

CHAPTER 3: FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the *Town of Townsend 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* provides detailed discussion on the town’s 20-Year General Plan Design (**Map 3.1**). The GPD is intended to guide the location and density of future development, while preserving various natural resources, over the next 20 years in the Town of Townsend.

20-YEAR GENERAL PLAN DESIGN

The General Plan Design was created based on the information contained in:

1. *Volume II: County Resources*; and
2. The detailed community information found in Chapter 2 (Inventory, Trends, and Forecasts) of *Volume I: Town Plan*.

The data and input in these sections of the plan were major components in both the development of the General Plan Design (**Map 3.1**) and the following Recommended Development Strategy for the town’s 20-year planning period.

Land Use Classifications

The following land use classifications most appropriately represent the town’s rural, natural character and are in the best interest of the town’s future growth

Please note all categories shown below are not necessarily represented on the Town of Townsend General Plan Design; however, future development strategies for each are discussed in this chapter. The town’s future land use classifications include:

- Residential
- Mixed Use
- Commercial/ Light Industrial
- Industrial
- Parks and Recreation
- Governmental / Institutional / Utilities
- Agriculture / Woodlands
- Transportation
- Mineral Resources Overlay
- Environmental Corridors Overlay

Utilizing these land use classifications, this section details the suggested type, location and density of development for the Town of Townsend 20-year planning period.

Land Use Recommendations

Residential

It is the intent of this classification to promote orderly and efficient growth patterns that are consistent with adjacent land uses. As a result, residential development in the Town of Townsend is categorized into *concentrated residential and rural residential*.

Concentrated Residential

The concentrated residential category is illustrated as “*residential*” on the town’s 20-Year General Plan Design (**Map 3.1**). This residential classification is designated for portions of the town that contain large concentrations of development, are capable of providing adequate infrastructure, and will allow for future growth with similar residential types and densities.

Many of the town’s surface waters are already heavily developed along their shorelands. However, additional development around these areas can place stress on the natural environment leading to poor water quality and loss of wildlife habitat. While many these areas are designated for concentrated residential development on the town’s 20-Year General Plan Design Map, any additional residential development in these areas needs special consideration in order to ensure protection of these resources.

Recommendations:

- **Future concentrated residential development in the town will be directed to areas of pre-existing concentrated development and areas adjacent to these areas as illustrated on Map 3.1.** Density of development in these areas should be driven by the presence of a sanitary district. The town will recommend lower density development in all areas as long as a sanitary district is not present. Upon development of a sanitary district, the town will consider allowing higher density development in these areas. Development occurring prior to the installation of a sanitary district should be done in a manner that will be consistent with development that will occur if sanitary services become available. Other things to consider as development densities increase in these areas include:
 - Existing infrastructure and accessibility to future development
 - Provision of emergency services
 - Maintaining ground and surface water quality
 - Availability of groundwater
 - Traffic control
 - Nuisances
- **Concentrated development will continue as planned along Maple Acres and Chipmunk Lanes.** Currently, access and infrastructure in this area is adequate to serve the planned development. However, the town should continue to monitor this and make any upgrades and adjustments as necessary.
- **One and two family residencies will be the primary development** with the possibility of infill developments and rehabilitation, or redevelopment of existing structures.
- **Multi-family housing in these concentrated residential areas will be given consideration on a case-by-case basis based on the needs of the town’s residents.** For purposes of this comprehensive plan, multi-family housing is defined as those structures containing three or more households. This would include residential spaces such as apartment complexes, condominiums, and long-term care facilities. Residents throughout the northern portion of Oconto County have expressed some demand for multi-family and elderly housing options. Multi-family housing development in concentrated residential areas will be given consideration by the town Plan Commission on a case-by-case basis in order to ensure conflicts with existing structures surrounding the proposed development do not occur.
- **Proposals for new multi-family development should consider the adequacy of existing infrastructure to accommodate the needs of that development.** This type of development should only be allowed when appropriate infrastructure exists to accommodate the development or plans are in place to construct new facilities or update existing infrastructure. The town will consider multi-family housing development only if adequate infrastructure,

including a sanitary district, is available. If a sanitary district is developed in the town, multi-family housing will only be allowed in areas that can access that district. The town will make exceptions for smaller multi-family developments, such as town homes, if proof can be provided that the development will be adequately serviced by existing infrastructure.

- **Infill should be maximized in concentrated residential areas that have existing development whenever possible.** Utilizing infill development will result in limiting the costs to extend infrastructure, minimizing the loss of open space and productive woodlands, and decreasing the travel distance between residences and existing services. However, due to the town’s lack of sanitary and stormwater services, it is important that infill development be done in a manner that will continue to protect the town’s surface water features.
- **Encourage development techniques which maintain a balance between the natural environment and new development.** It is recommended that various development techniques such as conservation subdivisions are utilized in these residential areas in an effort to protect surrounding environmental features, preserve open space throughout residential areas, and protect woodlands and wildlife habitats within the town.
- **Future residential development should maximize the protection of natural features.** Natural features located in areas of proposed residential development should be preserved.
- **New residential development types are encouraged to minimize the co-location or adjacent location of incompatible uses.** Conflicting size, type, design or location of development may detract from existing properties.
- **When considering residential development proposals in shoreland areas** the potential impacts on the water resource, shoreline erosion, wildlife habitat, and surrounding natural resources should be reviewed.
- **When considering residential development proposals in shoreland areas, increased building setbacks and vegetated shoreline buffers should be implemented whenever possible.** This will help to maintain, or improve, the water quality and habitat potential of the town’s surface water features.
- **Consider increased lot dimensions for all new shoreland properties** beyond those already required by the Oconto County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.
- **Any new plans for expansion or alteration of existing structures in shoreland areas should account for and mitigate, if necessary, the increased impacts of that development.** Plans for the expansion or alteration of an existing structure should investigate methods to mitigate any increase in negative impacts on the town’s surface waters such as septic system upgrades/alterations or shoreline restoration.
- **The single family residential zoning district will be the primary zoning district of choice for any proposed residential development** in areas shown as concentrated residential. The town may also consider the use of the rural residential zoning district on a limited basis when the use of that district better aligns with existing residential development.

Rural Residential

The “Rural Residential” category is illustrated as “*Agriculture / Woodlands*” on the town’s 20-Year General Plan Design (**Map 3.1**) and encompasses single-family residences. It is highly encouraged that any future residential development takes place in areas designated as *residential*

on the town’s 20-Year General Plan Design. However, the town does recognize that existing open space will be desirable to some property owners for future development. This classification is designed for single-family residences located within a natural forested or agricultural setting and would include any residential development taking place in the woodlands and/or agricultural designations. Expansion of this classification shall not negatively impact adjacent or nearby uses.

Recommendations:

- **Low density development will be promoted to help maintain the town’s visual and environmental integrity.** Future development permitted in these areas should be done in a manner which has the least amount of impact on the natural environment and limits the amount of fragmentation to larger tracts of agriculture, woodlands, and open space.
- **New residential development will conform to surrounding uses** in order not to detract from or conflict with existing properties.
- **Encourage new development techniques which maintain a balance between agricultural or woodland areas and new development.** Utilize various development techniques such as conservation subdivisions and open space preservation ordinances in an effort to protect the surrounding environmental features.
- **Access controls are encouraged to limit the number of driveways** along the primary corridors in order to improve safety and reduce road maintenance costs.
- **The rural residential zoning district will be the primary zoning district of choice for any proposed residential development** while the town may also consider the single family residential zoning district on a limited basis when a smaller lot size would further the towns intent of preserving woodlands and agricultural lands.

Commercial

The Commercial land use classification also includes retail, professional, and service sector businesses. The Town of Townsend already contains a variety of commercial spaces that provide a number of services. The town would like to continue this trend of development which includes areas of commercial development.

Recommendations:

- **Concentrated areas of commercial uses are planned at the intersection of State Highway 32 and County Highway T** rather than dispersed throughout the town. This location is envisioned to contain commercial, retail and service related businesses that will be widely used by the town’s residents and visitors. New development in this area will be allowed only when appropriate infrastructure is in place or can be reasonably added.
- **Businesses in the town should be compatible with the character of the town.** The town encourages new businesses to feature attractive, well-maintained buildings that include appropriate signage and lighting in order not to detract from the rural, natural character of the town.
- **New commercial and light industrial development should be directed away from environmentally sensitive areas** (shown as “Environmental Corridors” on Map 3.1).

- **Development of new commercial spaces should be carefully planned in order to minimize the impacts on existing infrastructure.** Proposals for new development should consider the adequacy of existing infrastructure to accommodate the needs of that development. New development should minimize the costs of utility and road extension. Additionally, the presence of truck traffic, noise, and other impacts of commercial and light industrial activity should be minimized when located near residential areas. When necessary, buffers should be created to minimize impacts on residential and commercial land uses.
- **The location of home-based businesses should be carefully scrutinized to ensure their operations do not interfere or compromise surrounding land uses or the rural integrity of the town.** For any home based businesses that grow to a level that requires a change in zoning, the town should first determine if the business will negatively impact the surrounding land uses. If a change in zoning is required to permit the business, the town may consider utilizing the restricted commercial or neighborhood commercial zoning districts.

Industrial / Light Industrial

The Industrial/Light Industrial land use classification specifically accommodates manufacturing businesses which creates or changes raw or unfinished materials into another form or higher valued product. Since industrial manufacturing can occur at various intensities, the inclusion of light industrial accommodates less intense operations. The town does not view itself as a community that would attract large industrial operations during the 20 year planning period and have not identified any areas for industrial development on **Map 3.1**. Industrial uses are generally expected to locate within nearby communities that have adequate infrastructure, while light industrial uses may be considered in areas designated for commercial development on **Map 3.1** or in other areas where commercial businesses may be considered.

Recommendations:

- **Industrial or Light Industrial uses in the town should be compatible with the character of the town.** Any new industrial or light industrial uses must be consistent with the scale of the town and be environmentally friendly.
- **Control the appearance of industrial or light industrial businesses** by reviewing designs, signage, and landscaping of future establishments through building scale and appearance. Any new industrial or light industrial business development should be directed away from environmental sensitive areas (shown as “Environmental Corridors” on Map 3.1).
- **Development of new industrial or light industrial spaces should be carefully planned in order to minimize the impacts on existing infrastructure.** Proposals for new development should consider the adequacy of existing infrastructure to accommodate the needs of that area. New development should minimize the costs of utility and road extensions. Additionally, the presence of truck traffic, noise, and other impacts of industrial activity should be minimized when located near residential areas. When necessary, buffers should be created to minimize impacts between residential and light industrial land uses.
- **The location of home-based businesses should be carefully scrutinized to ensure their operations do not interfere or compromise surrounding land uses or the rural integrity of the town.** For any home based businesses that grow to a level that requires a change in zoning to light industrial, the town should first determine if the business will negatively impact the surrounding land uses.

Mixed Use

The Mixed Use land use classification includes areas with a mix of existing residential and commercial land uses. It is the intent of this classification to promote continued development of commercial uses within these areas, as they are located along the STH 32 corridor or other prominent crossroad areas within the town. It is not the intent of the town to promote significant residential development within these areas.

Recommendations:

- **Mixed use development is planned along State Highway 32.** These locations are envisioned to contain primarily commercial, retail, and service related businesses that will be widely used by the town’s residents and visitors along with some existing residential uses and some limited new residential uses.
- **Future commercial development surrounding the Town Hall and Park should be done in a manner that will lead to the development of a “town center.”** Commercial businesses in this area should be retail and commercial in nature and be done in a manner that compliments the surrounding land uses.
- **New businesses should be compatible with the character of the town.** The town encourages new businesses to feature attractive, well-maintained buildings that include appropriate signage and lighting so not to detract from the rural character of the community and the mixture of uses within the planned mixed use area.
- **New development should be directed away from environmentally sensitive areas** (shown as “Environmental Corridors” on Map 3.1).
- **Development of new commercial spaces should be carefully planned in order to minimize the impacts on existing infrastructure.** Proposals for new development should consider the adequacy of existing infrastructure to accommodate the needs of that area. New development should minimize the costs of utility and road extensions. Additionally, the presence of truck traffic, noise, and other impacts of commercial activity should be minimized when located near residential areas. When necessary, buffers should be created to minimize impacts between residential and business land uses.
- **Residential uses within these mixed use areas are anticipated to continue, however it is not the intent of the town to promote significant residential development within these planned mixed use areas.** The town will utilize the single family residential zoning district for the limited new residential uses as needed.
- **The general commercial zoning district will be the primary zoning district of choice for any proposed commercial proposals.** When a commercial proposal within one of the designated mixed use areas is situated amongst existing residential uses the town may wish to utilize the restricted commercial or neighborhood commercial zoning district.

Governmental/Institutional/Utilities

The Governmental/Institutional/Utilities land use classification addresses the capacity and efficiency of government buildings; emergency services and facilities; utilities and utility sites; cemeteries; and public services provided to the town residents.

Recommendations:

- This classification is **limited to the existing area of the Town Hall, Town Extractive Mining Operation, town owned and operated waste disposal site, and Oconto County Administrative Offices** which are located throughout the town. There is no expansion or development planned for any of the areas that lie within this classification.
- The town should **continue to monitor the necessity of a sanitary district** based on a variety of criteria including ground and surface water quality and public health and safety.
- **Future municipal development should be located in a manner that maximizes safety and minimizes negative impacts.** It should be ensured that safe access into and out of municipal buildings is available for all emergency services, such as fire and rescue, town officials, and town residents.

Park and Recreation

The Park and Recreation land use classification is intended for the promotion of existing recreational facilities, trails, boat landings, beaches, and parks and open spaces within and around the Town of Townsend. In addition, ensure that the public is served with adequate park facilities, ranging from passive to active recreation.

Recommendations:

- **Work with Oconto County to create and update the County Outdoor Recreation Plan.**
- **Cooperation in planning park and recreational facilities.** If future recreational development were to occur in or around the town, it is recommended that the town cooperate with the surrounding towns, Oconto County, WDNR, US Forest Service and other pertinent agencies to promote connectivity of recreational uses such as trails.
- **Develop a long-term plan for establishing permanent trail systems** that will accommodate a variety of recreation activities.
- **Continue to monitor public access to the town’s water features.** As development pressures continue to mount along the town’s surface water features, the amount of access the public has to the town’s surface waters could be jeopardized. It is important the town continue to monitor the amount of access available to the town’s residents and visitors along popular surface waters used for recreation purposes. The town may want to consider developing a long-term plan for acquiring lands that will continue to provide the public access to these waters.
- **The town should consider adopting an official map** which can be used to designate areas for future recreation-related development.
- **The town should cooperate with the surrounding towns, Oconto County, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources** to promote the expansion and connectivity of recreational trails.
- **Proposed private campgrounds should be compatible with the character of the town and located in areas that do not conflict with area land uses.** Any campground proposals should be directed away from environmentally sensitive areas (shown as “Environmental

Corridors” on Maps 3.1) and away from areas that do not have suitable soils to support the sanitary system needs of the proposed use.

Agricultural

The Agricultural land use classification encompasses lands being utilized for agricultural purposes within the areas illustrated as “Agriculture / Woodlands” on the town’s 20-Year General Plan Design (Maps 3.1). The agricultural classification is designed to preserve existing lands devoted to the growing of crops and the raising of livestock.

Recommendations:

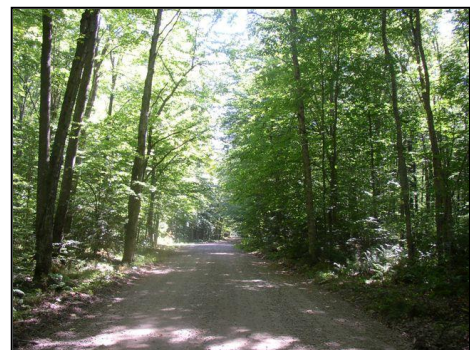
- **If residential development is permitted in these areas, low density development should be considered.** Future development in these areas should be done in a fashion which is least impactful to the natural environment and ensures fragmentation of agriculture land does not occur.
- **Develop a long-term vision for lands being converted from agricultural use to non-agricultural uses.** The town should ensure that lands converted from agricultural to non-agricultural uses are done in a way that is compatible with surrounding land uses.
- **Advocate that agricultural lands are under adequate farming practices.** It is important for these lands to continue to be under the best management practices for agricultural activities. Inappropriate agricultural practices can have an adverse impact on the quality of surface water and groundwater unless properly managed.
- **Work with Oconto County to address the issue of large-scale farming operations.** Large-scale farming operations are recommended to be located in areas of the town that avoid environmental corridors and surface water features.

Woodlands and Open Space

The Woodlands/Open Space land use classification encompasses lands being utilized for woodland and natural open space and is illustrated as “Agriculture / Woodlands” on the town’s 20-Year General Plan Design (Maps 3.1). The woodland classification is designed to promote the maintenance of private woodlands and open space areas within the town.

Recommendations:

- **If residential development is permitted in these areas, low density development should be considered.** Future development in these areas should be done in a fashion which is least impactful to the natural environment and does not fragment large, contiguous areas of woodlands and open spaces.
- **Maintain the town’s private woodland areas.** Woodlands should not be developed with higher densities in order to preserve open space and the economic vitality of the community and its residents.
- **Utilize existing natural areas to enhance the character of the town.** Preserve large natural areas and features to enhance and retain buffers between incompatible uses while maintaining scenic views of the town.



- **Protect the town’s many natural features and open space areas** to enhance the recreational opportunities in the community.

Nicolet National Forest

The Public Land classification encompasses primarily the Nicolet National Forest. The town envisions the existing lands remain in public ownership throughout this planning period. Preservation of public forests encourages the continuation of large tracts of forested lands that maintain diverse vegetative and biological communities. These lands are to continue to provide recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, camping and snowmobiling.

Transportation

The Transportation land use classification covers both motorized and non-motorized travel. This includes the existing road network; future recreation paths and trails; and recommendations for safety and improved traffic movement in the town.

Recommendations:

- **Maintain a cost effective road system management plan.** Continue to utilize the PASER (Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating) program to assist in maintaining the roads in the future.
- **Consider adopting an Official Map** to delineate future road extensions.
- **Work with Oconto County and Wisconsin Department of Transportation to ensure adequate maintenance** of all county and state highways; particularly State Highway 32.
- **Ensure adequate off-street parking in areas of commercial/light industrial development.**
- **Develop a long-term vision for providing multi-modal transportation options** for a variety of transportation modes.
- **Recreational paths, routes, and trails such as snowmobile trails should have proper signage and intersection controls** to ensure safe crossing and interaction with vehicles.

Mineral Resources Overlay

The Mineral Resources Overlay is depicted on the General Plan Design to ensure active and future quarries are identified within the town. This overlay includes both metallic mining, although extremely rare, and non-metallic mining activities. In most cases, the type of mining to occur in Oconto County will involve extraction of gravel, marl, clay, and similar materials to be conducted for a specified approved period of time. When mining is complete and the site is reclaimed, the overlay shall be removed and the previous land uses allowed to continue.

- **The town should work with Oconto County Officials to monitor existing mining operations.** Any issues involving the mining operation should be brought to the attention of the county officials in a timely manner.
- **The town should adequately review proposed mining operations.** The town should recommend conditional use requirements to the county that ensure the mining operation does not significantly compromise surrounding land uses. The application of setbacks will help alleviate issues with neighboring properties.

- **Mining operations should show that they have little negative impact** on the neighboring properties or other portions of the town and surrounding areas. This includes negative impacts on groundwater and local roads.
- **Ensure mining operations are properly closed.** The town should work with surrounding communities, Oconto County and state agencies to ensure that mining sites are reclaimed to a natural setting.
- **The town should pursue avenues in which to reclaim mining operations not sufficiently reclaimed.**
- **The reclaimed mining sites will be available for other land uses.** The town will need to determine the land use that best suits the area and needs of the town. (i.e. agriculture, recreational, residential)

Environmental Corridors

Environmental corridors contain four elements including: the 100-year floodplain as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); WDNR wetlands; steep slopes of 12 percent or greater; and setback from all navigable waterways as defined by the Oconto County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Together, these elements represent the areas of the town that are most sensitive to development and are intended to be preserved through the implementation of this comprehensive plan.

Recommendations:

- **This plan should serve as a guide for the preservation of environmental corridors.** Using the environmental corridors as a guide when reviewing proposed developments will give the town background information to determine what areas are important to maintaining the rural character and quality of the town’s natural resource base. The corridors have been added as an overlay to the 20-Year General Plan Design and should be utilized as a reference when reviewing future development plans.
- **Recommend developments should locate away from environmental corridors as much as possible** to help minimize the negative effects on water resources, wildlife habitats and the overall character of the town.
- **Maintain environmental corridors.** Development near environmental corridors in the town should be carefully reviewed in order to maintain ample open space and wildlife corridors and reduce the impact on the town’s natural features.

IDENTIFIED SMART GROWTH AREAS

According to Wisconsin State Statute 16.965 a “smart growth area” is “an area that will enable the development and redevelopment of lands within existing infrastructure and municipal, state and utility services, where practicable, or that will encourage efficient development patterns that are both contiguous to existing development and at densities which have relatively low utility and municipal and state governmental costs.”

- The Town of Townsend identified lands containing *existing* concentrated development and those that would likely be serviced by a sanitary district if one were to be built in the future, along with the State Highway 32 corridor as the town’s “smart growth areas.”

- Concentrating future commercial and light industrial development along the corridor of State Highway 32 will assist in meeting the needs of the town's existing and future businesses, residents, and tourists while taking advantage of the excellent exposure and ease of access to the highway.

Map 3.1: 20-Year General Plan Design