

11. Preferred Land Use Management Strategy

This section describes the strategy and thought process used by Vilas County in developing a land use management strategy for Vilas County. Planning involves the integration and application of multiple information sources, each important, each with an affect on the process of developing a sound, logical plan. In many cases, the process of planning holds equal importance to the product. Plans are only effective when people believe in the direction the plan represents. A plan must engage community resources and decision-making to implement the plan policy or there is little value in the investment.

The process of planning for future land uses can most realistically be accomplished through evaluation and understanding of existing conditions and how those circumstances compare to a desired future condition. The framework and building process of the *Vilas County Year 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan* is based upon several different factors, each representing a critical piece of information. Each piece of information is a “chapter” that creates Vilas County’s land use story. Evaluation and understanding of the "chapters" affords both the public and Vilas County leadership the ability to evaluate land use in terms of what is desired compared to what they have. The following summarizes the County’s planning effort.

11.1 Coordination of Local and County Planning Processes

The premise behind Vilas County’s land use management strategy was to develop plans at both the local and County level through an integrated and coordinated planning process. The County utilized Foth & Van Dyke to develop both the Town and County plans to ensure consistency throughout the planning process and develop coordinated plan recommendations. As discussed in Chapter 2, Participating Towns utilized a similar plan development structure, but were autonomous in developing plan recommendations. The County planning process occurred subsequent to local plan development, as the County wanted the local units of government to address land use at the local level. All local plans were developed with a complete implementation strategy that included an evaluation of the potential regulatory relationship between the local plan recommendations and County ordinances. Development of the *Vilas County Year 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan* included a complete assessment of the local plan recommendations and the corresponding potential regulatory impact to County ordinances (which is discussed in detail in Chapter 12, Implementation). The County plan process also included in-depth analysis of the past development patterns, and a thorough examination of current issues, trends, forecasts and conditions that affect land use. Extensive land use information was studied in conjunction with the public’s vision for the future which was acquired through extensive community involvement and learning.

11.2 Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping

GIS mapping technology incorporates land information into a computerized, digital format that allows the ability to view and analyze information in layers. In essence, GIS mapping allows the existing conditions to be studied to determine the potential impact of preferred future conditions. Under the direction of the Mapping and Land Information Office, Zoning Office, and UW-Extension, Vilas County developed partnerships with the North-Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the Wisconsin Department

of Natural Resources, Vilas County communities and Foth & Van Dyke to create base maps of existing conditions. The base maps were developed countywide and created consistent data formats that could be used to provide value beyond the planning processes.

The existing land uses (Map 9-1) were inventoried and mapped by the towns and Vilas County Zoning staff and digitized by Vilas County. Existing zoning districts (Map 9-2) of each municipality were mapped and overlaid onto land use maps. This process allowed people to view how land uses are regulated, and to correlate existing versus permitted uses. The Land & Resource Protection Map (Map 8-4) was overlaid on the land use and zoning maps to determine land protection areas within general ownership patterns. Wetlands and County regulated shoreland zones were mapped (Map 8-1) then overlaid upon the others to define undevelopable areas and areas of environmental sensitivity. Vilas County Lakes Classification data was mapped (Map 8-2) to display shoreland zoning regulations and impact on potential land use. The public services, cultural areas, and community facilities were mapped (Maps 5-1 and 5-2) and reviewed to assess land use impacts, service location capability, and potential service demand(s) based on preferred or anticipated development patterns. Potential development scenarios were mapped as discussed in this chapter to assess potential growth impacts and evaluate existing regulations on land use. The GIS mapping allowed both the local units of government and the County to analyze preferred land use along borders and to coordinate inconsistencies between jurisdictions. Ultimately, the mapping process allowed all those involved to view land use interactively through evaluation of existing conditions and regulations and to see how those conditions relate to both existing and proposed development. The Vilas County Mapping and Land Information Department staff was instrumental in developing and coordinating the mapping products. In addition, the mapping and data investment created through the planning process will have benefit well beyond the completion of the plan for a multitude of applications.

11.3 Incorporation of Vision, Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives outlined in Chapter 3 of this report were the guiding principles of the planning process. The vision statement, 21 goals and 143 objectives were created based on ideas generated through the local planning processes, from existing County programs, plans, and ordinances, and from direct input from residents and property owners at public informational meetings. The County Land Use Planning Committee reviewed, created and edited the guiding principles during two meetings at the beginning of the County planning process. The Land Use Planning Committee also periodically reviewed the vision statement, goals and supporting objectives as the plan developed to ensure consistency with the ideas they represented.

11.4 Public Participation

As discussed throughout section 2.2, Planning Process, a central idea behind the County planning process was to extensively involve and utilize input and opinions of county citizens and taxpayers throughout the plan development. The approach proved fruitful, as public participation was a highlight in many local plan processes. The approach to involve citizens in key decisions, not tell them what the decision had been, was positively received through both the local and County plan development process. Several Towns also set attendance records for public meetings during plan development. The County plan focused on pulling the local plans together,

integrating the plan recommendations to address feasible County implementation strategies as discussed in Chapter 12.

Public Informational Meetings

The County held four public informational meetings August 5-6, 2002 at the Conover Community Center (August 5th) and at the Manitowish Waters Community Center (August 6th). Each meeting started at 3:00 p.m. with a ½ hour presentation followed by a 1-½ hour open house. The meeting was repeated each day at 7:00 p.m. The meeting intent was for the general public to see and hear what was occurring with the land use planning process across Vilas County, and to solicit public input and comments on issues of county-wide interest.

There were several local Town plans, maps & graphics on display that represented much of the planning effort that took place over the previous four years, both at the town and county level. Meeting attendants were also asked to provide feedback on five possible county-wide alternative development scenarios, as well as the county planning goals, objectives, and vision statement. Each of the issues had its own “station”, with graphics and written explanations that allowed the public to provide feedback as they saw fit. The results of the public informational meetings can be viewed in Appendix B.

Focus Groups

The Vilas County Land Use Planning Committee facilitated a series of three focus groups to explore land use issues of countywide significance. The focus group topics were selected by the Committee based on the issues that were identified in the local plans. The purpose of the Sustainable Forestry focus group was to generate some initial suggestions and alternatives for strategies for sustaining forestry on both public and private lands. The purpose of the Home-Based Business focus group was to generate some initial suggestions and alternatives for encouraging home-based businesses while also ensuring their compatibility in Vilas County. The purpose of the Cluster Development focus group was to generate some initial suggestions and alternatives for residential and commercial cluster development in Vilas County.

Each of the Focus Groups included 10-12 invited participants who possessed significant experience with the particular issue. The Focus Groups allowed the County Land Use Planning Committee to study and discuss these particular issues as they were commonly identified within the local plans. The Vilas County UW-Extension Office compiled the results of the discussions into reports, of which the Executive Summaries can be found in Appendix B. The corresponding results and recommendations also assisted the County in review of potential implementation strategies as discussed in Chapter 12.

Alternative Development Scenarios

Five alternative development scenarios were created for the committee by Foth & Van Dyke and Vilas County staff based on the input from the Focus Groups and other local plan input to examine alternative planning and development concepts for Vilas County. The intent of the alternative development scenarios was to review the potential development impact of certain issues based on current regulations, development trends, and local plan recommendations. After review and input from the Land Use Planning Committee, the alternatives were refined and

background maps and data were rendered to display the concepts. The following alternatives were developed as illustrated in Appendix B:

- ◆ Map of Areas Available for Manufacturing/Industrial Uses
- ◆ Map of Potential Assessment Areas for Sanitary Services
- ◆ Map of Areas Available for Multi-Family Housing
- ◆ Alternative Commercial Development Options
- ◆ Alternative Examples of Conventional and Conservation Development:
 - Clustering To Preserve Environmental Features
 - 10 Acre Density Clustering To Preserve Woodlands and Forests
 - 5 Acre Density Clustering To Preserve Woodlands and Forests

Each of the alternative development scenarios were displayed and presented at four public informational meetings held August 5-6, 2002. Each scenario was accompanied with an explanation and review of the issue and had several questions to engage public response. Please see Appendix B for the materials and the public response to the alternative development scenarios.

11.5 Local Comprehensive Land Use Plans

To facilitate and strengthen intergovernmental relationships, the County decided in 1997 that land use planning should be a “bottom-up” approach with planning done at the local level first, then the county level. Many land use issues are reviewed by the Towns first, then administered or regulated by the County. In concert with this strategy, the County offered all local governments an opportunity to participate in the County planning process through development of their own land use plan. The basic premise was that local plans, coordinated by the County, would ‘roll up’ in combination to develop the County plan. Of the county’s 15 local governments, six Towns and the City of Eagle River decided to participate including Winchester, Washington, Presque Isle, Cloverland, Plum Lake and Lincoln. The City of Eagle River and the Town of Lincoln initially commenced a joint planning process due to their common land use issues, with Lincoln finishing the plan independently. In addition, the Towns of St. Germain, Arbor Vitae, and Manitowish Waters either completed or were in a planning process of their own. Their respective plans, when adopted, would also help build the County plan.

The local comprehensive land use plans were primarily built through developing preferred land use classifications that generalized land use by preferred uses, location, and density. Each land use class “title” identified what the particular town felt was the desired future condition of lands defined within the class boundary. The preferred land use classifications are not zoning districts and do not have the authority of zoning. Although the map and preferred land use classifications are advisory, they are intended to be used by town officials as a guide when reviewing lot splits, re-zoning requests, and for direction in revising the town zoning map.

When the Towns were building their Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map, proposed land uses were discussed based on the types of uses the town felt were of consistent character, use, and location relative to the existing development pattern and uses that occupy land. Each preferred land use class has a distinct purpose and area designation on the Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map. Each Town preferred land use map has a number of preferred land use classifications.

Each preferred land use classification has suggested permitted and conditional uses specific to that Town. (See Appendix C: Local Preferred Land Use Classifications and Local Preferred Land Use Permitted and Conditional Use Matrix).

By the summer of 2003, eight communities had adopted plans, either through the County planning process or individually. The plan status in Vilas County is reflected in Table 11-1. The Year 2020 Local Preferred Land Use Map of Towns with adopted plans can be viewed in Appendix C, along with the descriptions of the local Preferred Land Use Classifications and the recommended permitted and conditional uses of each Classification. Manitowish Waters and St. Germain Preferred Land Use Maps do not include the permitted and conditional use matrices, as those communities worked independent of the County to develop their respective plans.

Table 11-1 Land Use/Comprehensive Plan Status in Vilas County, 2003

Adopted Plans
Arbor Vitae
Cloverland
Lincoln
Manitowish Waters
Plum Lake
St. Germain
Washington
Winchester
Other Plan Status
Eagle River (1990 plan adoption followed by comprehensive rezoning)
Land O' Lakes (1992 partial town plan adoption for downtown area)
Presque Isle (plan drafted, public hearing completed, not adopted)
Towns Without Plans
Boulder Junction
Conover
Lac du Flambeau
Phelps

11.6 County Land Use Plan Integration

Although many issues are found in common between Towns, addressing land use across the County proved to be quite complex as attitudes toward land use and regulations vary significantly between jurisdictions. The County planning process identified many local land use plan recommendations that were tied to County level regulations and administration. The Town plan recommendations included significant County coordination, as the project intended from the beginning to have the County integrate the local plan recommendations into a Countywide plan.

Historically, most Towns in Vilas County utilized County administered zoning regulations as the main land use regulation tool. However, planning and the associated intensive public involvement process identified a desire of the participating Towns to pursue preferred land uses and future development patterns that in some cases differed quite dramatically from the existing zoning regulations that regulated such use. As the planning process unfolded, County leaders found that just integrating the local plans to create the County plan (as was originally intended) did not sufficiently take into account the Towns that did not have a plan (please see Table 11-1). County leaders felt all towns should have a voice in the future direction of the County, especially if zoning modifications or other ordinance changes are involved. In addition, many of the Town plans were recommending the Vilas County Zoning Ordinance to be a primary implementation tool, as administered through Vilas County. The potential administration costs and associated staffing responsibility was a significant concern to the Towns and the County. Assessment of the local plan recommendations, relative to preferred land uses, also found there was a significant consistency gap between the local preferred land use classifications and existing zoning districts that could be used to implement the preferred land use.

The local planning processes developed 29 different preferred land uses between eight different Towns (see Table 11-2). Many of the local preferred land uses were very similar, however others were not. As the intent of the local plans was to try and implement the preferred land uses, UW-Extension and Foth & Van Dyke staff compiled matrices of similar land use classifications for Committee comparison and consolidation where appropriate, including the recommended permitted and conditional uses of each preferred land use. The analysis identified the many similar uses and exposed the gaps between what the towns wanted (preferred land uses) and what they currently could do (existing zoning districts). As an example, many of the plans had similar recommendations with the following:

- ◆ Most plans in the county had a Rural Residential preferred land use classification that suggests densities lower than (ex. 5 acres) the existing county single family residential zone (ex. 1.5 acres). A separate zoning district for this use may be appropriate and necessary.
- ◆ The forestry zone in Vilas County has a five-acre minimum lot size. All plan recommendations relative to forestry suggest at least a 10- acre minimum. A focus group study on forestry also recommended the forestry zoning district be reviewed and modified to update the standards of density and uses.
- ◆ The many permitted and conditional uses associated with the All-Purpose zoning district were not recommended in preferred land use classifications in local plans. This same statement cannot be made for towns that did not participate in the county plan, hence the reason that all towns were involved with the zoning district review process.
- ◆ All of the zoning districts were suggested to be reviewed relative to:
 - Coordination of lot size
 - Permitted and Conditional Uses
 - Consistency between Planning and Zoning.

The result of the evaluation process would develop the County plan recommendations and proposed implementation strategy relative to the local plan integration. The County planning process was to have an additional phase, called Phase 6, that dealt specifically with implementation of both local and County plan recommendations and any ordinance modifications or development that may be necessary.

However, in order to facilitate integrating the local plan recommendations with the County Zoning Ordinance, the County Land Use Planning Committee voted to designate the existing zoning map and corresponding zoning ordinance as the basis for the County's comprehensive land use plan. Utilizing the County zoning map as the starting point for the integration process would narrow the scope of the County Plan. Instead of using all 29 different preferred land uses to develop the County Plan by incorporating them directly, the County Plan would start with the nine existing zoning districts. The local plan recommendations, via a consolidation of preferred land uses, would be used as reference in assessing the need for additional zoning districts. An additional zoning district would be created when supported by the majority of the local plans through a consolidation of the preferred land uses. One of the County Land Use Plan's primary implementation strategies would be to develop and obtain approval of the proposed new zoning district options.

The idea was discussed at length at April 28 and May 8, 2003 Land Use Planning Committee meetings. The May meeting was an Intergovernmental Coordination and Plan Update 'summit' held at the Arbor Vitae Community Center (see Appendix D). Town Board Supervisors and Plan Commission members were invited to discuss the County integration process. After review and discussion of the proposal, the consensus of both County and Town officials was to have the County develop and facilitate an 'integration process' whereby Town and County officials could discuss how the local use plans could be implemented via potential development of additional new zoning districts. The Land Use Planning Committee wanted the focus to stay on developing new districts based on local plan recommendations, not revising the existing zoning districts, as they were viewed as two separate issues. All Towns were asked to appoint delegates and alternates to the process, with the delegates having the responsibility to report the proceedings and obtain feedback from their respective Town. As a result, the Vilas County Land Use Planning Committee held three additional County/Town 'integration meetings' on June 30, August 11, and September 5, 2003.

Based on the review of the local preferred land use classifications in June, the consensus from the delegates and County officials was to have the consultant, John Williams of Foth & Van Dyke, draft some recommendations for new zoning district options for Vilas County. Williams worked with most of the Towns as they developed their plans and understood the rationale each community used in developing their respective preferred land uses. Seven additional zoning districts were initially proposed (see Appendix D). Each proposed district included a description along with proposed permitted and conditional uses. New district options proposed included Lakeshore Residential/Resort, Lakeshore Recreation, Wooded Residential, Rural Residential, Rural Residential/Light Mixed Use, Light Mixed Use/Commercial, and Forest Management zoning districts. The proposals were discussed at length in the August and September meetings of the Land Use Planning Committee. The consensus recommendation from the Committee concluded with four proposed new zoning districts (Lakeshore Residential/Resort, Lakeshore Recreation, Wooded Residential, and Rural Mixed Use). The proposed zoning districts are discussed at length in Chapter 12, Implementation.

