

**CHAPTER 4:
IMPLEMENTATION**

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines a variety of actions and activities necessary to implement the development strategies and vision of the *Town of Spruce 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*. In an effort to keep this plan up-to-date with the changing conditions, this section also includes a process for amending/updating the comprehensive plan, along with a mechanism to measure the town’s progress of accomplishing its development goals.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL OFFICIALS

The Town Plan Commission, with cooperation from Oconto County, has the primary responsibility to implement the comprehensive plan. Plan Commission members, along with elected officials, need to be familiar with the future development strategies, vision statement, and maps found within the plan since they provide much of the rationale the community needs in making land use decisions or recommendations. If a decision needs to be made that is inconsistent with the comprehensive plan, the plan must be amended to reflect this change in policy before it can take effect.

The Plan Commission needs to ensure that supporting ordinances are consistent with the comprehensive plan per Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 (3). The town will consult the comprehensive plan when working with Oconto County and other government entities to develop/amend land ordinances or create additional land use recommendations.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INTERNAL CONSISTENCY

The comprehensive plan elements and their respective development strategies should maintain consistency to ensure land use decisions are based on current conditions. In an effort to keep the plan’s uniformity, the town’s Plan Commission and elected officials should conduct periodic reviews of the town’s vision statement and development strategies, along with the General Plan Design text and mapping. Any town ordinances and regulations that are not maintained and enforced by Oconto County need to be reviewed for consistency with the *Town of Spruce 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*. The town should also work cooperatively with Oconto County to ensure all land use ordinances and maps are updated to limit inconsistencies with the town’s comprehensive plan.

UPDATING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This comprehensive plan shall be amended/updated following §66.1001 (4)(b) and the town’s adopted written procedures for fostering public participation. It is recommended that the town’s comprehensive plan be reviewed/updated by the Town Plan Commission based on the following schedule:

- **Annually**
 - Review the vision statement and future development strategies;
 - Review updates to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) population and housing estimates, and U.S. Census data;
 - Review implementation priorities and relevance of the development strategies;
 - Update any changes to General Plan Design text or map; and
 - Ensure consistency with new or revised ordinances proposed by Oconto County.

- **Five Years**
 - Review U.S. Census data, WDOA population and housing projections – work with Oconto County to update *Volume II: County Resources* as needed;
 - Identify substantial changes over the past five years and any potential impacts to the community in the near future. This helps monitor outcomes of implemented development strategies and identifies any possible needs for the 10-year update; and
 - Be aware of updates or completion of other local, county, or regional plans.
- **Ten Years** - required comprehensive plan update per Wisconsin Statute 66.1001(2)(i). Amend the plan as needed based on changing conditions.
 - Conduct a review of the town’s vision statement, General Plan Design development strategies and map, land use recommendations, work with Oconto County to update the town’s population, housing, and economic data, along with other relevant planning information inventoried in *Volume II: County Resources*. Review ordinances and other controls for consistency with the comprehensive plan.

IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL LAND USE CONTROLS

Zoning

Oconto County General Zoning Ordinance

Oconto County has zoning jurisdiction within all unincorporated communities of the county. Oconto County maintains and administers the general zoning ordinance to achieve community goals such as promoting public health, safety, and welfare; protection of natural resources; and to maintain community character. General zoning utilizes a system of districts designated for different uses based on land suitability, infrastructure, avoidance of conflict with nearby uses, protection of environmental features, economic factors, and other local factors. Refer to the general zoning ordinance of Oconto County for detailed information on zoning districts, regulations, restrictions, permitted uses, and zoning maps.

- The comprehensive plan’s preferred land uses need to be compared to the zoning map to determine compatibility and realignment within various districts. The Town Plan Commission and Town Board should work closely with Oconto County to decide when re-zoning will occur, for it is not the intent of the zoning map to become a direct reflection of the comprehensive plan’s 20-Year General Plan Design Map (**Map 3.1**). The comprehensive plan is a vision for the future while zoning represents current use.
- Cooperate with Oconto County to develop/amend ordinances that encourage the protection of the town’s natural features and aesthetic views.
- Additional ordinances may be developed by the town or Oconto County in order to meet the town’s “vision statement” listed in Chapter 1 of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

Official Mapping

Under §62.23(6), the City Council/Village Board/Town Board (under village powers) "...may by ordinance or resolution adopt an official map showing the streets, highways, parkways, parks and playgrounds laid out, adopted and established by law." Once an area is identified on an official map, no building permit may be issued for that site, unless the map is amended.

The official map serves several important functions:

1. It helps assure that when the city/village/town acquires lands for streets, or other uses, it will be at a lower vacant land price;
2. It establishes future streets that subdividers must adhere to unless the map is amended; and,
3. It makes potential buyers of land aware that land has been designated for public use.

Floodplain Ordinance

The Oconto County Floodplain Ordinance regulates development in flood hazard areas to protect life, health and property and to provide a uniform basis for the preparation, implementation and administration of sound floodplain regulations for all county floodplains.

Areas regulated by the Oconto County Zoning Ordinance include all areas in the County that would be covered by the “Regional Flood.” These areas are divided up into three districts:

1. The *Floodway District (FW)* consists of the channel of a river or stream and those portions of the floodplain adjoining the channel required to carry the regional flood waters.
2. The *Floodfringe District (FF)* consists of that portion of the floodplain between the regional flood limits and the floodway.
3. The *General Floodplain District (GFP)* consists of all areas which have been or may be hereafter covered by flood water during the regional flood. It includes both the floodway and floodfringe districts.

For more information about floodplain zoning in Oconto County refer to the Oconto County Floodplain Ordinance.

- Further development in the Town of Spruce should remain consistent with the Oconto County Floodplain Ordinance. Cooperate with Oconto County, WDNR, FEMA, and other appropriate agencies when updates to the Oconto County Flood Insurance Rate Maps and the Oconto County Floodplain Ordinance are proposed.

Shoreland Ordinance

The Oconto County Shoreland Ordinance establishes zoning standards for use of shorelands along navigable waters. The shoreland standards apply to lands:

1. In unincorporated communities of Oconto County that lie within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water mark of navigable lakes, ponds or flowages; and
2. Within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark of all navigable rivers or streams, or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever distance is greater.

The Oconto County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance also establishes minimum lot sizes for parcels within the shoreland zone, setbacks of buildings and structures from the water, standards for the alteration of surface vegetation and land surfaces, and a permit process for work taking place in waterways.

- Further shoreland development in the Town of Spruce should remain consistent with the Oconto County Shoreland Ordinance.
- The town may wish to adopt a more restrictive shoreland ordinance than the county maintains.

Land Division / Subdivision Ordinance

A land division/subdivision ordinance, as authorized by s. 236, Wis. Stats., regulates the division of land for the purpose of sale or building development. The town may regulate, by ordinance, the division of land within its boundary. The land division/subdivision ordinance is related to the general zoning ordinance as it regulates the type of development that takes place on a parcel and the land division/subdivision ordinance regulates how the parcel is created and made ready for development.

Oconto County maintains a Land Division Ordinance. The ordinance applies to “any act of division of a lot, parcel, or tract which existed on the effective date of this ordinance by the owner thereof or his agent for the purpose of transfer of ownership or building development where the act of the division creates one or more new lots, parcels, tracts or units, if the lot, parcel, tract or unit being created is equal to or smaller in area than ten (10) acres in size, determined by the right of way.” Please see the Oconto County Land Division Ordinance for further information.

- Work cooperatively with Oconto County in efforts to update the county’s Land Division Ordinance.
- Consider developing a land division or subdivision ordinance for the Town of Spruce to regulate parcel arrangement within specific areas of the town and promote orderly growth.

Other Ordinances and Regulations

Other tools to implement the comprehensive plan may include the development/support of additional town controls or Oconto County regulations such as:

- Building/Housing Codes
- Blighted Building Ordinance
- Landscape Ordinances
- Design Review Ordinances
- Erosion and Stormwater Control Ordinances
- Historic Preservation Ordinances

IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The Town of Spruce Plan Commission, with cooperation from Oconto County, will be directly responsible for, or oversee the implementation of most of the development strategies (goals, objectives, policies, and programs) with the Town Board ensuring the plan is being implemented in a timely manner. In total, there are eleven general goals for the town, each followed by a detailed list of objectives, policies, and programs. Since many planning issues are interrelated, the objectives, policies, and programs related to one goal may be similar to those stated in other areas.

The following statements describe the town’s intent regarding growth, development, and preservation over the next 20 years.

Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs

- **Goals** - describe desired situations toward which planning efforts should be directed. They are broad and long range. They represent an end to be sought, although they may never actually be fully attained.
- **Objectives** - are measurable ends toward reaching a defined goal.
- **Policies** - are a rule or course of action used to ensure plan implementation.
- **Programs** – an action or a coordinated series of actions to accomplish a specific policy.

LAND USE

GOAL: To preserve and retain the rural atmosphere and character of the town by promoting compatible land uses.

Objective: Ensure the Town of Spruce land use is developed/preserved according to the strategies described in the Future Land Use Plan (Chapter 3 of this document).

COMMUNITY PLANNING

GOAL: For the *Town of Spruce 20-year Comprehensive Plan* to provide guidance to local officials when making land use decisions that reflect the town’s vision.

Objective 1: Utilize this 20-year comprehensive plan to best reflect the interests of all the town’s residents, follow an orderly and cost efficient method when considering future development and preserve significant features of the community.

Policies:

- A. This 20-year comprehensive plan will be reviewed by the Town Plan Commission, Town Board and other local committees before making any decision regarding land use and land use policies.
- B. Ensure that all growth and development occurs in a planned and coordinated manner that will maintain or improve the quality of life associated with the rural character of the town.
- C. Encourage cooperation and communication between the town, neighboring municipalities and county government in implementing this 20-year plan.

Programs:

- Continue Plan Commission meetings to encourage community planning related efforts. Meet with adjacent communities, media and/or private organizations to publicize ongoing planning projects and plan implementation projects found within this comprehensive plan.
- Encourage Plan Commission and Town Board to reference goals of this document prior to making decisions concerning land use.

Objective 2: The Town Board and Town Plan Commission have the overriding responsibility to review and update the town’s comprehensive plan as needed.

Policies:

- A. Periodically review and update, when necessary, the adopted 20-year comprehensive plan in order to provide for the greatest possible benefits regarding future development and preservation of significant features such as agricultural and natural resources.
- B. Review existing town and Oconto County ordinances as they relate to the implementation of this plan.
- C. Hold Town Plan Commission meetings/working sessions to review the adopted 20-year comprehensive plan and make amendments to accommodate changing conditions as needed.

- D. Ensure the public is informed and involved to the greatest extent possible when considering updates and revisions to the town’s comprehensive plan.

NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL: To preserve the role and attractiveness of the town’s rural landscape.

Objective 1: Identify and maintain the features of the town that help promote a sustainable natural environment.

Policies:

- A. Protect landscape features such as woodlands, wetlands, floodplains, streams, and lakes.
- B. Carefully plan development that may be considered adjacent to rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands and steep slopes.
- C. Encourage sound management practices of the town’s woodlands and wetlands.
- D. Encourage the inclusion of environmental corridors, buffer zones, grasslands and other natural areas in new and existing developments.

Objective 2: Encourage protection of water resources (surface and ground).

Policies:

- A. Preserve and restore surface water quality (wetlands, lakes, rivers, and streams).
- B. Carefully plan development adjacent to Kelly Lake and the town’s rivers, streams and wetlands.
- C. Promote the use of sound agricultural and soil conservation methods that minimize groundwater contamination.
- D. Consider techniques for erosion control (e.g., buffer strips, easements, land use controls, flood controls, etc.).

Programs:

- Support the restriction of winter manure spreading where limited environmental buffers exist adjacent to surface waters.
- Protect key natural resources through the use of the Environmental Corridors designation on the General Plan Design Map (**Map 3.1**).
- Work cooperatively with surrounding jurisdictions and Oconto County to protect groundwater resources.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

GOAL: To maintain the town’s agricultural attributes.

Objective 1: Preserve the farmland in the town for continued agricultural use.

Policies:

- A. Advocate that the county’s Zoning Ordinance has regulatory language that assures a strong future for agriculture.
- B. Retain large contiguous areas of prime agricultural lands for future farming operations.
- C. Discourage development on soils that have been identified as being prime agricultural areas thus encouraging the use of these lands for farming purposes only.
- D. Work with the county and state agencies to promote innovative programs which ensure the protection of farmlands - such as PDR (Purchase of Development Rights) and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR).
- E. Protect the existing farm operations from conflicts with incompatible uses.
- F. Large-scale farming facilities shall avoid the town’s environmental corridors.
- G. Support studies that evaluate the impacts of agricultural operations on the environment.

Programs:

- Encourage Nutrient Management Planning, Land Buffer Programs, etc.
- Support the restriction of winter manure spreading where limited environmental buffers exist adjacent to surface waters.
- Recommend buffers separating non-farming uses from agricultural lands in order to lower the number of possible nuisance complaints regarding agricultural lands.
- Consider informational materials that could be provided to new homeowners explaining what they should expect when moving into an agricultural community (e.g., odors, hours of operation, slow moving vehicles, etc.).
- Work with Oconto County Zoning to have better county control regarding animal size and number by zoning district.
- Work with Oconto County officials as needed to update the county’s farmland preservation plan.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

GOAL: To preserve and enhance the town’s cultural resources.

Objective: Encourage the preservation of the town’s historic and cultural locations.

Policies:

- A. Identify historically significant buildings (churches, historic homes and buildings), sites and other landscape features (cemeteries, fence lines, etc.).
- B. Encourage cultural events that support the area’s history.
- C. Consider combining historical assets with low impact recreational activities.

HOUSING

GOAL: To provide for a variety of quality housing opportunities for all segments of the town’s current and future population.

Objective 1: Identify and support existing policies and programs that help citizens obtain housing.

Policies:

- A. Support housing developments for all persons including low and moderate income, elderly and residents with special needs.
- B. Encourage the maintenance, preservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock within the town when appropriate.
- C. Support housing/living accommodations for migrant workers in the area.

Program:

- The Town may work with the state, county, and Bay-Lake RPC to monitor the town’s population characteristics to stay informed of changing demographics/characteristics within the town.

Objective 2: Promote housing development that is environmentally conscious and cost effective.

Policies:

- A. Encourage new housing in areas that can be adequately served by infrastructure (e.g., Kelly Lake Sanitary District) and community services.
- B. Situate higher density residential development in areas that minimize impacts upon low density residential development.
- C. Encourage the infill of existing vacant residential property where appropriate.
- D. Maintain a common green space/open space area during consideration of housing development design for subdivisions.
- E. Work with neighboring communities, to establish innovative development guidelines for future consideration within the town.

Program:

- Consider conservation by design developments as well as cluster type developments to provide for open space/agriculture preservation and a variety in housing choices.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: To consider small scale economic development while protecting and enhancing the town’s environmental and agricultural assets.

Objective 1: Future businesses should be directed to areas which will enhance and promote the rural atmosphere of the Town of Spruce.

Policies:

- A. Direct large commercial and industrial development to communities better served by existing infrastructure.
- B. Allow home occupations to locate within the town until they outgrow the existing property.

Objective 2: Preserve and enhance the town’s environmental, agricultural and recreational assets.

Policies:

- A. Consider the value of agricultural lands and the rural and scenic nature of the town before changing and converting to non-agricultural uses.
- B. Encourage conservation practices that minimize non-point source pollution of the town’s surface water and contamination of groundwater.
- C. Promote the town’s many natural resources as recreational opportunities.

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL: To advocate safe and efficient transportation systems for all modes of transportation in the town.

Objective 1: Promote an efficient road system that ensures the highest degree of mobility and accessibility while protecting the safety of its users and is able to adapt to changes in transportation demand and technology.

Policies:

- A. Maintain the functional integrity of existing and future roadways through appropriate land use controls and design standards.
- B. Protect existing investments in the road network with proper maintenance.
- C. Work with Oconto County to support transportation needs for the elderly and special needs populations.

Objective 2: Encourage a transportation system that complements and enhances the rural character and natural environment of the town.

Policies:

- A. Advocate for transportation projects that contribute to the protection of the town’s natural resources, scenic views, open space and agricultural land.
- B. Support transportation investments that encourage sustainable land use practices.

UTILITIES/COMMUNITY FACILITIES

GOAL: To balance the town’s growth with the cost of providing public services and facilities.

Objective 1: Promote quality community facilities and public services that are well maintained, efficient and cost-effective for residents.

Policies:

- A. Encourage concentrated development in areas where appropriate utilities (e.g., Kelly Lake Sanitary District), community facilities, and public services are readily available.
- B. Provide safe and convenient ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility to all public buildings.
- C. Continue to coordinate, consolidate and share governmental facilities and services where possible.
- D. Work with county and state agencies to remain informed about sex offenders relocating to the town and surrounding area, keeping in mind the safety of town residents.
- E. Promote cooperation and communication with the Oconto Falls, Lena, and Suring school districts to collectively support quality educational opportunities.

Programs:

- Continue the concept of “mutual aid agreements” for public services.
- Advocate that the community is served by adequate road maintenance, solid waste/recycling practices and facilities, protective services, etc.
- Work with adjacent communities, Oconto County, school districts and other jurisdictions to maximize the joint use of community facilities to reduce costs, promote efficiency in use, and avoid duplication and overbuilding of services.

Objective 2: Consider environmental and resource sustainability opportunities when making land use decisions.

Policies:

- A. Consider the possible impacts to the groundwater sources when evaluating future developments.
- B. Promote the use of shared on-site wastewater treatment systems where appropriate.
- C. Utilize the town’s environmental corridors (i.e., wetland areas, floodplains, steep slope, areas of poor soils for development, etc.), as areas that the town may want to prohibit all sewage system uses to protect groundwater quality.
- D. Consider developing/revising controls for telecommunication and electrical services (e.g., telecommunication towers and wind farms) to limit negative impacts.
- E. Encourage sustainability planning for development proposals.
- F. Promote energy conservation measures.

PARKS AND RECREATION

GOAL: To offer a variety of park and recreational activities.

Objective: Advocate safe parks and recreational sites that provide a number of activities for all town residents and visitors.

Policies:

- A. Cooperate with Oconto County and private recreation organizations on the maintenance and enhancements to the various recreation facilities located within the town.

Program:

- Consider charging a fee to launch watercraft on Kelly Lake to maintain the launch sites, parking areas and surrounding grounds.
- B. Work with town residents, Oconto County, and other adjacent communities, when planning for the development of additional recreational parks and trails within and surrounding the town.
 - C. Consider access for the disabled, elderly and very young when planning/designing/coordinating and constructing any new recreation projects, including parking, trails, etc.

Programs:

- Explore available resources and contact appropriate agencies (e.g. WDNR, BLRPC, etc) to further enhance the quality of the town’s recreational systems.
- Provide input into the updates to the Oconto County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

GOAL: To coordinate with adjacent communities, Oconto County and other interested groups/agencies on planning projects.

Objective: Promote cooperation between the Town of Spruce and any other municipality or government entity that makes decisions impacting the town and surrounding area.

Policies:

- A. Work cooperatively with surrounding municipalities to address possible boundary issues to minimize conflicts.
- B. Develop coordination and sharing/joint ownership of community facilities, equipment and other services whenever possible.
- C. Promote cooperation and communication with the Oconto Falls, Lena, and Suring school districts to collectively support quality educational opportunities.

Programs:

- Encourage improved participation with neighboring communities regarding meetings, workshops, mutual planning activities, etc.

- Work with neighboring communities and agencies regarding Kelly Lake and other water features or land uses which lie across town lines.
- Continue the concept of “mutual aid agreements” for public services.

Implementation Steps

Town officials should establish a general process and timetable for addressing the development strategies that will ultimately lead to implementing the *Town of Spruce 20-Year Comprehensive Plan*. Steps to address the development strategies could include the following:

1. To ensure the comprehensive plan remains current, the Plan Commission and Town Board should review and document any concerns or items that need to be addressed. The review of the comprehensive plan should include assessment of the town’s land use control tools (e.g., ordinances and regulations).
2. The Plan Commission and Town Board should identify policies and programs that are considered a priority. These priority strategies will lead to the implementation of additional policies and programs in subsequent years.
3. Town officials should identify key stakeholders and collaborators to assist in the implementation of the development strategies as needed. A list of some of those entities is provided at the end of this chapter.
4. The priority policies and programs should be separated based on topic such as agricultural preservation, natural resources, housing, economic development, transportation, parks and recreation. The separation of policies and programs by topic will allow for the delegation of projects to other entities.
5. The Town of Spruce has many tools available for the implementation of the community development strategies over the 20-year planning period. Within the appendices of *Volume II: County Resources*, there are comprehensive lists of financial and technical resources to implement many of the strategies listed for the housing, economic development, and transportation elements of the plan.
6. The implementation of this plan should be evaluated and revised as needed. Town officials will need to monitor the Inventory and Trends highlighted in Chapter 2 to ensure the development strategies address the changing conditions of the Town of Spruce.

Stakeholders

Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission
 Kelly Lake Sanitary District
 Marinette County
 Oconto County
 Oconto County Highway Department
 Oconto County Land Conservation Department
 Oconto County Planning/Zoning/Solid Waste Department
 Oconto County UW-Extension
 Gillett School District
 Lena School District
 Oconto Falls School District

Suring School District
 Town of Bagley
 Town of Brazeau
 Town of Gillett
 Town of Lena
 Town of Maple Valley
 Town of Oconto Falls
 Town of Stiles
 Town of Pound
 United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
 Wisconsin Department of Commerce
 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
 Wisconsin Department of Transportation
 Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)
 Wisconsin Department of Administration

Priorities

1. Continue to work cooperatively with Oconto County to update the Oconto County General Zoning Ordinance and other land use related ordinances in order to ensure the vision of the *Town of Spruce 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* can be achieved.
2. Consider adopting ordinances that are more restrictive than those currently being enforced by Oconto County to address specific issues impacting the town, and to provide additional protection to natural features.

 Furthermore, work with the county to explore developing plans and processes aimed at protecting the quality and quantity of the town’s water resources. This could include, but is not limited to, projects such as stormwater management planning; identifying and developing a plan to protect vital groundwater recharge areas; developing and enforcing erosion control measures; and restoration of wetlands.
3. Continue to utilize a pavement management system to ensure the town’s road network can continue to effectively serve current and future populations.
4. Continue to work with surrounding communities, school districts, Oconto County, and the Kelly Lake Sanitary District to efficiently provide quality, cost effective public services. As part of this, the town should continue to evaluate all mutual-aid agreements that are in place and consider other potential opportunities.
5. Work with Oconto County and other local, state, and federal agencies to promote best management practices for agricultural activities, such as nutrient management planning and establishment of land buffer programs.
6. Cooperate with surrounding towns, school districts, Oconto County, and Kelly Lake Sanitary District to discuss future planning projects and development concerns to lessen potential conflicts.