

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 Washington decided to participate and the following pages encapsulate that effort.

The Town of Washington is located in southeast Vilas County, and is bound by Forest County to the east, the towns of Phelps and Conover to the north, the Town of Lincoln to the west, and Oneida County to the south. The town covers 30,581 acres and has a 2000 population of 1,577 permanent residents and an estimated peak seasonal population of over 5,500. The Town of Washington is primarily a rural community with concentrated lakeshore development, especially on the Eagle Chain-of-Lakes, and low density residential radiating from the lakeshore. Due to its proximity to Eagle River, there is no concentrated commercial development or downtown area, although many businesses are located along STH 70 and USH 45. Approximately 13.6% (4,168.6 acres) of the town is covered by water, including 16 named lakes, the Deerskin River, and Blackjack, Ninemile, Mud, and Meadow Creeks. Most of the town (72.3%) is wooded, with a large portion (36%, 10,921 acres) being public land in the eastern portion of the town, primarily in the Nicolet National Forest. A brief history of the town is included in Appendix 1-1.

The purpose of the *Town of Washington 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 12 meetings with Foth & Van Dyke, three public informational meetings, one public hearing, and the dedicated effort of the Washington Land Use Planning Forum and Washington taxpayers, the *Town of Washington 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 able 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 Washington 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

In the 21st Century, the Town of Washington will strive to contain a mix of residential, business, light industrial, and agricultural uses. Land use planning and smart growth controls will protect the rural environment characterized by dense shoreline development on the Eagle Chain, low-density, wooded residential development beyond the shoreline, and large, contiguous forest tracts.

The town is a leader in building partnerships and increasing citizen support and involvement for land use planning, protecting surface and groundwater resources, and land conservation. This leadership results in a strong sense of community stewardship ensuring the quality of land, air, water, and public services for the enjoyment of existing and future residents.

Land use regulations provide equitable and responsive governance by the town and county to its property owners. Future growth and development will be managed by establishing compatibility of uses, location, and density of property. Implemented land use policies guide the location of compatible developments and continue the town's commitment to provide quality services such as good roads, fire protection, library services, and year around recreational opportunity.

The unique aesthetic, recreational, and ecological qualities associated with the Eagle Chain of Lakes and other water resources will be conserved and enhanced. New development will reflect northwoods values and small town feel designated by design review standards.

The town has an impressive economy of businesses and services along the USH 45 and STH 70 corridors. Business and light industrial growth has further diversified the economy and retention of local jobs without inhibiting the town's rural atmosphere.

The pro-active involvement of the community to manage growth will maintain the Town of Washington as a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

2 Public Participation Process

The public participation process was the key element to the development of the *Town of Washington Year 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan*. Plan direction was driven by the opinions and participation expressed by town residents and landowners as facilitated by the Town of Washington's Land Use Planning Forum. 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. The Town of Washington Land Use Planning Forum met on numerous occasions not listed below, and by no means is the entire plan development process effort encapsulated by the following summary description.

In the fall of 1998, the Town Board of Washington decided to initiate a land use planning process for the community in cooperation with Vilas County. The Town Board solicited community volunteers to serve on a Town of Washington Land Use Planning Forum. As part of the planning process, Vilas County UW-Extension agreed to assist the community and the consultants in gathering input for the planning process.

Meeting No. 1 (April 08, 1999) Project Orientation

Foth and Van Dyke met with the Town of Washington Land Use Planning Forum and with Vilas County Land Use Plan project coordinator Bryan Pierce. The meeting was held at the Washington Town Hall to discuss the planning process, discuss timelines, and identify with Town of Washington's progress, issues, ordinances, and planning related documents and reports. Foth and Van Dyke 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 decided not to conduct an issue identification workshop due to the town's extensive work with Wisconsin Rural Partners. The collaborative learning process was constructed as the first phase of public participation to identify issues and concerns related to town growth and development. The Land Use Planning Forum held four public meetings that resulted in the Concerns and Interests Report, dated March 2, 1999, which can be viewed in Appendix 2-1 of this report. The report was used to build related survey questions discussed subsequent in this report.

The Town of Washington Land Use Planning Forum also voted to conduct a Town Community Planning Survey as the second phase of public participation to engage the opinions of town residents and property owners. Bryan Pierce of the University of Wisconsin-Extension coordinated and conducted the survey. The Land Use Planning Forum created a subcommittee to assist in survey formulation and coordination.

Meeting No. 2

The meeting was "banked" as to be used as needed by the Forum. Meeting No. 2 was designed to be a public informational workshop. The meeting was not needed as the Forum held several collaborative learning workshops and public input meetings with the Wisconsin Rural Partners as discussed above.

Community Planning Survey

The first step in the town's unique survey process involved convening a series of training meetings on collaborative learning. The training was conducted as a special project of Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc. Four training sessions were facilitated by Wendy Hinrichs-Sanders of the Great Lakes Forest Alliance and Kelly Haverkamp of Wisconsin Rural Partners.

Following the collaborative learning workshop series, lists of priority land use issues, concerns and interests were developed, as well as suggestions for improvements on those issues. This information was used to formulate specific questions for this Land Use Planning Survey. Vilas County UWEX worked with the Forum members and consulting firm to draft the survey questions. The survey questions and format were also reviewed by Barbara Burrell of the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory.

The purpose of the survey was to "gather opinions about future changes from property owners and renters in the town." The Forum decided to provide the survey forms to the households of all property taxpayers in order to give both resident and non-resident property owners an opportunity to respond to the survey. The mailing address used was the same as on the property tax billings. Mailing labels were generated from the computer address file provided by the Vilas County Data Processing Department. Labels were screened for duplicates by the Forum members.

In addition to the property tax list, the Forum also announced through newspaper notices the availability of the survey forms at the town clerk's office for anyone who rented property in the community.

The mailing labels and forms were numbered as a checkoff system to avoid having to send reminder notices out to those who had already returned their surveys. The master mailing list was kept at the Vilas County UW-Extension office to protect the anonymity of the respondents. The survey forms were checked off by UWEX staff as they were returned.

The surveys were mailed out the first week of August 1999. A total of 1,762 surveys were mailed first class, with a stamped return envelope enclosed. An additional 10 forms were picked up at the town clerk's office. The first deadline for returning the surveys was set for August 15. The first mailing generated 679 returned surveys.

Following the initial mailing response date, a follow-up postcard reminder was sent to the mailing list recipients that had not yet returned their survey forms. The second mailing resulted in 42 additional surveys being returned. With not quite half responding from the two mailings, a decision was made by the Forum to proceed with a third full mailing. This mailing included a full survey form, again with return postage. Another 213 surveys were returned with this final mailing.

A total of 22 additional forms were found to have duplicate addresses. Another 65 surveys were returned by the post office as non-deliverable addresses. As a result, a total of 1,685 households were included as distributed surveys in the sample size. Of the 1,685 distributed surveys, a total of 934 surveys were returned; the overall response rate was 55.4%.

The planning survey is one method of generating public input for the land use planning process, and is often used with other techniques such as public workshops, informational meetings, hearings and other direct mailings. For comparison, 641 Town of Washington residents voted in the last election for state legislators (November 1998), and 732 voted for President in the 1996 election.

The survey responses were hand tabulated and compiled by a group of volunteers who met at the town hall during several 3+ hour sessions. These sessions were held starting on August 11, 1999. Bryan Pierce, Vilas County UWEX Resource Agent, provided an orientation to the tabulation process. Spot checks on a sample of survey responses were conducted by UWEX to check for accuracy of the compilations.

Narrative responses were recorded by Janet Christianson from the Vilas County UW-Extension/Advertising Office. Readers are strongly encouraged to spend time reviewing the richness of these written comments.

Results

The following results include tabulated responses for each of the questions on the Town of Washington Land Use Planning Survey from 934 returned surveys. As noted above, the response rate overall for return of the survey forms after the three mailings was 55.4%.

As the mailing labels were numbered for repeat mailings, response rates for different zip codes were possible to determine. Of the 934 returned survey forms, 390 surveys (42%) came from within the Town of Washington/Eagle River zip code of 54521, while 544 forms (58%) were returned from outside the local zip code.

The 390 surveys returned within the local zip code were out of 696 distributed, for a response rate of 56%. This compares very closely with the overall response rate for the survey. Resident property owners responded at about the same rate as non-resident property owners. Not all survey respondents answered each question. As a result, numerical totals to the various questions may not add up to the 934 total respondents.

Based on the number of surveys returned out of the total distribution, a general confidence interval for the survey results was calculated. At the 95% confidence level, the confidence interval was $\pm 2.1\%$. At the 99% confidence level, the confidence interval as $\pm 2.8\%$. In other words, it is 99% certain that the true response of the entire survey population falls between plus or minus 3% of the given percentage response. Confidence intervals for individual questions will vary somewhat since not all respondents answered each question. Please see the Executive Summary in Appendix 2-2.

Meeting No. 3 (February 8, 2000) Forum Meeting

The Town of Washington Land Use Planning Forum (WLUPF) met with Foth & Van Dyke at 7:00 p.m. at the Washington Town Hall. The Forum reviewed in detail the draft goals and objectives that were created from the town of Washington community planning survey and information generated from previous public input. The Forum also reviewed the revised summary meeting schedule and set the next meeting date for March 14, at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting No. 4 (March 14, 2000) Forum Meeting

The meeting was held at 7:00 p.m. at the Washington Town Hall. The Forum reviewed and finalized the plan goals and objectives and revised project schedule. The Forum also reviewed, discussed, and finalized the vision statement. The Forum then reviewed the land use, zoning, resource protection, water feature data, and lakes classification maps. Information related to population, housing, permit data, and was discussed. The format, schedule, and notification process was decided for the planned public informational meeting, which was set for Saturday, May 6, 2000 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the town hall. The Forum also decided to try and have the preferred land use public informational meeting in August 2000, which accelerated the schedule. The Forum also set the sixth meeting for May 23, 2000, 7:00 p.m.

Meeting No. 5 (May 06, 2000) Public Informational Meeting

A public informational meeting and open house was held at the town hall from 12:45 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The meeting was attended by 36 town residents and landowners and the Town of Washington Land Use Planning Forum. At 1:00, John Williams of Foth & Van Dyke presented an overview of the plan goals, objectives, and vision statement; inventory data highlights and trends related to housing, population, economics, and growth; overview of the community planning survey and issues identification process; and GIS mapping, including land use, zoning, land and resource protection, water feature data, Vilas County lakes classification data, zoning, and land use. 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 (June 13th, 2000) Forum meeting

The WLUPF met at 7:00 p.m. at the town hall to begin the process of developing the preferred land use map. The Forum 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 Forum 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 Forum discussed at length the relationship between the existing land use map and preferred land use classifications. The Forum decided lakes classification would be sufficient to regulate the shoreland areas, off-chain lakes would be viewed differently than on-chain lakes, off-chain lakes with mixed uses would be classified residential assuming the 'grandfather' clause allowed existing non-residential uses to continue, on-chain should be planned for mixed uses, and existing single-family areas should continue to be single-family.

Meeting No. 7 (June 27, 2000) Forum meeting

The Forum met at 7:00 p.m. at the town hall to continue work on the preliminary draft of the preferred land use map. The Forum discussed potential 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 preferred land use classification. The Forum decided to dedicate commercial areas along portions of STH 17, STH 45, and STH 70 in accordance with the survey and existing development pattern. The northwest quadrant of the town was designated as an agricultural/residential area that could accommodate both residential and agricultural uses. The Forum also felt the town should dedicate areas for exclusive forestry uses that are in forest management or do not have public road access. Development should be focused near public roads, which would have higher density standards than off-road, interior areas. The Forum also discussed the potential to tier off of public roads, with lower density for those lands that are in the town's interior with no direct public access. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m. and the next Forum only (without Foth & Van Dyke) meeting was set for Wednesday, July 12th.

Meeting 8 (July 12, 2000) Forum meeting

The Forum met at 6:30 p.m. at the town of Washington town hall to continue building the preferred land use map and classifications. The Committee discussed the map in detail, which was substantially finalized during the meeting. The Forum discussed in detail the language associated with the preferred land use classifications. The Committee decided on nine preferred land uses, including Lakeshore Residential, On-Chain Mixed Uses, Forestry, Rural Residential, Commercial, Wooded Residential,

Parks, Government/Institutional, and Agriculture Residential. The Forum reviewed and edited a four-piece information packet that will be sent to all property tax payers. The Forum also decided to meet on their own on July 25, 2000 to discuss permitted and conditional uses within the preferred land use classes and then convene again August 8, 2000.

Meeting No. 9 (October 07, 2000) Public Informational Meeting

The Town of Washington Land Use Planning Forum (WLUPF) hosted a community public informational meeting at the Washington Town Hall from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Sixty-three people attended. An overview of the planning process and progress to date was summarized, and the Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map was presented in detail. Each Town of Washington 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. John Williams presented the draft plan for an hour, followed by an open question and answer session. All maps were on also on display. There were many comments and opinions related to plan as presented. The WLUPF was directed by those in attendance to review the On-Chain Mixed Use classification, as many property owners (including those along Everett Point and E. Cranberry Lake) noted they were in opposition to additional commercial uses, beyond those that exist, within the lakeshore areas. Many water-related issues were discussed. The general consensus was that the draft plan was on track with its long-term intent of preferred uses, although there were issues that needed further refinement. The WLUPF noted the survey results would be analyzed and property owners would be given the opportunity to discuss their ideas and concerns. Appendix 12-3 has the public notification responses and comments (from the October 7, 2000 public informational meeting and April 28, 2000 public hearing) to the Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map.

Meeting No. 10 (October 30, 2000) Forum Meeting

The Washington Land Use Planning Forum met at 7:00 p.m. at the town hall to review the meeting notes, public comment, and survey response summary of the October 7th public informational meeting. The Forum also discussed the process for proposed revisions to the preferred land use map and edits to the preferred Permitted and Conditional Use Matrix. The Planning Forum discussed the results of prior meetings and reviewed requests for map revisions. It was decided to proceed with the recommendations to adjust the Gaffney property to Rural Residential, the Small property to On-Chain Mixed Use, the west side of E. Cranberry Lake Road and the west shore of Scattering Rice Lake to lakeshore Residential, and maintain the Anvil Lake area as Rural Residential. The Forum also discussed some options the town could use to implement the plan recommendations. The Forum set a Forum only (no consultant) meeting for November 14, 2001. Williams will meet with the Forum in January. The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Meeting No. 11 (January 09, 2001) Forum meeting

The Forum met at the town hall at 7:00 p.m. to continue discussions on the Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map and the implementation strategy. The Forum discussed reclassification of the Moscerosch property near Anvil Lake. The Forum spent a majority of the meeting discussing the administration and responsibility of plan implementation. The Forum also decided that the public hearing would be held Saturday, April 28, 2001 at 10:00 a.m. The public notification strategy was also discussed in detail. The town will send another poster plan mailing to all property taxpayers in advance of the public hearing. The next meeting was set for February 27th and the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Meeting No. 12 (February 27, 2001) Forum meeting

The Forum met at the town hall at 7:00 p.m. to continue discussions on the implementation strategy. Discussion focused on the comparison of preferred land use classifications to existing county zoning districts, and how zoning could be used as one tool to assist in plan implementation. Much time was spent discussing administration and coordination between the county and the town. The Forum confirmed the April 28th public hearing date and decided to meet March 13th to review the poster plan packet that will be mailed to all property owners. The Pre-Final draft of the plan and maps were to be displayed at the library in Eagle River 30 days prior to the public hearing. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Meeting No. 13 (April 28, 2001) Public Hearing

The Town of Washington held a public hearing at the Washington Town Hall to discuss the plan and solicit comment from the public. The formal Public Hearing was held from 10:00 - 10:52 a.m., with open discussion until 12:22 p.m. Fifty-one people were logged on the sign-in sheet. In general, the intent of the Year 2020 Preferred Land Use Map was supported by a majority of those present. The major residential issues included the west side of Everett Road and East Cranberry Lake Road, in that the residents favored a residential area exclusive of any commercial development. Minimum lot sizes in the Rural Residential and Forestry and Recreation Classifications were also a debated topic.

The Forum met again May 15, 2001 at which the Forum undertook discussion of several items related to the preferred land use map. The Forum also met and approved a resolution for plan adoption on June 12, 2001. The Washington Town Board approved the plan by ordinance on July 02, 2001. Both the resolution and ordinance are included in the beginning of this document.