nestled in the heart of Vilas County, the Town of Plum Lake remains a quiet, rural town. A place of expansive public forests, clear lakes with developed lakeshores, abundant natural resources and recreational opportunity, a quaint “downtown” in Sayner, fresh air, friendly people...northwoods treasures that define the Town of Plum Lake in the 21st century.

The Town of Plum Lake will have a land use plan focused on the preservation and enhancement of its unique northwoods character and rural charm. As a result of the pro-active planning efforts of the town and its residents, Plum Lake will boast of sprawling, unfragmented forests; clean, clear lakes and streams filled with walleye, musky, and trout; a growing business community of buildings and shops of northwoods-style character in Sayner and Star Lake...quiet, rural living only minutes from Eagle River. These things will offer both residents and visitors an environment which is desired and managed to continue the opportunity to be aesthetically pleasing, safe, environmentally sound, and personable.

A system of planned and orderly development, guided by the town, will respond to the needs of people and protect the integrity of the environment. Using the *Town of Plum Lake Year 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan* as a guide, the town will successfully manage growth and future development by establishing compatible and consistent use, location and density of property. Shoreline development and vegetation, in conjunction with Vilas County shoreland zoning, will be managed to preserve the quality of water resources and visual attractiveness for generations to come. Larger, wooded residential lots will help maintain the rural nature of the town. New business development in Sayner and Star Lake will reflect the northwoods values and small town charm designated by design review standards. The town’s commitment to provide quality services such as good roads, fire protection, recycling facilities, and year around recreational opportunity will entice all those who live and visit. Implemented land use policies will guide the location of compatible developments and preserve the environmentally sensitive areas better suited for deer, grouse, songbirds and the like.

By pro-actively directing growth and development, the town of Plum Lake continues to provide residents and guests with natural beauty, northwoods charm, aesthetic recreational experiences, and appealing rural residential opportunities. The town’s planning, in conjunction with the surrounding abundant natural beauty, will provide residents and visitors alike an exceptional quality of life.

2 Public Participation Process

The public participation process was the key element to the development of the *Town of Plum Lake Year 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan*. Plan direction was driven by the opinions and participation expressed by town residents, landowners, and the Plum Lake Land Use Planning Committee. Numerous techniques were utilized to gather public input in the plan development process. The public input tools utilized and their representative results are summarized as follows.

It must be noted the meetings listed in the following section were facilitated by Foth & Van Dyke in conjunction with the Vilas County Land Use Plan project. The Plum Lake Plan Planning Committee met on numerous occasions not listed below, and by no means is the entire plan development process effort encapsulated by the following summary description.

Meeting No. 1 (May 11, 1999) Project Orientation

Foth and Van Dyke met with the Town of Plum Lake Land Use Planning Committee and with Vilas County Land Use Plan project coordinator Bryan Pierce at the Plum Lake Town Hall to discuss the planning process, discuss timelines, and identify with Plum Lake's progress, issues, ordinances, and planning related documents and reports. Foth and Van Dyke and Vilas County representative Fred Hageman discussed the role of Vilas County, project coordination, and how the town plan was to "roll-up", or facilitate the Vilas County Land Use Plan. A preliminary schedule and timeline was drafted, and a meeting summary list was presented.

The Town of Plum Lake decided not to conduct a Community Planning Survey as funds were not budgeted and the key issues will be exposed during the public participation elements of the planning process. The town discussed the potential of a landowner survey during the preferred land use mapping stage of plan development. The town scheduled an Issue Identification Workshop for June 17, 1999 at the town hall.

Meeting No. 2 (June 17, 1999) Issue Identification Workshop

The Town of Plum Lake, as part of the Vilas County Land Use Plan, contracted with Foth & Van Dyke to prepare a land use plan for the community. The Community Planning Issues Identification Workshop was scheduled as the first phase of public input for plan development.

The workshop was conducted at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 17, 1999 at the Town Hall in Plum Lake. The purpose of the meeting was to obtain from the participants their perceptions on the following question: *"In your opinion, what do you feel are the most important land use management issues facing the Town of Plum Lake in the next two decades?"*

A total of 10 workshop participants registered on sign-in sheets for the session. The workshop was facilitated by John Williams from Foth & Van Dyke, Bryan Pierce, Vilas County University of Wisconsin-Extension, and Fred Hageman, Vilas County Zoning Administrator.

Williams presented a slide show describing the components for the Plum Lake land use plan. He also described the following for the input gathering session. The ground rules included the following:

1. *This is your plan! Everyone's ideas are important. There are no "dumb" or "stupid" ideas.*
2. *Think long range (20 to 30 years into the future).*
3. *Think in terms of the "common good." Your personal self-interests are important, but they should not dominate.*
4. *Be willing to compromise.*
5. *Be committed to developing a successful plan.*

Following this introductory session, the participants used a nominal group process to identify and prioritize important land use management issues for the town. First, each person was asked to write down on note cards their own reaction to the primary question. Next, group members shared their issues in a round robin fashion, while the facilitators recorded the responses on flip chart paper.

After all of the issues were recorded, there was discussion within the group to clarify the issues and statements. Then members were asked to privately select and vote for their top five issues on note paper. The votes were recorded on flip chart paper. The 14 issues with the most votes in the small group were then listed on a summary sheet.

The top issues were then presented by the facilitators to the full group. The results of the workshop were compiled in the Town of Plum Lake Land Use Planning Issue Identification Workshop report for the Plum Lake Planning Committee by Bryan Pierce, Vilas County UW-Extension with assistance from Janet Christiansen. The lists of issues generated by the workshop participants were used by the Land Use Planning Committee and Foth & Van Dyke to prepare overall goals and objectives for the land use plan, and begin to consider alternatives for preferred land uses.

The final top 10 priority land use management issues for the Town of Plum Lake can be seen in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1
Final Top 14 Priority Land Use Management Issues for the
Town of Plum Lake, Vilas County, Wisconsin
June 17, 1999

In your opinion, what do you feel are the most important land use management issues facing the Town of Plum Lake over the next two decades?

Rank	No. of Group Votes	Issue
1	6	Keep the "quaintness" of the town with new businesses.
2	4	Limitations on potential expansion of tax base due to the extent of public land and small number of large landowners.
3	3	Avoid large multi-family, condominium development, especially on lakes.
4	3	What's impact of local plan on public land? How does apply to fed./state/county lands-ex. for park and recreation development?
5	3	The town does not have a clearly defines business district anymore.
6	3	Does the planning committee have the right to dictate uses on private lands?
7	2	Lake frontage owners abide by erosion policies, etc. for shoreline use, yet should continue to have a choice of open cleared property or heavily wooded.
8	2	Define location and extent of commercial zoning.
9	2	Conflicts between various user groups: ex. fishermen vs. water skiers, bikers vs. vehicles, hikers vs. hunters.
10	2	Lack of available workers to support businesses and industry.
11	2	Possible conversion of the industrial park to homes? The town owns the land (approximately 70 acres).
12	2	No multi-family housing is available, which limits affordable housing. Some multi-family is needed.
13	2	A large portion of the lakeshore is owned by seasonal residents which do not contribute to the community and economy during off season.
14	2	Planning for impacts if large private land holdings are sold.

Other Issues Identified

Rank	No. of Group Votes	Issue
-	1	Clearing, elimination of trees and shrubs along the shoreland area.
-	1	The attitude that "I'm here, I don't want anyone else here."
-	1	Scarcity of reasonably price residential property.
-	1	Clear cutting vs. select cutting along town roads.
-	1	Garbage - location of landfill in coming years.
-	1	Opportunity to redefine a main street in conjunction with the industrial park area.
-	1	Difficulty of recruiting and maintaining volunteers for fire department, etc.
-	-	Controversy with jet skis.
-	-	Removal of potential problem trees along the town roads during logging.
-	-	Town of Plum Lake vs. the individual communities of Sayner/Star Lake.
-	-	People moving up here don't want to pay high taxes, but want "city" services.
-	-	No roads within a subdivision are accepted by the town until they are paved (current ordinance).
-	-	Amount and schedule of road maintenance - blacktopping.
-	-	Signage ordinance put in place since 1986 (allows 32 sq. ft).

Meeting No. 3 Goals, Objectives and Vision Statement (July 20, 1999)

Foth & Van Dyke presented draft goals, objectives and vision statement to the Plum Lake Land Use Planning Committee. The Committee reviewed and discussed the information at length as to how the Issue Identification Workshop results and opinions of the Planning Committee and general public were to be addressed in plan development. Much discussion concerned how the goals and objectives related to lakeshore development, location of commercial and residential development, and ordinance development as it related to plan implementation. The meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the town hall.

Meeting No. 4 (August 24, 1999)

The Plum Lake Land Use Planning Committee reviewed, discussed, and finalized the plan goals, objectives and vision statement. John Williams of Foth & Van Dyke presented and discussed population and housing trends and implications on land use. The Planning Committee reviewed the draft land use map, resource protection map, zoning map, and wetlands (water feature data) map. The committee discussed the format and intent of the September 23 public informational

meeting, and discussed how the maps and information presented would be used to help create the preferred land use map. General discussion also took place relative to the relationship between the existing zoning and land use maps. Specifically, the existing uses on the landscape as compared to the allowed uses determined by zoning, and how both of the maps will help determine preferred land uses.

Meeting No. 5 (September 23, 1999) Public Informational Meeting

A public informational meeting and open house was held at the town offices from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The meeting was attended by 22 town residents and landowners and the town Land Use Planning Committee. At 6:30, Foth & Van Dyke presented an overview of the plan goals, objectives, and vision statement; inventory data highlights and trends; results of the planning issues identification workshop; and GIS mapping, including land use, zoning, land and resource protection, water feature data, Vilas County lakes classification data, and topography. Meeting participants were handed a copy of the goals, objectives, and vision statement, and had access to review the mapping and inventory information as displayed throughout the town hall. In general, the public comments were complimentary to the work effort. There were many questions relative to zoning and land use, lakeshore development, and how the plan will address use, location, and density of future development.

Meeting No. 6 (October 19, 1999)

The Planning Committee met at 6:00 p.m. at the town hall to begin the process of developing the preferred land use plan. The Committee discussed in general the process that would be used to draft the preferred map, including: 1) review existing maps and acetate overlays to assess the existing conditions that affect property in the town, 2) discuss the existing development pattern to review where uses occur and what uses are allowed, 3) review completed plans to learn from others, 4) discuss preliminary preferred land use classifications and how they will be used to build the map, and 5) analyze the town to determine the appropriate future use, location, and density of property. The committee also discussed general policies, related to the goals and objectives, that would help define map boundaries. Foth & Van Dyke presented examples of land use classifications, and the committee discussed at length the relationship between the existing land use map and preferred land use classifications.

Meeting No. 7 (November 16, 1999)

The Planning Committee met at 6:00 p.m. at the town hall to work on the preliminary draft of the preferred land use map. The Committee again reviewed examples of preferred land use classifications, with each classification based on consistency of uses between the existing and preferred uses, the location in which uses would be preferred, and the associated density of the development that would be recommended in the classification. Discussion occurred relative to how the preferred land use classifications would relate to the Vilas County Zoning Ordinance and what types of uses should be allowed within each land use classification. The Committee continued to draft the preliminary preferred land use classifications and the preferred land use

map based on the public input from the Land Use and Planning Issues Workshop, the plan goals and objectives, public road policies, existing ownership patterns, and reference to town maps. The committee also revised the project schedule to hold the public informational meetings in May (from February) and August (from July) to best accommodate both seasonal and permanent residents and property owners.

Meeting No. 8 (January 12, 2000)

The Planning Committee met at 6:00 p.m. at the town hall to work on the draft preferred land use map and the preferred land use classifications. The Committee reviewed each classification based on consistency between the existing and preferred uses, the location in which uses would be preferred, and the associated density of the development that would be recommended in the classification. Much discussion occurred relative to how the preferred land use classifications would relate to the Vilas County Zoning Ordinance and what types of uses should be allowed within each land use classification. The Committee discussed the revised schedule in accordance with planned public meetings, and came to consensus on the map and classifications.

Meeting No. 9 (March 7, 2000)

The Plum Lake Planning Committee met at 6:00 P.M. at the town hall in Sayner to finalize the preferred land use map and classifications, permitted and conditional use table, public informational meeting details, and to discuss plan implementation strategy. The committee confirmed the public meeting schedule for May 17, 2000 at 7:00 P.M.. The town will coordinate a mailing to all property owners in mid April, 2000 to notify landowners of the land use planning process and to solicit as much public participation as possible at the May public informational meeting. The Committee discussed the public informational meeting process in detail and decided on information to include in a public mailing. A Committee (only) meeting date was set for March 15th, 2000 to review the draft implementation strategy, action plan, and informational packet.

Meeting No. 10 (April 5, 2000)

The Plum Lake Planning Committee met at 6:00 P.M. at the town hall in Sayner to finalize the preferred land use map. The Committee met with Bryan Pierce, Vilas County UW-Extension, and Fred Hageman, Vilas County Zoning Administrator, to discuss the preferred land uses and how they could relate to existing zoning. The Committee met on their own March 15th and could not come to consensus on the preferred permitted and conditional uses associated with the preferred land uses. The Committee agreed the intent of the preferred land use map is not far from the existing conditions; the only issue is the associated uses that the town would prefer within the preferred uses. The Committee decided to meet April 17th to address the preferred permitted and conditional uses. The Committee confirmed the public meeting schedule for May 17, 2000 at 7:00 p.m. The town will coordinate a mailing to all property owners in late April, 2000 to notify landowners of the land use planning process and to solicit as much public

participation as possible at the May public informational meeting. The Committee discussed the public informational meeting process in detail.

Meeting No. 11 (May 17, 2000) Public Informational Meeting

The Town of Plum Lake hosted a community public informational meeting at the Plum Lake Town Hall from 7:00-10:00 p.m. 45 people attended. A brief overview of the planning process and progress to date was summarized, and the Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map was presented in detail. Each Plum Lake property tax payer was sent a packet of information prior to the meeting which included an introductory letter, a copy of the map with explanation (poster plan), a survey specific to the map and preferred land use classifications, and a table showing the preferred permitted and conditional uses for each of the preferred land use classifications. Meeting participants were also handed a Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map, preferred land use classifications and a survey asking for their input. The plan was presented for an hour, followed by an open question and answer session. All maps were on also on display. There were many comments for and against the plan as presented. The Planning Committee was directed by those in attendance to refine the extent of the Star Lake Downtown Business Area, reduce the Lakeshore Resort/Residential areas, and further study the uses proposed in the Lakeshore Residential areas and Rural Residential areas. The general consensus was that the lakeshore areas should be developed residentially (as indicated) and the Plan was generally on track with its long-term intent of preferred uses. The survey results would need to be analyzed and the P/C matrix of uses needs to be refined.

Meeting No. 12 (July 29, 2000)

The Plum Lake Planning Committee met at 6:00 p.m. at the town hall in Sayner to review the results of the public informational meeting, discuss the survey results from the mailing and meeting, discuss revisions to the preferred land use map and classifications, permitted and conditional use table, and finalize the preferred land use map. The Committee discussed the survey results which in general were in favor of the draft preferred land use map by over a 2 to 1 margin. The directives identified in the public informational meeting were discussed and specifically addressed, along with individual property owner requests and questions. Overall, the intent of the map did not change, but many of the areas on the map were reclassified based upon the public directives and property owner requests. The Star Lake Business District location was scaled down to represent existing business areas only, with the remaining areas reclassified to residential uses. The Lakeshore Resort/Residential areas were mostly reclassified to Lakeshore Residential on Plum Lake and Lake Laura. A large area north of CTH K in the eastern half of the town was redesignated to Rural Residential from Forestry and Recreation, and several parcels were addressed individually based upon property owner request. The Committee also confirmed the Public Hearing date for August 15th, 2000. The next meeting date (Committee only) was set for Wednesday, July 27th, 2000, at 4:30 p.m. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Meeting No. 13 (August 22, 2000) Public Hearing

The Town of Plum Lake hosted a public hearing at the Plum Lake Town Hall from 7:00- 8:05 p.m.; 8:05 - 10:00 p.m. included general discussion. 35 people attended the hearing. 10 people registered to speak, 5 of them were opposed to the plan. The others did not register an opinion. The Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map was discussed at length. Few comments were heard besides the Star Lake area and amount of business use that should be allowed and the conditional uses specific to the shores of Plum Lake. Most if not all of the discussion was relative to those two issues. The following were issues raised at the hearing:

1. Assess Errington property in Star Lake. The existing resort property was requested to be included as business.
2. Stillwaters Resort-classify as business on both sides of the road.
3. The Committee should consider the “least invasive” policy for lands in the town as an overall strategy.
4. Gary Errington - Wants property on corner of K in Star Lake designated as business as he has plans to expand.
5. Uses along the Plum Lake shoreline, including a comment that Sayner Downtown Business should be changed to LR/R along the shoreline.
6. The Plum Lake Riparian Owners Association submitted a petition and was read into the record. Petition was to support single-family residential uses along the lakeshore only. Multi-family, condos etc should not be allowed. Conditional uses specific to Plum Lake for above uses should be eliminated. Letter to Town Board and Planning Committee also submitted in support of petition.
7. The Planned Mixed Use class includes the town owned land that may be a business park at some point. Comment was to visit the P/C matrix and address.
8. CTH K Rustic Road petition. Petition was submitted and read in to the record. The corridor travels through Star Lake and petitioners support uses compatible with state recommendations for rustic roads.
9. People wanted to be notified of what was happening and requested e-mail notification and possibly another direct mailing.

Overall the general consensus was the Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map was on track to guide the town's long term growth management. A few specific property issues needed to be resolved, but the general intent had been met. It was the intent of the Planning Committee and Town Board to review the meeting directives, address the individual property issues, and proceed with Plan approval in October/November 2000.