

**CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION**

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PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The *Town of How 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* is a legal document that provides the policy framework for which town officials will base their development decisions. Over the next 20 years, the town will need to address a number of land use issues that will likely have an impact on various aspects of community. This comprehensive plan will serve as a guide to ensure decisions regarding future land uses are consistent and take into account housing development, provision of public services, economic development, transportation expansion, and environmental protection.

The General Plan Design (**Map 3.1**) designates areas of the town for preferred land use activities and is the desired goal to be achieved through the implementation of this comprehensive plan. The General Plan Design, along with the town's development strategies, shall be used in conjunction with Oconto County's zoning ordinances, local land use ordinances, supporting planning materials, and other implementation tools to make informed land use decisions in the Town of How over the next 20 years.

State Planning Legislation

As outlined in the Comprehensive Planning legislation, s.66.1001, Wis. Stats., the *Town of How 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* addresses the required nine plan elements.

- Issues and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agriculture, Natural, and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use
- Implementation

The comprehensive planning legislation (s.66.1001, Wis. Stats.) further states:

“Beginning on January 1, 2010, if a local governmental unit engages in any of the following actions, those actions shall be consistent with that local governmental unit's comprehensive plan:

- (a) Official mapping established or amended under s. 62.23 (6).
- (b) Local subdivision regulation under s. 236.45 or 236.46.
- (c) County zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 59.69.
- (d) City or village zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 62.23 (7).
- (e) Town zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 60.61 or 60.62.
- (f) Zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands under s. 59.692, 61.351 or 62.231.”

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The *Town of How 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* is made up of two volumes containing a total of 11 chapters. **Volume I – Town Plan** consists of Chapters 1 through 4 along with an appendices section for the community’s plan. **Volume II – County Resources** contains Chapters 5 through 11, along with an appendices section that details countywide and town specific background information and data.

Volume I: Town Plan: This volume describes how the Town of How envisions itself developing over the next 20 years. It includes detailed background information and data, development strategies, land use projections, a 20-Year General Plan Design (future land use map), and a plan implementation guide.

Chapter 1: Introduction - contains an overview of the purpose of the plan; state planning legislation; plan development process; and the town’s planning vision statement.

Chapter 2: Inventory, Trends, and Forecasts - identifies town specific background information and data assembled at the county level; inventories existing town land uses; details land use issues and conflicts; acknowledges continued land use trends; and projects future land use allocations.

Chapter 3: Future Land Use Plan - illustrates the town’s recommendations for future land uses through a 20-Year General Plan Design; designates area for farmland preservation; and defines the characteristics of the future land uses through a series of land use recommendations.

Chapter 4: Implementation - contains a guide to implement the development strategies (goals, objectives, policies, and programs) of the comprehensive plan with identified stakeholders and priority projects.

Appendices: Town Plan - Contains town public participation materials; nominal group results; intergovernmental cooperation workshop results; existing town land use inventory; and other relevant input and materials generated or gathered during the plan development process.

Volume II: County Resources: This volume contains countywide background information and data that served as a basis in the creation of the town’s development strategies and 20-Year General Plan Design.

Chapter 5: Natural, Agricultural and Cultural Resources - provides a detailed description of the county’s unique features that comprise its physical landscape.

Chapter 6: Population and Housing - presents countywide historic demographic information along with future population and housing projections.

Chapter 7: Economic Development – highlights labor force statistics; economic composition; and provides an analysis of existing and future economic conditions for the local communities and Oconto County.

Chapter 8: Transportation - describes the county’s existing multi-modal transportation system.

Chapter 9: Utilities and Community Facilities - inventories all local and countywide utilities and facilities including schools and emergency services.

Chapter 10: Intergovernmental Cooperation - lists the results of the intergovernmental cooperation workshops as well as programs to facilitate joint planning and decision making processes with other government units.

Chapter 11: Land Use Controls and Inventory – provides a detailed inventory of existing land uses for Oconto County.

Appendices: County Resources - Contains a countywide inventory of natural resources information, endangered and threatened species; a detailed list of available housing, economic development, and transportation financial and technical resources; existing countywide land use inventory; a glossary of definitions; and other relevant input and materials generated or gathered during the plan development process.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The first comprehensive planning process which began in September of 2001 with planning assistance from Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission was completed in four stages. **Initially**, the Comprehensive Plan Committee, with help from University of Wisconsin Extension mailed a community wide survey to residents, in order to identify issues and concerns relative to land use and development within the town.

The **second stage**, inventory and interpretation, began with the collection of data on existing conditions within the community. The data was then analyzed to identify existing and potential problem areas. Using results from the community wide survey, as well as background data compiled during the inventory stage, the Comprehensive Plan Committee developed an overall vision statement as well as goals, objectives, policies and programs for each of the nine elements required in the comprehensive plan under “Smart Growth”.

The **third stage**, was the development of the General Plan Design. The first two stages were combined to create a recommended land use plan to guide future conservation, growth and development within the town over the next twenty years. The preliminary General Plan Design was presented to the citizens of the community as well as nearby municipalities and government organizations for their review and comment. The comments were considered and included in the final General Plan Design map and document.

The **fourth stage**, established the tools necessary for implementation of the plan. Recommendations for regulatory techniques including zoning, and an action plan were established to ensure that the intent of the plan will be achieved.

The Town of How 20-Year Comprehensive Plan was adopted May 10, 2003.

Plan Amendment

The first major amendment of the Town of How 20-Year Comprehensive Plan began in 2018 with assistance from Oconto County Planning. The updated Town of How 20-Year Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2021. The focus of this amendment was to completely revise the plan layout and to update all components of the plan including existing land use data, general plan design, land use recommendations, goals, policies, and implementation steps.

Public Participation Process

Public Participation Plan

A major element of the comprehensive planning process is public participation. In accordance with Wisconsin State Statute 66.1001(4), which defines “Procedures For Adopting Comprehensive Plans”, the town adopted by resolution written procedures that will be followed in order to involve the public in the comprehensive planning process to the greatest extent practicable.

As part of the plan amendment process, the town adopted an updated public participation plan entitled “Procedures for Public Participation for Adoption or Amendment of the Town of How Comprehensive Plan”. This updated plan was adopted by the Town of How on December 10, 2019. These adopted procedures will continue to be followed in order to involve the public in the comprehensive planning process to the greatest extent practicable. A copy of the public participation plan is included in Appendix A of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

Community Survey

A community survey was conducted as part of the first comprehensive planning process in January 2001 to solicit the feelings residents and landowners had toward existing town services and to gain their insight on town planning and development. In all, residents indicated that they were satisfied with the past development of the town, wanted stricter protections of their resources, should develop a comprehensive plan, should discourage residential development near established agricultural facilities, support farmer’s rights to farm, want cooperation with the Village of Suring in planning, and wanted higher use developments located closer to the Village of Suring and low density development elsewhere within the town. Results of this survey are located within Appendix B of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

Nominal Group Exercise

In August 2006 as part of a county planning project, the Town Plan Commission members participated with surrounding municipalities in a Nominal Group Exercise to identify issues and concerns regarding future development in the Town of How and the central portion of Oconto County. The following are the priority planning issues generated during the discussion. Relevant issues were considered during the development of the goals, objectives, policies, and programs for the town’s comprehensive plan. Top issues from the nominal group exercises include:

Central Cluster Nominal Group:

- Preservation of agriculture and forestry
- Development of business/industrial parks
- Regulate developers seeking to subdivide land
- Maintain the rights of the land owner within reason
- Maintain agricultural heritage in county
- Develop and assist small businesses (less than 20 employees)
- Preserve county forestlands
- Preserve agricultural land-protect from infringement

- Prevent fragmentation-keep agriculture and forest lands together – promote preservation as well
- Promote development of businesses in cities and villages so as not to tax surrounding communities – promote small business as well

As part of the plan amendment process that began in 2018, the town reviewed and discussed these prior nominal group results. These results and the additional discussion assisted the town in the plan update process.

A complete list of the Nominal Group Exercises can be found in Appendix C of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

Visioning Exercise

As part of the planning process in 2001, a visioning exercise was conducted with town residents to describe the future of various elements discussed in the town’s comprehensive plan, including natural resources, economic development, housing, etc. The visioning process was used to provide a foundation for the development of the Town of How 20-Year vision statement, and generate development strategies (i.e., goals, objectives, policies, and programs) to implement the *Town of How 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*. As part of the plan update process that began in 2018, the Town reviewed the original vision statement. The town’s vision statement is displayed later in this chapter.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Workshop

As part of the planning process in 2001, an intergovernmental cooperation workshop was held on May 16, 2001. Approximately 40 representatives of 11 jurisdictions participated. The results of this workshop are available in Appendix D of Volume I: Town Plan.

As part of the county planning project an Intergovernmental Cooperation Workshops was conducted in April 2008 for communities located in the central region of Oconto County. Representatives from each of the communities within the central planning cluster were invited to attend the workshop, along with neighboring municipalities, school districts, civic and recreational clubs, Oconto County staff, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and other entities and departments that have an interest in, or direct impact on, the implementation of the area’s comprehensive plans.

The workshop collected input on any existing or potential conflicts or positive relationships between the communities and their surrounding government jurisdictions. Participants were also asked to provide potential resolutions to the identified issues or concerns. The list of issues and conflicts, and resolutions from the Intergovernmental Cooperation Workshops are displayed in Appendix D of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

As part of the plan amendment process that began in 2018, the town reviewed and discussed these prior intergovernmental cooperation workshop results. These results and the additional discussion assisted the town in the plan update process.

Open Houses

“Open Houses” were held during the planning process leading up to plan adoption in 2003. As part of the plan amendment process, an open house was held to provide residents and any

interested persons an opportunity to review the updated plan materials and give input as to its content and scope. Plan update materials were also made available on the Oconto County website throughout the plan update project.

VISION STATEMENT

The following is the Town of How 20-Year Vision Statement as prepared by members of the Plan Commission:

“Over the past 20 years, the Town of How has remained a productive rural farming community that has experienced limited complementary growth while ensuring its natural features were preserved and protected for the enjoyment of all of its residents. New homes and small businesses are clustered near Suring or found within a village like setting around Hayes, while having spacious development elsewhere - protecting open spaces and prime soils while also keeping service costs down. Agricultural industries and home-based businesses have been continued as a viable economic option for town residents. Future developments are well buffered from active farmlands so as to minimize conflicts between uses.

The town is still defined by its large tracts of open spaces and agricultural lands, as well as its varied water features, trails, acres of wetlands and woodlands. How’s roads are well maintained and uncluttered adding to the scenic beauty of the town.

How’s small community way of life has been preserved through working with neighboring communities and by basing planning decisions upon the town’s adopted Comprehensive Plan, supporting regulations, and public participation.”