



**TOWN OF SARATOGA, WISCONSIN
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2023**



Town of Saratoga

Town Board

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Plan Contents

- Chapter 1: Demographics 1
 - BACKGROUND 1
 - DEMOGRAPHICS..... 2
 - GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES 10
- Chapter 2: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources..... 11
 - PREVIOUS NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PLANS AND STUDIES 11
 - NATURAL RESOURCES..... 12
 - HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES 18
 - AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES 20
 - NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PROGRAMS..... 20
 - GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES 24
- Chapter 3: Housing 27
 - PREVIOUS HOUSING PLANS AND STUDIES 27
 - HOUSING ASSESSMENT 28
 - HOUSING PROGRAMS..... 32
 - GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES 34
- Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities..... 36
 - PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES 36
 - UTILITIES..... 37
 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES 38
 - GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES 40
- Chapter 5: Transportation 43
 - PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION 43
 - ROAD NETWORK 44
 - GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES 50
- Chapter 6: Economic Development 52
 - PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES 52
 - ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT 55
 - ECONOMIC ANALYSIS..... 55
 - SOLAR AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 59
 - Solar Energy’s Impact on Jobs and the Supply Chain..... 62
 - SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 63

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS	65
GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES	68
Chapter 7: Land Use.....	70
PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES	70
EXISTING LAND USE	71
FUTURE LAND USE	75
LAND USE PROGRAMS AND TOOLS	77
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES	79
Chapter 8: Intergovernmental Cooperation	81
OVERVIEW.....	81
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS	82
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES	85
Chapter 9: Implementation	86
IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	86
CONSISTENCY AMONG PLAN CHAPTERS	88
PLAN ADOPTION, AMENDMENTS, UPDATES, AND MONITORING	88
PLAN EVALUATION.....	90

Maps

Map 1: Planning Area

Map 2: Natural Resources

Map 3: Utilities and Community Facilities

Map 4: Transportation

Map 5: Existing Land Use

Map 6: Future Land Use

Attachments

1. Public Participation Plan

2. Plan Commission Resolution

3. Public Hearing Notice

4. Town Board Ordinance

Chapter 1: Demographics

This is the first of nine chapters in the Town of Saratoga Comprehensive Plan. This chapter reviews the demographics of the Town of Saratoga including trends, forecasts, and comparisons for some basic demographics including population, households, employment, age, education, and income. Forecasts typically cover the 20-year planning period, except in cases where the only acceptable data sources had lesser time periods for their forecasts. Official data sources include the WDOA Demographic Service Center and the U.S. Census Bureau.

BACKGROUND

The Town of Saratoga is located in the southeastern corner of Wood County, Wisconsin. The Town is bounded by the City of Nekoosa and Town of Port Edwards to the west (across the Wisconsin River), the Village of Port Edwards and Town of Grand Rapids to the north, the Town of Rome (Adams County) to the south, and the Town of Grant (Portage County) to the east. In 2020, the Town of Saratoga had a population of 4,954. Most of the Town consists of woodlands, with scattered residential and business development throughout as well as frontage along the Wisconsin River.

Planning Process

The Comprehensive Plan explores potential issues that may have an impact upon the development of the Town over a 20-year planning period. As required by the state's comprehensive planning law – 66.1001 – plans must be updated every ten years. In the Spring of 2022, the Town initiated a process to update its previous plan. Several meetings with the Plan Commission have been held and a draft plan is expected in the Spring of 2023. Running concurrently with the comprehensive planning process was the development of the Town's first economic development strategy. This was done to incorporate its findings related to economic development and land use development into the comprehensive plan. A final Plan Commission meeting was held on DATE to review the final plan and recommend adoption of the plan by the Town Board.

Public Participation

An important part of any planning process is public involvement. Public involvement provides the citizens of the town an opportunity to express their views, ideas, and opinions on issues that they would like addressed regarding the future development of their town. Local officials use this input to guide policies and decisions with greater awareness of the public's desires and consensus. See the adopted Public Participation Plan in Appendix A. The Town of Saratoga posted all Plan Commission meetings to invite the public and held a Public Hearing to collect public input.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population and Households

Historical Trends

Table 1 shows 2020 population estimates for the Town, County, and State. The Town grew by 8.23 percent between 1990 and 2010 but lost 4.14 percent of its population since 2010. Despite this, the number of households grew since 2010 at a rate of 2.19 percent, which is considerably lower than the growth rate of 27.53 percent between 1990 and 2010. Compared to the state, both Saratoga and Wood County are growing at a slower rate, and the average household size is decreasing at a faster rate. This could be partially due to empty nesters remaining in the Town as their children move away for school or work. It is important to note that Saratoga’s household size was considerably larger than county and state averages, but now it is closer to county and state averages.

Table 1: Demographic Change 1990-2020						
Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	2010	2020	1990-2010 % Change	2010-2020 % Change
Total Population						
T. Saratoga	4,775	5,391	5,168	4,954	8.23%	-4.14%
County	73,605	75,555	74,749	73,112	1.55%	-2.19%
State	4,891,769	5,363,675	5,686,986	5,790,716	16.26%	1.82%
Total Households						
T. Saratoga	1,613	2,012	2,057	2,102	27.53%	2.19%
County	27,473	30,135	31,598	32,332	15.01%	2.32%
State	1,822,118	2,084,556	2,279,768	2,358,156	25.12%	3.44%
Average Household Size						
T. Saratoga	2.96	2.66	2.51	2.36	-15.20%	-5.98%
County	2.65	2.47	2.34	2.23	-11.70%	-4.70%
State	2.61	2.5	2.43	2.39	-6.90%	-1.65%

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, & 2010; ACS 2020

The average household size has been decreasing steadily across the nation over the past few decades. This is due to a multitude of factors including longer life spans, less people having children, and people having fewer children.

Projections

Figure 1 shows population projections for the Town of Saratoga and Table 2 compares projected population in the Town to Wood County, based on projections made by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA). The Wisconsin DOA population projections are recognized as Wisconsin’s official population projections. These projections are based on historical population and household growth in the community, with more recent years given a greater weight. The Town of Saratoga is

expected to experience an increase in population through 2040 at a rate of 1.23 percent. Wood County is expected to experience population loss at a rate of 2.39 percent through 2040.

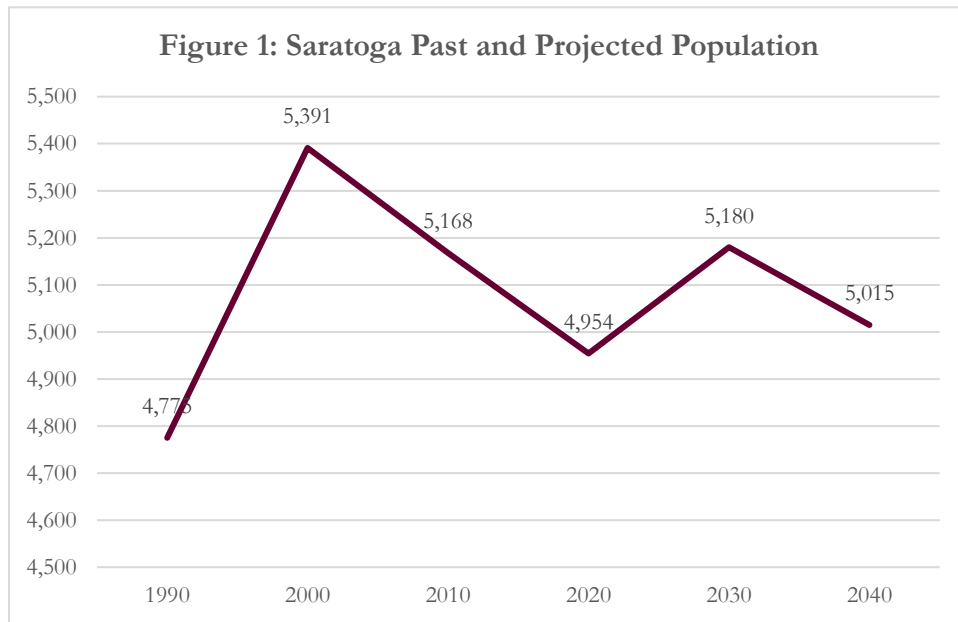
Figure 2 and Table 3 include household projections completed by the WDOA. Projections indicate that although both population and number of households are expected to increase through 2040, the growth in households will be faster than the overall population growth. This is likely due to the trend of decreased household size. The number of households is expected to increase 5.8 percent for the Town of Saratoga and decrease 0.45 percent for Wood County through 2040. Household size has been steadily decreasing through the past few decades and this trend is expected to continue. The average household size was 2.36 in 2010 and is expected to decrease to 2.25 by 2040.

Table 2: Population Projections, 2025-2040						
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2020-2040
T. Saratoga	4,954	5,190	5,180	5,150	5,015	1.23%
Wood Co.	72,892	74,370	73,930	73,270	71,150	-2.39%

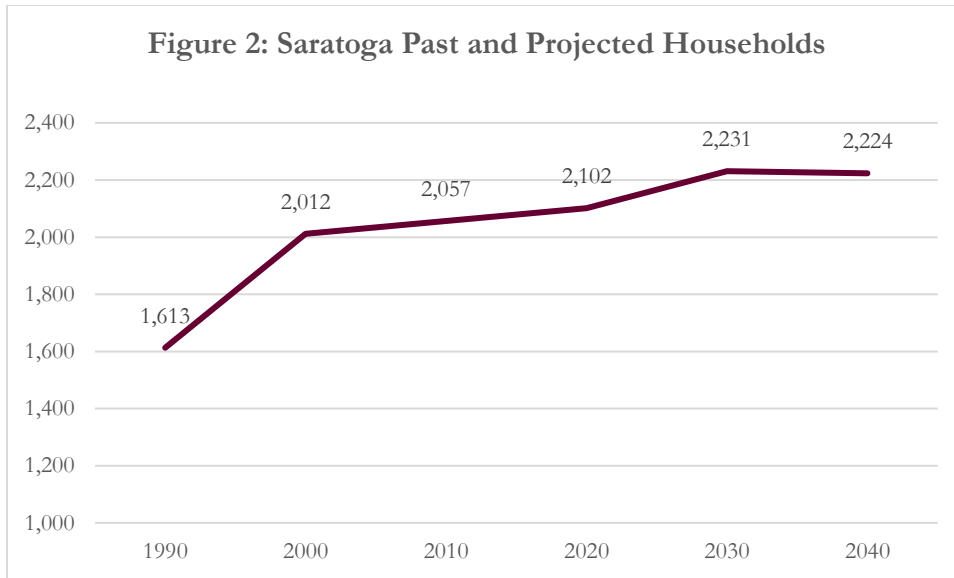
Source: ACS 2020, DOA 2025-2040

Table 3: Household Projections, 2025-2040						
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	% Change 2020-2040
T. Saratoga	2,102	2,206	2,231	2,253	2,224	5.80%
Wood Co.	32,707	32,861	33,043	33,175	32,561	-0.45%

Source: ACS 2020, DOA 2025-2040



Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, & 2010; ACS 2020; DOA 2025-2040

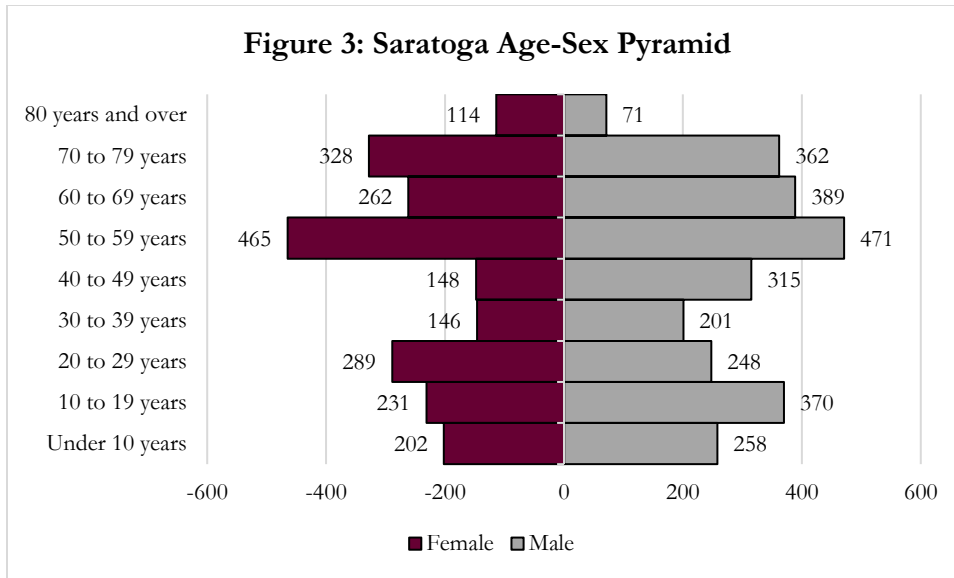


Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, & 2010; ACS 2020; DOA 2025-2040

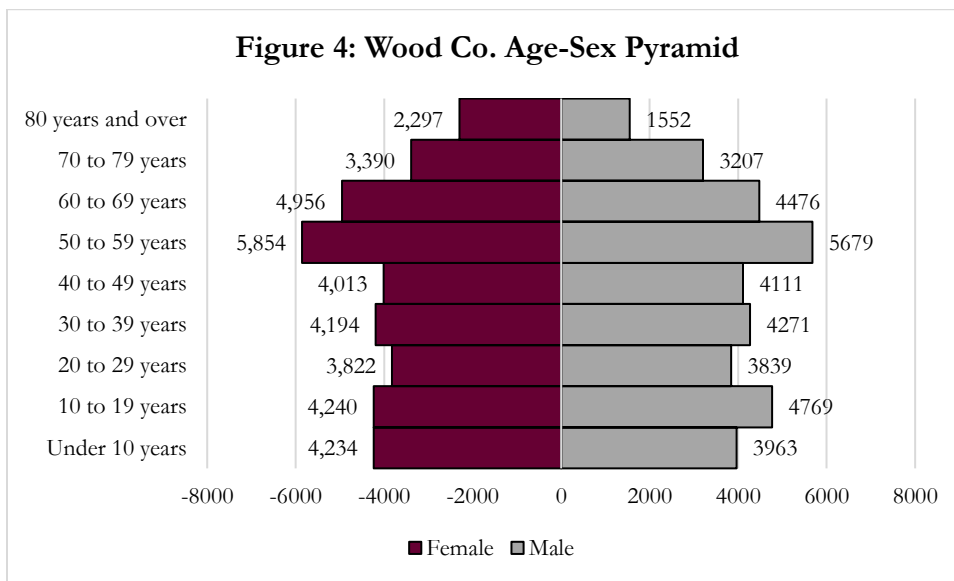
Age

Figures 3 and 4 compare the distribution of age group for the Town of Saratoga and Wood County. Wood County’s population pyramid is stationary with similar numbers across all age ranges. Stationary population pyramids are characteristic of areas with low birth rates and long life expectancies. This is indicative of slow, steady population growth. In contrast, the Town of Saratoga has a greater share of residents both over 49 and under age 30. Since the 30 to 49 age group often is a large share of a community’s labor force, this could impact the availability of workers to fill jobs. Most males in the Town are in the 50-59 year old age category and most females are also in the 50 to 59 year old age category.

In 2020, the median age in the Town was 49.9 years, up from 46.0 in 2010. The county’s median age was 43.9 in 2020, up from 42.0 in 2010. The median age for both the Town and the county was significantly higher than the state which had a median age of 39.6 in 2020.



Source: ACS 2020



Source: ACS 2020

Population distribution is important to the planning process. Two age groups are of note, those 17 years of age and younger and those 65 years of age or older. These are often referred to as dependent populations, but each have different needs. For example, the younger group requires schools and childcare and the older group requires increased levels of medical care.

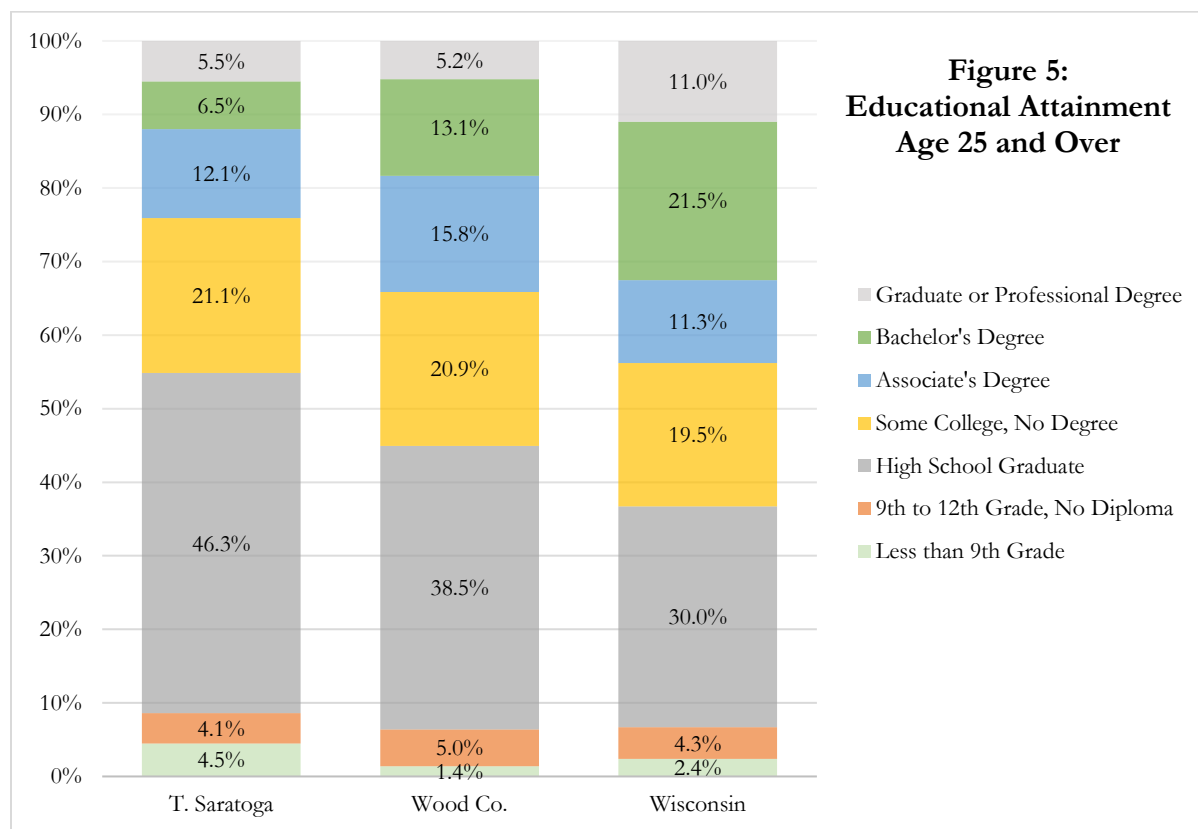
From 2010 to 2020, the population of 17 and younger group in Saratoga decreased from 23.4 percent of the population to 18.8 percent of the population. This was a net loss of 282 people from this age cohort. The population percentage of those in the 65 and older group increased from 15.3 percent in 2010 to 22.6 percent in 2020, with a net gain of 326 people. Due to longer life expectancy and the size

of the Baby Boomer generation, the 65 and older age group is expected to continue to increase in size. The trend is occurring at the state and national levels and to an even greater degree within the rural Wisconsin counties. This population trend whereby older age categories increase significantly while younger age categories decline will impact the future labor supply, school system, and health care industry at the national, state, and local levels.

Education and Income Levels

Education

Figure 5 compares educational attainment of those in the Town of Saratoga to the county and the state. In 2020, 91.4 percent of town residents ages 25 and older had a high school education or higher. This was 2.2 percent lower than the county average and 1.9 percent lower than the state average.



Source: ACS 2020

In 2020, 12 percent of Town residents ages 25 years and over had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. This was lower than Wood County at 18.3 percent. Both the Town and the County had much fewer bachelor's degree or higher recipients than the state at 32.5 percent. Education and how it relates to economic development will be discussed in the economic development chapter.

Income

Median household income and per capita income are two commonly used measures of income. Median household income is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, meaning half of all households have income above that amount, and half have income below that amount. Per capita income is the average income earned per person.

Adjusted for 2022 inflation, the median household income for Town of Saratoga residents was \$71,879 in 2020. Table 4 shows that this was higher than the whole of Wood County but slightly lower than the State of Wisconsin. In 2010, the Town of Saratoga median income was higher than the county and the state. When adjusted for inflation, the median household income in the Town has risen 1.68 percent between 2010 and 2020. This was slightly higher than the county at negative 0.62 percent, but only about half the state’s rate of 3.34 percent.

Table 5 illustrates that in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars, income per capita in the Town of Saratoga was \$39,264 in 2020, which was higher than the county and slightly lower than the state. This was not true in 2010, where per capita income in the Town was lower than both the county and the state. Per capita income in the Town has risen significantly at a rate of 33.49 percent even when adjusting for inflation from 2010 to 2020. This rate of increase is higher than both the state at 9 percent and the county at 8.62 percent.

Table 4: Median Household Income (in 2022 Dollars)				
Minor Civil Division	2010	2020	Net Change	% Change
T. Saratoga	\$70,689	\$71,879	\$1,189	1.68%
Wood County	\$64,103	\$63,702	-\$401	-0.62%
Wisconsin	\$70,070	\$72,407	\$2,337	3.34%

Source: ACS 2010, 2020

Table 5: Per Capita Income (in 2022 Dollars)				
Minor Civil Division	2010	2020	Net Change	% Change
T. Saratoga	\$29,414	\$39,264	\$9,850	33.49%
Wood County	\$33,805	\$36,719	\$2,914	8.62%
Wisconsin	\$36,155	\$39,411	\$3,255	9.00%

Source: ACS 2010, 2020

Employment Characteristics

Tables 6 and 7 illustrate the breakdown of the labor force and employed population living in the Town of Saratoga in 2010 and 2020. The “employed population” includes those that are 16 and older. There was a decrease of 189 people in the labor force from 2010 to 2020 in the Town. This is likely due to the rise in median age, whereby more people are entering retirement. This decline contrasted with the

marginal labor force growth seen the state. The decline was similar for the county, which had a negative 5.3 percent change in the labor force from 2010 to 2020.

Labor force participation indicates the percent of those 16 years and over that are in the labor force. The labor force participation rate decreased 4.0 percent in the Town of Saratoga from 2010 to 2020. There was a decrease in the county and state during this period also, but to a slightly lesser degree.

Table 6: Labor Force					
	Labor Force			Labor Participation Rate	
Minor Civil Division	2010	2020	2010-2020 % Change	2010	2020
T. Saratoga	2,746	2,557	-6.9%	65.2%	61.2%
Wood County	39,534	37,454	-5.3%	66.5%	63.7%
Wisconsin	3,078,465	3,096,518	0.6%	69.0%	66.1%

Source: ACS 2010, 2020

In 2010, the Town of Saratoga had an employed population of 2,514 people. This number increased by only 5 people to 2,519 by 2020, for an increase of 1.5 percent. From 2010 to 2020, the employed population decreased in the county at a rate of 2.6 percent and increased 4.0 percent in the state. The U.S. census classifies individuals as unemployed if they are not working, actively seeking work, and available to accept a job. The unemployment rate in the Town was 1.5 percent in 2020. This was lower than both the county and the state at 4.0 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively.

Table 7: Employment				
Minor Civil Division	2010	2020	2010-2020 % Change	2020 Unemployment Rate
T. Saratoga	2,514	2,519	0.2%	1.5%
Wood County	36,924	35,964	-2.6%	4.0%
Wisconsin	2,869,310	2,983,277	4.0%	2.3%

Source: ACS 2010, 2020

As shown in Table 8, in 2020 most Saratoga residents were employed in the areas of production, transportation, and material moving occupations. This is similar to in 2010, though numbers have shifted slightly between occupations. In 2020, the second sector most represented was the area of sales and office occupations, followed by management, business, science, and arts occupations. From 2010 to 2020, the most significant increase was seen in service occupations. The most significant decrease during this time was in sales and office occupations.

Table 8: Resident Occupations 2010-2020		
Occupation Sector	2010	2020
Management, business, science, and arts	422	445
Service occupations	306	410
Sales and office occupations	669	539
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	354	381
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	763	744
Total employed	2,514	2,519

Source: ACS 2010, 2020

Demographic Snapshot

- The population has decreased since 2010 and the number of households has increased since 2010. This has likely been due to the notable decline in household size over the past few decades.
- The Town of Saratoga is expected to experience a slight increase in population through 2040, with the number of households growing at a faster pace than the overall population.
- There are a large number of people in the older age categories and the median age is higher than the county and the state.
- The median age rose 3.9 years from 46.0 in 2010 to 49.9 in 2020.
- In 2020, 91.4 percent of Town of Saratoga residents aged 25 and over had a high school diploma or higher and 12 percent of residents had a bachelor’s degree or higher. The Town had more high school graduates than both the county and state, but fewer bachelor’s degree recipients than both the county and state.
- Both the 2020 average household income of \$71,879 and per capita income of \$39,264 were higher than Wood County, but lower than the state.
- The labor participation rate is lower than the county or the state. However, the unemployment rate is lower than both the county and the state.
- Most people working in the Town of Saratoga work in the areas of production, transportation, and material moving occupations.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Each of the following chapters of this comprehensive plan includes a set of goals, objectives and policies, which the Town Board will use to guide the future development of the Town over the next 20 years.

For the purposes of this plan, goals, objectives, and policies are defined as follows:

- ✓ Goals: Broad statements that express general public priorities about how the Town should approach development issues during the next 20 years. These goals are based on key issues, opportunities and problems that affect the community.
- ✓ Objectives: More specific than goals are usually attainable through planning and implementation activities. Accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.
- ✓ Policies: Rules or courses of action used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. Decision-makers use policies on a day-to-day basis.

Three overall goals identified in the Town's 2006 Comprehensive Plan are still important today:

- Protect and improve the health, safety, and welfare of residents in the Town of Saratoga.
- Preserve and enhance the quality of life for the residents of the Town of Saratoga.
- Protect and preserve the community character of the Town of Saratoga.

Chapter 2: Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources

This chapter describes local land and water conditions in detail as well as agricultural resources and cultural heritage. It is important to consider the patterns and interrelations of natural resources on a broader scale because they do not follow geo-political boundaries. In addition, many of the programs for protecting or mitigating impacts to natural resources are administered at the county, state, or federal level. Thus, an overview of recent county-wide natural resource planning efforts is described below, followed by a description of local natural resource conditions. Of particular interest are geographic areas of the landscape encompassing valued natural resource features grouped below by resource type, including soil and biological resources.

PREVIOUS NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PLANS AND STUDIES

In the last decade, several plans were prepared by Wood County specifically to address protection and management of natural resources. These plans may be used as resources to guide local policy and decision-making regarding resource management and protection.

Wood County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, 2015

This plan provides a framework for local/state/federal conservation program implementation efforts. This plan aims to protect valuable water and soil resources within Wood County. The plan identifies eight goals including improving surface water quality, reducing crop damage, protection of wetlands, increase water inventory efforts, minimizing urban sprawl and land fragmentation in rural areas, improving air quality, and improving woodlands.

Wood County Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Plan, 2018

The primary focus of this recreation plan is to protect and promote the health, safety, prosperity, and general welfare of the community and to provide a quality county-wide recreation system. The plan aims to guide and coordinate a harmonious county recreation system and provides direction for recreation management and policy. This includes direction for short and long-term community recreation decisions, an inventory of existing recreation systems and services, and a practical action program for future improvements. This plan is soon to be updated.

There are also a variety of other county plans related, such as the Soil Survey of Wood County, Wood County Soil Erosion Plan, and County Floodplain, Shoreland, & General Zoning Codes. There are also some state related documents as well, such as the Department of Natural Resources Legacy Report and various Water Resources Basin plans.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Examining the natural environment is essential to the planning process. For instance, soils, topography, and geology can pose limitations to certain types of development, while an inventory of surface water resources, vegetation types, environmentally significant areas, and historical features identify those resources and areas which should be protected from over-development. This section of the plan identifies both the land and water resources of the town.

Land Resources

The Town of Saratoga is located in southeastern Wood County, Wisconsin. The Town is bounded by the Town of Grand Rapids and Village of Port Edwards to the north, the Town of Grant (Portage County) to the east, the Town of Rome (Adams County) to the south and the Town of Port Edwards and City of Nekoosa to the west.

Topography and Geology

Wood County lies in two geographic provinces in Wisconsin. The northern one-third is part of the Northern Highland, and the rest of the county is part of the Central Plain according to the Soil Survey of Wood County. The Town of Saratoga lies within the Central Plain geographic province.

In general, the Northern Highland region has underlying bedrock that consists of Precambrian crystalline rocks. Over the bedrock there is a layer of loamy residuum weathered from Precambrian rock. The western half of this region has a mantle of heavy loam glacial till over bedrock, while the rest of this region has, over the bedrock, a layer that varies in thickness; this layer is loamy residuum weather from Precambrian rock. A two feet thick layer of wind-deposited silt cover the entire region.

The central plain region has underlying bedrock that consists of Cambrian sandstone interbedded with varying amounts of shale. These shale layers are thick and very prominent in the western part of the county. Glacial till covers the sandstone and shale in the northwestern part of the county and on a few broad, low ridges south of Powers Bluff, but the rest of the Central Plain in Wood County is residual. One to two feet of loess cover the entire region except the lake plain and outwash parts.

Soils

In Wood County, if a line were drawn east and west approximately through Wisconsin Rapids, it would roughly separate the loamy soils north of the line from the sandy soils south of the line. Most of the soils in the southern part of the county formed in sandy material deposited by glacial melt waters along the Wisconsin River or in Glacial Lake Wisconsin.

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service has grouped the soils of Wood County into eleven major soil associations. The most prevalent soil group, covering most of the Town of Saratoga, is the Plainfield – Friendship Association. The soils of this association are on outwash plains on either side of the Wisconsin River and extend from the vicinity of Wisconsin Rapids southward. See the Natural Resources Map.

Forests

Woodlands and forests cover about 25,500 acres, or approximately 78 percent of the Town. Forests play a key role in the protection of environmentally sensitive areas like steep slopes, shorelands, wetlands, and flood plains. Expansive forests provide recreational opportunities, aesthetic benefits, and economic development. All forests are dynamic, always changing from one stage to another, influenced by natural forces and human behavior. Changes can be subtle and occur over long period or can happen in shorts spans of time from activities such as timber harvest, a windstorm, or a fire. Aspen, pines, and oaks dominate area woodlands.

Metallic and Non-Metallic Mining

Mineral resources are divided into two categories, metallic and non-metallic resources. Metallic resources include lead and zinc. Non-metallic resources include sand, gravel, and limestone. There are no known metallic deposits and there are no permitted non-metallic mines currently in operation in the Town.

Environmentally Remediated Areas

Brownfields are commercial or industrial properties that contain or may contain hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. Expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of these properties can be especially difficult. The Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS) is an online database that provides information about contaminated properties and other activities related to the investigation and clean-up of properties with contaminated soil and/or groundwater. Contaminated sites are not uncommon as all communities with commercial and industrial development have the potential for air emissions, groundwater contamination, soil spills, and surface water contamination. Contaminated sites originate when a property is used for such activities as a gas station, industrial processing facility, a landfill, or a laundromat. There are no listed open sites on the BRRTS currently in the Town of Saratoga.

Rare Species and Natural Communities

Wisconsin's National Heritage Inventory Program (NHI) is responsible for maintaining data on the locations and status of rare species, natural communities, and natural features throughout the State. The program's database, on the Wisconsin DNR website, identifies species and natural communities that are currently tracked by the NHI. As of October 2021, NHI tracked seventeen species or communities in the Town of Saratoga, as shown in **Table 9**.

Table 9: Rare Species & Natural Communities			
Species Name	WI Status	Federal Status	Group
Dusted Skipper	SC/N		Butterfly
Red-Shouldered Hawk	THR		Bird
Field Dodder	SC/N		Plant
Blanding's Turtle	SC/P	SOC	Turtle
Persius Dusky Wing	SC/N		Butterfly
Floodplain Forest	NA		Community
Karner Blue	SC/FL	LE	Butterfly
Redfin Shiner	THR		Fish
Northern Wet Forest	NA		Community
Sioux (Sand) Snaketail	SC/N		Dragonfly
Vasey's Pondweed	SC		Plant
Alder Thicket	NA		Community
Missouri Rock-cress	SC		Plant
Central Sands Pine-Oak Forest	NA		Community
Wood Turtle	THR	SOC	Turtle
Northern Dry-mesic Forest	NA		Community
Stream--Slow, Hard, Cold	NA		Community

Source: Natural Heritage Inventory

WI Status Codes:

- SC – Special Concern
- SC/N – Special Concern with no laws regulating use, possession or harvesting.
- THR – Threatened and legally protected
- SC/P – Special concern and fully protected
- SC/FL – Federally protected, but not state designated
- NA – Not Applicable

Federal Status Codes:

- SOC – Species of Concern
- LE – Listed Endangered

Wisconsin’s biodiversity goals are to identify, protect and manage native plants, animals, and natural communities from the very common to critically endangered for present and future generations. Knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship of Wisconsin’s native species and ecosystems are critical to their survival and greater benefit to society.

Water Resources

The Town of Saratoga, as well as the whole of Wood County, contains an assortment of natural surface water features, including creeks and wetlands. This section discusses the characteristics of the major surface water features located within the Town.

Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land in which water drains to a common point. In Wisconsin, watersheds vary in scale from major river systems to small creek drainage areas and typically range in size from 100 to 300 square miles. River basins encompass several watersheds. There are 32 river basins in Wisconsin, which range in size from 500 to over 5,000 square miles.

The Town of Saratoga is included within four watersheds. The northern portion of the Town is located within the Fourmile and Fivemile Creek watershed, the central portion of the Town lies within the Sevenmile and Tenmile Creeks watershed, the southern portion of the Town lies within the Fourteenmile Creek watershed, and the western edge of the Town lies within the Wisconsin Rapids watershed. See the Natural Resources Map.

Wood County Shoreland Zoning is in effect. The County has authority over lands 300 feet from a river or stream and 1,000 feet from a lake. Actual shoreland jurisdiction measurements are coordinated through the County Planning and Zoning Department.

Surface Water

Surface water resources, consisting of rivers and streams together with associated floodplains, form an integral element of the natural resource base of the Town of Saratoga. Surface water resources influence the physical development of an area, provide recreational opportunities, and enhance the aesthetic quality of the area. Rivers and streams constitute focal points of water related recreational activities; provide an attractive setting for properly planned residential development; and, when viewed in context of the total landscape, greatly enhance the aesthetic quality of the environment.

There are an assortment of rivers and streams that flow through the Town of Saratoga. The Wisconsin River forms the Town's western boundary with the City of Nekoosa and Town of Port Edwards. Other perennial streams within the Town include Harvey Creek, Five Mile Creek, Seven Mile Creek, and Ten Mile Creek. In addition, there are several shallow water resources in the western and northwestern portions of the Town that are an integral part of the local cranberry economy.

Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

The Wisconsin DNR classifies major surface water resources. These classifications allow water bodies of particular importance to be identified because of their unique resource values and water quality. The DNR has two categories including Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) which have the highest quality water and fisheries in the state deserving of special protection, and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERW) which have excellent water quality and valued fisheries.

Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs) and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs) share many of the same environmental and ecological characteristics. The primary difference between the two is that ORWs typically do not have any direct point sources discharging pollutants directly to the water. In addition, any pollutant load discharged to an ORW must meet background water quality at all times. Exceptions are made for certain types of discharge situations to ERWs to allow pollutant loads that are greater than background water quality when human health would otherwise be compromised.

Bloody Run Creek, Fivemile Creek, and Sevenmile Creek are all listed as Exceptional Resource Waters within the Town of Saratoga. There are no waterbodies listed as an Outstanding Resource Water within the Town.

Impaired Waters

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to develop a list of impaired waters, commonly referred to as the “303(d) list.” A water body is considered impaired if a) the current water quality does not meet the numeric or narrative criteria in a water quality standard or b) the designated use that is described in Wisconsin Administrative Code is not being achieved. A documented methodology is used to articulate the approach used to list waters in Wisconsin. Every two years, states are required to submit a list of impaired waters to EPA for approval. The Wisconsin River is the only waterbody within the Town of Saratoga listed as an impaired waterbody. As such, the Wisconsin River continues to be monitored by the Wisconsin DNR

Invasive Aquatic Species

Surface water resources in Wood County are threatened by the introduction of invasive aquatic species. Invasive species can alter the natural ecological relationships among native species and affect ecosystem function, economic value of ecosystems, and human health. It is recommended that the Town continue to work with the Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department to develop public outreach education strategies.

Wetland

Wetlands perform many indispensable roles in the proper function of the hydrologic cycle and local ecological systems. In terms of hazard mitigation, they act as water storage devices in times of high water. Like sponges, wetlands are able to absorb excess water and release it back into the watershed slowly, preventing flooding and minimizing flood damage. As more impermeable surfaces are developed, this excess capacity for water runoff storage becomes increasingly important.

Wetland plants and soils have the capacity to store and filter pollutants ranging from pesticides to animal wastes. Calm wetland waters, with their flat surface and flow characteristics, allow particles of toxins and nutrients to settle out of the water column. Plants take up certain nutrients from the water. Other substances can be stored or transformed to a less toxic state within wetlands. As a result, the lakes, rivers, and streams are cleaner. See the **Natural Resources Map**.

Wetlands that filter or store sediments or nutrients for extended periods may undergo fundamental changes. Sediments will eventually fill in wetlands and nutrients will eventually modify the vegetation. Such changes may result in the loss of this function over time. Eradication of wetlands can occur through the use of fill material. This can destroy the hydrological function of the site and open the area to improper development. The DNR has promulgated minimum standards for managing wetlands.

Floodplains

A floodplain is generally defined as land where there is a one percent chance of flooding in any year. The primary value of floodplains is their role in natural flood control. Floodplains represent areas where excess water can be accommodated whether through drainage by streams or through storage by wetlands and other natural detention/retention areas. Specific areas that will be inundated will depend upon the amount of water, the distance and speed that water travels, and the topography of the area. If uninterrupted by development, the areas shown on a map as floodplains should be able to handle the most substantial (regional) flood, i.e. those that have a probability of occurring once every one hundred years. Due to the nature of the geography and hydrology of the area, floodplain mapping is also known to have accuracy issues in this area. The presence and exact location of floodplains must be verified by field survey, and applicable permits obtained prior to any land disturbing activity.

Groundwater

Groundwater is water that occupies void spaces between soil particles or cracks in the rock below the land surface. It originates as precipitation that infiltrated the ground. The type of soil and bedrock that a well is drilled into often determines the pH, saturation index, and the amount of hardness or alkalinity in water. The type of soil and bedrock in a region also determines how quickly contaminants can reach groundwater.

The source of all drinking water in Wood County is groundwater, and it supplies many agricultural and industrial processes as well. Groundwater is a limited resource, and both its quality and quantity are important factors. These factors are primarily influenced by local geology and local land use. Groundwater in Wood County is generally abundant and of good quality.

Susceptibility of groundwater to pollutants is defined here as the ease with which a contaminant can be transported from the land surface to the top of the groundwater called the water table. Many materials that overlie the groundwater offer good protection from contaminants that might be transported by infiltrating waters. The amount of protection offered by the overlying material varies, however, depending on the materials. Thus, in some areas, the overlying soil and bedrock materials allow contaminants to reach the groundwater more easily than in other areas of the state. According to the Wisconsin DNR, the Town of Saratoga generally ranks high for susceptibility to groundwater contamination.

Many land use activities have the potential to impact the quality of groundwater. A landfill may leach contaminants into the ground that end up contaminating groundwater. Gasoline may leak from an underground storage tank into groundwater. Fertilizers and pesticides can seep into the ground from application on farm fields, golf courses or lawns. Leaking fluids from cars in junkyards, intentional dumping or accidental spills of paint, used motor oil, or other chemicals on the ground can result in contaminated groundwater.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A cultural resource is a broad term that can encompass many aspects of heritage. Cultural resources may include archaeological sites and cemeteries, historic buildings and landscapes, historic transportation routes, or traditional cultural properties important to Native Americans or other cultural groups. Cultural resources are those elements that signify heritage and help to evoke the sense of place that makes an area distinctive. Cultural resources include buildings; sites and landscape that help communities retain their sense of identity in an increasingly homogenized society. Much of the historical context below was provided by town resident and local historian Steven Bornbach.

Historical Context

Natives and early history:

Saratoga was once home to three major indigenous groups, or tribes, they were the Chippewa at Swallow Rock south of Nekoosa, the Menomonee along present-day Ross Lake north of Ten Mile Creek, and the Ho-Chunk, thought to be across the river along Lynn Creek. Natives concentrated along the western portion of the township along the Wisconsin River and tributaries for travel by canoe and fishing. Numerous mounds built by indigenous peoples can be found along the Wisconsin River throughout central Wisconsin.

Early Europeans to the area:

Europeans began traveling to the area in the late 1600's. The French held control of the region during the 1600 and most of the 1700's. Central Wisconsin played a significant part in the fur trade between the French and native tribes. It was the French who originally settled Green Bay and continued west and north up the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers as the rivers were the primary travel corridors. Following the French and Indian War in 1763 the area became a territory of Great Britain. Twenty years later it became a territory of the United States. Trading posts were established to provide lodging, food, and goods for hunters, trappers, natives, and new arrivals to the land.

Permanent Settlements:

More and more people continued to settle in the area. As a result, in 1836, the Menomonee Tribe ceded a strip of land 3 miles wide on each side of the Wisconsin River. Initially the land was logged, from present day Adams County to Marathon County. Saratoga was then a hub for the lumber industry, along with other river communities as the vast forests of Wisconsin were harvested. Lumber barons came and went as settlements sprang up.

Amable Grignon had a trading post west of the Wisconsin River in 1827 until it was flooded out. It was then moved across the river to the east and built a dwelling along Fourteen Mile Creek in present day Adams County and later built a trading post in 1832 along the north side of Ten Mile Creek in present day Saratoga. A settlement soon sprang up across the creek to the south with a store, post office, and other amenities.

Daniel Whitney was another key pioneer. He began logging along the Wisconsin River and then settled on a site for a sawmill in the north part of Saratoga across from present day Nekoosa. Supply issues were a major problem, so Whitney blazed a trail from Portage City, through the Grignon Settlement, to his sawmill. That trail became known as ‘The Pinery Road.’

In 1837, Robert Wakely arrived with his family to the area in hopes of doing trade with natives and frontiersmen. He established a trading post and tavern which was favored over many others upriver, because of an abundant supply of fine spirits for thirsty souls. Wakely settlement was located at the bottom of the river’s rapids in a spot called Pointe Basse, just below present-day Nekoosa. The Tavern still stands and is listed on the State Register of Historic Places.

In the 1830s and 1840s, many English and Irish emigrants were arriving in the area from the state of New York. They named many of the communities after those they left in New York, such as Hancock, Almond and Plainfield. Many of these same immigrants then made their way into this immediate area, and quite possibly brought the name of Saratoga with them.

The area settlement grew to over a dozen buildings and had an operational ferry for river crossings. The area officially formed as a township on January 9, 1857. Eventually, the land was clear cut and agriculture took its place. Many settlers came to the area to establish farms, but eventually found the sandy soil difficult to sustain a livelihood. In 1916, a steel bridge was constructed linking the Town of Saratoga to the City of Nekoosa; previous transportation across the river was only by ferry.

As farming declined, in the late 1920s and continuing until 1940, a cooperative effort between landowners and the University of Wisconsin resulted in replanting thousands of acres of trees. Many farms in the county that were abandoned would eventually become county forest land. The larger area including the City of Wisconsin Rapids, The Villages of Biron, Nekoosa and Port Edwards became important papermill towns providing many employment opportunities for residents. Papermaking is still an important part of the area economy, but there has also been substantial economic diversification over the years.

Historical/Cultural Resources

Historic structures and cultural areas provide a sense of place, enhance community pride, and reinforce social and cultural enrichment. The identification of existing historic structures and cultural areas are an important consideration in all town planning efforts, as these features are critical to defining a community’s look and character.

There are two properties – Wakely Tavern and Wakely Road Bridge - within the Town listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the official national list of historic properties in America worthy of preservation, maintained by the National Park Service. The State Register is Wisconsin’s official listing of state properties determined to be significant to Wisconsin’s heritage and is maintained by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Both listings include sites, buildings, structures, objects, and districts that are significant in national, state, or local history.

The Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) is a collection of information on historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and historic districts throughout Wisconsin. Caution should be used as the list is not comprehensive and some of the information may be dated, as some properties may be altered or no longer exist. Eight properties within the Town of Saratoga are listed on the Architecture and History Inventory

The Archaeological Site Inventory (ASI) is a collection of archaeological sites, mounds, unmarked cemeteries, marked cemeteries, and cultural sites throughout Wisconsin. Similar to the AHI, the ASI is not a comprehensive or complete list; it only includes sites reported to the Wisconsin Historical Society. The Wisconsin Historical Society estimates that less than one percent of the archaeological sites in the state have been identified. Wisconsin law protects Native American burial mounds, unmarked burials, and all marked and unmarked cemeteries from intentional disturbance. Contact the Wisconsin Historical Society Division of Historic Preservation for more information. There are 33 sites within the Town of Saratoga listed on the Archaeological Site Inventory.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Agriculture is limited in the town. Historically most farms failed over the years, because of the poor soils and high ground water. Without water and chemical fertilizers large scale agriculture is difficult. As a result, the town is not a major agricultural area. Today there is only limited farming in the town including an organic cranberry operation, a Christmas tree farm, and some small hobby farms.

NATURAL, AGRICULTURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE PROGRAMS

There are a variety of existing programs available to the Town related to natural, agricultural, and cultural resources. Some of these may be helpful to access to help achieve some of the Town's goals. For specific program information, the agency or group that offers the program should be contacted.

Private Forestry

The WDNR's goal is to motivate private forest landowners to practice sustainable forestry by providing technical forestry assistance, state and federal cost-sharing on management practices, sale of state produced nursery stock for reforestation, enrollment in Wisconsin's Forest Tax Law Programs, advice for the protection of endangered and threatened species, and assistance with forest disease and insect problems. Each county has at least one Department forester assigned to respond to requests for private forestland assistance. These foresters also provide educational programs for landowners, schools, and the general public. Both private and industrial forest landowners have enrolled their lands under the Managed Forest Law.

Managed Forest Law (MFL)

The purpose of the MFL is to promote good forest management through property tax incentives. Management practices are required by way of an approved forest management plan. Landowners with a minimum of 10 contiguous acres (80% must be capable of producing merchantable timber) are eligible and may contract for 25 or 50 years. Open lands must allow hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-

country skiing, and sight-seeing; however, up to 80 acres may be closed to public access by the landowner. Contact the WDNR for further information.

Stewardship Grants for Nonprofit Conservation Organizations

Nonprofit conservation organizations are eligible to obtain funding for the acquisition of land or easements for conservation purposes and restoration of wildlife habitat. Priorities include acquisition of wildlife habitat, acquisition of lands with special scientific or ecological value, protection of rare and endangered habitats and species, acquisition of stream corridors, acquisition of land for state trails including the Ice Age Trail and North Country Trail, and restoration of wetlands and grasslands. Eligible types of projects include fee simple and easement acquisitions and habitat restoration projects. Contact the WDNR for further information.

Nonpoint Source Program (NSP)

Wisconsin's NPS Program, through a comprehensive network of federal, state and local agencies working in partnership with other organizations and citizens, addresses the significant nonpoint sources in the state. This program combines voluntary and regulatory approaches with financial and technical assistance. Abatement activities include agriculture, urban, forestry, wetlands and hydrologic modifications. The core activities of the program — research, monitoring, data assessment and management, regulation and enforcement, financial and technical assistance, education and outreach and public involvement — work to address current water quality impairments and prevent future threats caused by NPS pollution. Contact the WDNR for more information.

Drinking Water and Groundwater Program

This WDNR program is responsible for assuring safe, high quality drinking water and for protecting groundwater. This is achieved by enforcing minimum well construction and pump installation requirements, conducting surveys and inspections of water systems, the investigation and sampling of drinking water quality problems, and requiring drinking water quality monitoring and reporting. A team of specialists, engineers, hydrogeologists, and a program expert and program assistants staff the program. WDNR staff provide assistance to public and private well owners to help solve water quality complaints and water system problems. They also provide interested citizens with informational or educational materials about drinking water supplies and groundwater.

The Central Wisconsin Groundwater Center allows residents in the Town of Saratoga and other areas in central Wisconsin to determine the safety of their well water by providing the opportunity to have their well water tested. Residents can send in water samples of their well water to any state-certified testing laboratory, including the Water and Environmental Analysis Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, which houses the Central Wisconsin Groundwater Center.

Aquatic Habitat Protection Program

The WDNR provides basic aquatic habitat protection services through their staff. Staff members include Water Management (Regulation) Specialists, Zoning Specialists, Rivers (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission-FERC) Specialists, Lakes Specialists, Water Management Engineers, and

their assistants (LTEs). The program assists with water regulation permits, zoning assistance, coordination of rivers, lake management, and engineering.

Endangered Resources Program

The DNR's Endangered Resources staff provides expertise and advice on endangered resources. They manage the Natural Heritage Inventory Program (NHI), which is used to determine the existence and location of native plant and animal communities and Endangered or Threatened Species of Special Concern. The NHI helps identify and prioritize areas suitable for State Natural Area (SNA) designation, provides information needed for feasibility studies and master plans, and maintains the list of endangered and threatened species. All management activities conducted by Wildlife Management and Forestry staff must be reviewed to determine the impact on NHI-designated species. A permit for the incidental take of an Endangered or Threatened species is required under the State Endangered Species Law. The Endangered Resources Program oversees the permit process, reviews applications and makes permit decisions. Funding for the Endangered Species Program comes from a number of sources, including tax checkoff revenue, license plates, general program revenues (GPR), gaming revenue, Natural Heritage Inventory chargebacks, wild rice permits, general gifts and Pittman Robertson grants.

Fisheries Management Program

The WDNR funds this program primarily through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. The program assists with fishery surveys, fish habitat improvement/protection, and fish community manipulation. This program may also be used to fund public relations events and a variety of permitting and administrative activities involving fisheries.

Wildlife Management Program

The DNR's Bureau of Wildlife Management oversees a complex web of programs that incorporate state, federal and local initiatives primarily directed toward wildlife habitat management and enhancement. Programs include land acquisition, development and maintenance of State Wildlife Areas, and other wild land programs such as State Natural Areas. Wildlife Staff work closely with staff of state and county forests to maintain, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. Wildlife Management staff conduct wildlife population and habitat surveys, prepare property needs analysis's, develop basin wildlife management plans and collaborate with other DNR planning efforts such as Park, Forestry or Fishery Area Property Master Plans to assure sound habitat management. Funding comes from the federal government in the form of Endangered Species grants and Pittman-Robertson grants and from state government in the form of hunting and trapping license revenues, voluntary income tax contributions, general program revenue and Stewardship funds.

NRCS Conservation Programs

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase

wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. NRCS provides funding opportunities for agricultural producers and other landowners through these programs:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) by USDA's Farm Service Agency
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Small, Limited, and Beginning Farmer Assistance
- Working Lands for Wildlife

Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program which was established to restore wetlands on lands which were previously altered for agricultural use. The program is administered by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service in consultation with the Farm Service Agency and other federal agencies.

Land is eligible for enrollment in the WRP if the landowner has owned that land for at least one year, and the land is restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits. Landowners may choose to restore wetlands with a permanent or 30-year easement, or enter into a cost-share restoration agreement with the USDA. If a permanent easement is established, the landowner will receive payment up to the agricultural value of the land and 100% of the wetland restoration costs. The 30-year easement payment is just 75% of what would be provided for a permanent easement on the same site, and 75% of the restoration costs. Voluntary cost-share restoration agreements are generally for a minimum of 10 years, and 75% of the cost of restoring the land to wetlands is provided. In all instances, landowners continue to control access to their land.

Discovery Farms Program

Discovery Farms is a program administered by UW-Extension that works with over 40 farmers across the state of Wisconsin. The program's mission is to "develop on-farm and related research to determine the economic and environmental effects of agricultural practices on a diverse group of Wisconsin farms; and educates and improves communications among the agricultural community, consumers, researchers and policymakers to better identify and implement effective environmental management practices that are compatible with profitable agriculture." On-Farm projects fall under one the following categories: Nitrogen Use Efficiency, Tile Monitoring, Leachate Collection Systems, Watershed water quality, and Edge-of-Field Runoff Monitoring.

Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants

The Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) provides funding to producer-led groups that focus on nonpoint source pollution abatement activities through the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program (PLWPG). The goal is to improve Wisconsin's soil and water quality by supporting and advancing producer-led conservation solutions by increasing on the ground practices and farmer participation in these efforts.

Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Wisconsin Historical Society

This office is part of the Wisconsin Historical Society and serves as the principal historic preservation agency in the state. In partnership with communities, organizations and individuals, the SHPO works to identify, interpret and preserve historic places for the benefit of present and future generations.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Goal 1: Reinforce the Town’s rural character by encouraging the preservation of forested land, sensitive environmental areas, wildlife habitat, rural vistas, and local cultural resources.

Objectives:

1. Minimize fragmentation of forest lands.
2. Minimize the potential impact on natural resources, environmental corridors, or habitat areas when evaluating potential residential, commercial, industrial, and intensive agricultural uses.
3. Utilize recreational opportunities and the preservation of open space to maintain the rural character wherever feasible. Develop additional park and recreational facilities to meet current and projected needs.
4. Minimize the potential impact on local cultural resources when evaluating new developments. Ensure that any known cemeteries, human burials or archaeological sites are protected from encroachment by roads or other development activities.

Policies:

1. Support the preservation of forest lands for continued forestry use. The Town will place a high priority on directing development away from areas that have been historically productive forest lands.
2. Encourage landowners to retain contiguous areas of forest lands, natural areas, and open spaces.
3. Discourage the placement of new development in the middle of parcels of forest land to protect the continuity of forest land areas for future use.
4. Avoid development in areas that have documented threatened and endangered species, or have severe limitations due to steep slopes, poor soils, or sensitive environmental areas such as wetlands, floodplains, and streams to protect the benefits and functions they provide.
5. Collaborate with neighboring municipalities to ensure access to recreational opportunities for all Town residents.

6. Work with community residents and developers to determine suitable locations for new park or recreational facilities.
7. Collaborate with State, County, and local efforts to celebrate people, sites, and events of local significance whenever appropriate or feasible.
8. Encourage maintenance and rehabilitation of historic areas and buildings.
9. Incorporate findings from the Community Wildfire Protection Plan 2023-2027.

Goal 2: Reduce the potential for land use conflicts between farm and non-farm uses, as well as between farms.

Objectives:

1. Encourage existing and expanding forestry operations to follow “Best Management Practices.”
2. Direct new and expanding uses to areas as defined in the Future Land Use Map.
3. Support small scale agriculture uses that complement the area’s unique natural resources.

Policies:

1. All existing, expanding, or new farming or forestry operations are encouraged to incorporate the most current “Best Management Practices” as identified by but not limited to the following agencies:
 - Wood County
 - University of Wisconsin Extension
 - Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
 - Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
 - National Resource Conservation Service
2. Encourage higher density and cluster development that preserves natural areas.
3. Promote non-animal micro farming operations as complimentary in rural residential areas.

Goal 3: Protect surface water and groundwater quality.

Objectives:

1. Monitor water quality testing throughout the Town.
2. Enhance and restore soil resources.
3. Encourage organic methods for agricultural activities.

Policies:

1. Periodically collect or conduct testing.

2. Discourage land uses that would degrade local water resources.

Chapter 3: Housing

Housing characteristics and trends are important components of comprehensive planning. The physical location of housing can determine the need of many public facilities and services. Furthermore, understanding dynamics in the market likely to affect housing development in the future provides a basis for the formulation of policy to coordinate transportation facilities with a sustainable pattern of residential development. Understanding the factors affecting people’s ability to meet their own housing needs provides a basis for reinforcing community ties, fostering economic development and environmental sustainability and improving the quality of life.

PREVIOUS HOUSING PLANS AND STUDIES

Wisconsin State Consolidated Housing Plan

The Consolidated Housing Plan is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the application process required of the states in accessing formula program funds of Small Cities Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships, Emergency Shelter Grants and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA).

The Consolidated Plan provides the Framework for a planning process used by states and localities to identify housing, homeless, community, and economic development needs and resources and to tailor a strategic plan for meeting those needs.

ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2020

This report, developed by the United Way, described the 22 percent of households in Wood County that are above the federal poverty level, but still struggle to afford basic household necessities, or “ALICE” households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). These households are largely employed but do not earn enough in wages to meet the “household survival budget,” which does not allow for any savings. The report states that many ALICE households provide vital services, such as retail, health care, childcare, and security, but cannot make ends meet on the income provided from these jobs.

- The ALICE report shows that 26 percent of Saratoga households are either below the federal poverty level or are considered ALICE households, indicating that the average household in Saratoga is slightly less financially prosperous than the average Wood County State of Wisconsin household at-large.

Regional Livability Plan, 2015

The 2015 Regional Livability Plan (RLP), written by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), addresses issues of livability in the areas of housing, transportation, economic development, and land use. The RLP identifies several issues affecting community livability related to housing:

- Aging population
- Smaller household sizes
- Lack of housing options
- Increase in housing costs related to incomes.

HOUSING ASSESSMENT

Housing Type and Tenure

In 2020, the Town of Saratoga had approximately 2,430 occupied housing units, 86.5 percent of which were occupied for a total of 2,102, see Table 10. The Town of Saratoga had a significantly higher percentage of owner-occupied homes than both Wood County and the State of Wisconsin, at 71.4 percent and 67.1 percent respectively. The average household size of 2.36 was slightly higher than the county (2.20) and lower than the state (2.39). In 17.6 percent of households the householder lived alone and 44.7 percent of households had an individual age 60 or older. The lower average household size and higher number of households with those 60 and over, when compared to the county and state, suggest that there are more two person families without children or with grown children in the Town of Saratoga.

	T. Saratoga	Wood County	Wisconsin
Total housing units	2,430	35,247	2,709,444
Occupied housing units	2,102	32,707	2,377,395
Owner occupied housing units	2,021	23,358	1,596,500
Renter occupied housing units	81	9,359	781,435
Average household size	2.36	2.20	2.39
% owner occupied	96.1%	71.4%	67.1%
% householder living alone	17.6%	32.7%	30.1%
% with individuals 60 or over	44.7%	42.3%	39.5%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Structural Characteristics

Tables 11 and 12 detail the number and percentage of housing units by type. Housing in the Town of Saratoga is overwhelmingly single-family detached housing, with a small number of two-unit homes and a considerable number of mobile home units. Wood County is also comprised mainly of single-family housing but does have more of a variety of housing types. This is due mainly to a balance of urban and rural communities throughout the county. In Wood County, single-family detached homes account for 74.1 percent of housing units, followed by apartment style homes with five or more units,

which account for 12.4 percent of housing. There is a distinct need for a variety of styles within the Town. This would better accommodate those at various income levels and from different economic backgrounds.

Table 11: Housing Units by Structural Type, 2020								
	1- Detached	1- Attached	2	3 or 4	5 or more	Mobile Home	Other	Total
T. Saratoga	2,086	0	10	0	0	334	0	2,430
Wood County	26,126	873	1,730	616	4,371	1,529	2	35,247
Wisconsin	1,804,037	114,519	171,960	97,646	329,523	90,973	786	2,709,444

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Table 12: Housing Units by Structural Type (Percentage), 2019								
	1- Detached	1- Attached	2	3 or 4	5 or more	Mobile Home	Other	Total
T. Saratoga	85.8%	0%	0.4%	0%	0%	13.7%	0%	100%
Wood County	74.1%	2.5%	4.9%	1.7%	12.4%	4.3%	0%	100%
Wisconsin	66.6%	4.2%	6.3%	3.6%	15.9%	3.4%	0%	100%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Age Characteristics

The age of a community’s housing stock typically reflects several important factors including size, offered amenities, and overall maintenance costs. Age of the home often also reflects different regional and national trends in housing development. For example, average homes constructed in the later part of the previous century and the first decade of the millennium are typically much larger than housing built in previous decades. This can be seen in both the rural and more urban environments of Wood County. Additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and attached garage space are among the amenities found in newer housing units.

Table 13: Year Structure Built, 2020									
	1939 or earlier	1940 to 1949	1950 to 1959	1960 to 1969	1970 to 1979	1980 to 1989	1990 to 1999	2000 to 2009	2010 or later
T. Saratoga	144	82	134	206	579	376	648	197	64
Wood County	6,492	2,226	3,389	4,126	6,366	3,353	4,500	3,570	1,225
Wisconsin	514,838	147,695	289,277	266,303	392,059	266,654	380,262	334,007	122,349

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates and T. Saratoga Building Permit Data

Table 14: Year Structure Built (Percentage), 2020									
	1939 or earlier	1940 to 1949	1950 to 1959	1960 to 1969	1970 to 1979	1980 to 1989	1990 to 1999	2000 to 2009	2010 or later
T. Saratoga	5.9%	3.4%	5.5%	8.5%	23.8%	15.5%	26.7%	8.1%	2.6%
Wood County	18.4%	6.3%	9.6%	11.7%	18.1%	9.5%	12.8%	10.1%	3.5%
Wisconsin	19.0%	5.5%	10.7%	9.7%	14.5%	9.8%	14.0%	12.3%	4.5%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates and T. Saratoga Building Permit Data

Tables 13 and 14 outline build dates of housing units throughout the Town, county, and state based on 2020 American Community Survey data and the Town’s building permit data. Most housing stock was constructed in the Town of Saratoga between 1970 and 1999 (66%). The most significant periods of housing construction in the Town were from 1990 to 1999 (26.7%), 1970 to 1979 (23.8%) and from 1980 to 1989 (15.5%). Fewer housing units have been constructed within the Town since 2000 (10.7%). Construction in the county and the state occurred more consistently throughout the decades, with most occurring between 1970 and 1979. Construction has leveled in the county and the state since 2000, but to a slightly lesser degree than the Town. Home supply has not been constructed to meet demand since the Great Recession of 2008 in the Town, county, or the state.

Value Characteristics

Table 15 details housing values in owner-occupied homes throughout the Town, county, and state. In 2020, the median housing value was \$241,900 in the Town of Saratoga. This is considerably higher than Wood County, at \$133,700, and higher than the State of Wisconsin, at \$189,200. The largest concentration in home values (37.9%) is in the over \$300,000 range, with declining availability the more affordable the price range.

Table 15: Housing Values Owner Occupied, 2020							
	Less than \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,999	\$150,000 to \$199,999	\$200,000 to \$299,999	\$300,000 or more	Median Value
T. Saratoga	3.7%	5.5%	11.4%	17.8%	23.7%	37.9%	\$241,900
Wood County	7.2%	26.0%	25.2%	18.7%	15.2%	7.8%	\$133,700
Wisconsin	4.4%	11.4%	18.5%	19.2%	24.6%	20.9%	\$189,200

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Housing Affordability

Several factors contribute to the affordability of housing in Wood County. These factors include rent and mortgage payments, maintenance expenses, lot size, and required or desired amenities for the dwelling. Household size and income are key factors contributing to what housing options are available and accessible to residents.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban (HUD) development recommends that housing costs do not exceed 30 percent of monthly income. If housing costs exceed 30 percent of monthly income, a household is considered cost burdened. HUD also indicates that lenders are more willing to make loans if the scheduled mortgage payment is no greater than 31 percent of the monthly household income. Low-income households that pay more than 30 percent of their income toward rent may have difficulty affording other household necessities such as food, childcare, and healthcare costs. Severely cost-burdened households are at risk of becoming homeless.

Table 16 shows that the percentage of households in the Town of Saratoga that pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs is much lower than both the county and state with those that have a mortgage as well as those without a mortgage. Table 17 shows that the proportion of renter-occupied households that are cost burdened was 25.9 percent, substantially less than the county or the state.

Table 16: Owner-Occupied Housing Affordability (Median Selected Owner Costs)				
	With mortgage	% cost burdened*	No mortgage	% cost burdened*
T. Saratoga	\$1,261	9.9%	\$407	7.7%
Wood County	\$1,106	18.8%	\$453	10.5%
Wisconsin	\$1,436	22.2%	\$556	12.9%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

*Cost burdened means a household is paying more than 30% of their income towards housing costs

Table 17: Renter-Occupied Housing Affordability (Median Selected Renter Costs)		
	Median Gross Rent	% cost burdened*
T. Saratoga	\$776	25.9%
Wood County	\$726	36.8%
Wisconsin	\$872	43.2%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

*Cost burdened means a household is paying more than 30% of their income towards housing costs

Specialized Housing

In Wood County, housing for seniors and populations with special needs is primarily provided in the urbanized areas in and around Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield. The Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Central Wisconsin has locations in Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield and serves Lincoln, Marathon, and Wood Counties. The ADRC supports seniors, caregivers, and adults with disabilities. The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, the United Way of South Wood & Adams County, and the Marshfield Area United Way all maintain information about specialized housing options throughout the county. As the number of elderly persons increases in the coming years, there will most likely be a greater need for a wider variety of housing options.

Senior Housing

Housing for seniors typically consists of a range of housing options that provide a spectrum of assistance starting with individual units or homes with little or no assistance, independent living

communities for seniors that remain independent, assisted living facilities for those who are no longer able to live on their own, and nursing homes for those that need skilled medical care.

According to research by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, most seniors prefer to “age in place,” or remain in their home throughout retirement. This can be difficult for those in rural areas such as Saratoga, as the ability to access medical care and necessary goods and services can become burdensome. This highlights the importance of senior transportation services and universal design (home design that creates access for all people). Most senior housing within the county is located within the urbanized areas of Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield. The area surrounding the Town of Saratoga will likely need additional housing options for seniors in upcoming years.

Summary of Housing Characteristics

The Town of Saratoga is dominated by single-family homes and some mobile homes. Beyond that there are few options. Most housing consists of single-family detached housing that is owner occupied. Most housing was constructed between 1970 and 1999, falling into high-valuation ranges. Some population growth is expected in upcoming years, however the community would benefit from a wide range of housing options. Consistent with statewide trends, new housing construction over the past decade has stalled, as only 2.6 percent of homes in the Town have been constructed since 2010.

There is a need for construction of additional housing units to accommodate future demand. It would be desirable to construct housing in a variety of styles to create affordability and more adequately meet the needs of those at various income levels and desiring a range of amenities. Affordability is an issue for some renters and homeowners within the Town, particularly for renters.

There are many Town residents that are moving into older age categories. These older age groups typically desire housing that is smaller, accessible, maintenance free, and near needed healthcare services and amenities. This trend will continue throughout the upcoming decades, and if the Town does not have these options locally, they will relocate to Wisconsin Rapids and other places that do.

The Town has a rural character, consisting of wooded areas near outdoor recreation and tourism to the south and urban employment centers to the north and west. These are attractive qualities to those looking for a home. The more options available that would bring young families and allow seniors to stay in the community are important considerations when looking at future housing policy and planning.

HOUSING PROGRAMS

There are a variety of state and federal housing programs geared at addressing a variety of housing issues. Grants and low interest loans are available for counties, communities, or individual homeowners and renters. The following are some housing resources administered through the state using state or federal funds that are available to participants.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

- Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)
- Rental Assistance (Section 8) Programs
- Multifamily Loan Fund
- National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling
- WHEDA Advantage
- FHA Advantage
- First-Time Home Buyer Advantage
- WHEDA Tax Advantage
- WHEDA Foundation Grant Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development (USDA-RD)

- Single Family Direct Home Loans
- Single Family Home Loan Guarantees
- Mutual Self-Help Housing Technical Assistance Grants
- Rural Housing Site Loan
- Housing Preservation & Revitalization Demonstration Loans & Grants
- Housing Preservation Grants
- Multi-Family Housing Direct Loans
- Multi-Family Housing Loan Guarantees
- Multi-Family Housing Rental Assistance

State of Wisconsin Department of Administration Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources (DEHCR)

- Housing Grants and Loans
- Homelessness Assistance and Prevention
- Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)
- HOME Homebuyer and Rehabilitation Program
- HOME Rental Housing Development (RHD)
- Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program
- Housing Cost Reduction Initiative Program (HCRI)
- CDBG – Small Cities Housing and Revolving Loan Program

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- The HUD Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program
- The HOME Investment Partnership Program
- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers
- CDBG – Small Cities Program

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Goals:

1. Plan for the residential needs of all Town residents to meet existing and forecasted housing demands, including senior housing options.
2. Encourage housing properties, types, and densities that reinforce the rural character of the Town.

Objectives:

1. Collaborate with neighboring municipalities to plan for a range of housing that meets the needs of area residents of various income levels, age, and health status.
2. Emphasize control of residential density and site design rather than lot size alone.
3. Direct new and expanding land uses to appropriate areas as defined in the Future Land Use Map.
4. Ensure that homes are built and maintained according to current state and local building codes.
5. Retain single-family residences as the preferred type of housing supply in the Town of Saratoga.
6. Encourage residents to maintain the existing housing stock.
7. Work to ensure various services are available to the aging population, including transportation and other senior assistance.

Policies:

1. Include affordable housing in any future discussions with developers. Explore opportunities to provide incentives for developers and homebuilders to create housing that is affordable for low and moderate-income households.
2. Encourage the location of multi-family apartment buildings, senior housing, and special needs housing, where there is easier access to public services and facilities.
3. Encourage higher density residential land uses near existing developed areas and lower residential densities near existing wooded lands to provide economies of scale for the Town's infrastructure, retain rural character, and to provide more convenient access to area facilities and services.
4. Encourage clustered residential subdivisions to minimize conversion of open space land. Incentives may be considered by the Town for developments that preserve forested land.

5. Higher density residential development not served by sanitary sewer, must meet state code.
6. Maintain a comprehensive building code that requires inspection of new structures and repair of unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions.
7. Encourage single-family homes as the primary residential building type.
8. Continue to enforce a property maintenance ordinance and encourage voluntary efforts by private homeowners to maintain, rehabilitate, update, or otherwise make improvements to their homes.

Chapter 4: Utilities and Community Facilities

Utilities and community facilities, provided by either public or private entities, are critical for community development. Utilities include things such as electrical service, natural gas, telephone, cable, and internet. Community facilities include local government buildings, libraries, educational facilities, and maintenance and storage facilities, as well as services like police, fire protection, and emergency medical services.

The efficient utilization of these resources is one of the basic principles of comprehensive planning. Existing infrastructure is a public asset that must be safeguarded for the future, both to conserve and protect environmental values and to maximize the benefits of economic growth. Development that does not acknowledge or integrate existing infrastructure resources is wasteful of the public investment that they represent. Development patterns that require the extension of utilities and the expansion of public facilities while existing facilities go unused at other locations is likely not the best use of public resources. The Utilities and Community Facilities Map provides detailed information about the inventory throughout the Town.

PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

Wood County All Hazards Mitigation Plan, 2020

This plan examines general conditions, including an inventory of utilities, community facilities, and emergency services throughout Wood County. Risk assessment is at the heart of the all-hazards mitigation program. To mitigate the risks, it is necessary to assess their relative importance. The report looks at a series of mostly weather-related disasters; how they have affected the county in the past and how future instances are likely to affect the county and how local government should respond to such occurrences.

The report concludes with suggested mitigation measures that might be taken by local governments to reduce the risk from identified hazards. Counties and incorporated municipalities are required to adopt such plans with updates every five years.

Wood County Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Plan, 2018

The primary purpose of the Wood County Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Plan is to guide and accomplish a coordinated and harmonious county recreation system. It serves as a guide for the decision making of recreation providers, elected officials, and stakeholders for the five-year planning

period. This enables the highest and best use of county resources, including natural resources, manufactured resources, and financial resources.

UTILITIES

Water Service

The Town of Saratoga does not have a public water supply system. Instead, private wells supply the water for public and private facilities within the Town. Concerns exist over water quality as properties continue to develop. The Town has an educational program for homeowners with private wells regarding annual testing and monitoring.

Wastewater

There is no public sewer system in the Town of Saratoga. Therefore, all development in the Town uses on-site septic systems that discharge to underground drainage fields and may include conventional (underground), mound, pressure distribution, at-grade, holding tank, or sand filter systems. There is growing concern about water quality and the ability to site new septic systems on limited lots as older systems are phased out. There has also been concern about development in the northeastern portion of the Town where water tables are high. The Wisconsin Administrative Code regulates these on-site wastewater treatment systems. The Wood County Planning and Zoning Office administers the program locally and issues permits, as well as inspection. Over the years there has been some discussion with the Town of Rome related to their desire to connect to the wastewater plant in Port Edwards which would require a sewer pipe to run through the Town of Saratoga.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Private haulers provide container pick up of garbage and recycling for businesses and residents in Town. The Town maintains two transfer stations for metal and tires, recycling, and brush, which is available to all Town residents.

Energy and Telecommunications

Electric and Natural Gas

Electric services are provided by Adams-Columbia Electric Cooperative and Alliant, and natural gas service is provided by WE Energies. Both Solarus and Charter Communications provide telephone, television, and internet service in the Town. There are two communication towers located within the Town.

Two solar facilities are in the Town. The 150-Megawatt Wood County Solar – Project 1 is operated by Alliant Energy, located between CTH Z and STH 13 north of Blue Ridge Ln. Saratoga Solar – Project 2 has been proposed as of 2022 by Savion, the same developer as Wood County Solar – Project 1. This 150-Megawatt project takes advantage of the newly upgraded 138 kV transmission line in its location immediately to the east of Project 1, straddling STH 13. The area has some of the highest solar potential in Wisconsin. Project 1 sits on about 1,600 acres while Project 2 is approximately 1,900

acres. Combined, both facilities are expected to generate \$42 million over 35 years for the Town and the County. See the Utilities & Community Facilities map.

Cable/Internet

Several companies provide high speed internet service throughout Wood County including Frontier, HughesNet, Solarus, Spectrum, Viasat, and TDS. Speeds vary throughout the county. In 2021, Wood County was awarded a Public Service Commission broadband grant that will greatly expand the speed and quality of broadband service throughout Wood County.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Town Operations

Town Hall

The original Saratoga Town Hall was built in 1962 and the Municipal Building was built in 2003. These buildings are located at 1116 and 1120 WI-73, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494. The Town Board consists of a Chair and four Supervisors. The Town Board meets twice each month while the Town Plan Commission meets monthly. There is also a Town Assessor, Building Inspector, Constable, Clerk, Treasurer, Zoning Administrator,



Saratoga Town Hall - 2021

and a

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The Wood County Sheriff's Department provides police protection in the Town of Saratoga. They patrol all county roads and respond to 911 calls. In addition, the Wisconsin State Highway Patrol provides some patrol, mainly on state and federal highways. There are no police facilities located within the Town.

Fire

The Town does not maintain its own fire department, but contracts with the Towns of Grand Rapids and Rome and the City of Nekoosa Fire Departments. Fire stations are located in those communities.

Ambulance

The Town maintains a volunteer Emergency Services first response unit. The Town contracts with various entities for Ambulance Service.

Medical Services

The nearest hospital is Aspirus Riverview Hospital located in Wisconsin Rapids. The 45-bed facility provides full medical services. A 12-bed hospital is being constructed by Marshfield Clinic in the City of Wisconsin Rapids. Marshfield Clinic and Aspirus Clinic are also located within Wisconsin Rapids.

Cemeteries

There are two cemeteries in the Town. Greenhill/Pioneer Cemeteries at 504 Heminger Court and 4810 Townline Road. Wisconsin Statute 157.70 provides for the protection of all human burial sites, including all marked and unmarked burials and cemeteries. Minimum acreage requirements exist for cemeteries established on or after November 1, 1991, unless a cemetery is owned by a religious association, or the Town enacts an ordinance allowing new cemeteries of less than 20 acres to be constructed.

Childcare Facilities

Currently, there are no licensed childcare facilities located within the Town of Saratoga.

Education

Primary and Secondary Schools

The Town of Saratoga is located within both the Nekoosa and Wisconsin Rapids School Districts. The Nekoosa School District operates one elementary, one middle, and one high school, as well as the Nekoosa Academy, Central Wisconsin STEM Academy, and WISE Academy. These schools serve the five municipalities: Armenia, Rome, Saratoga, Port Edwards, and Nekoosa. The Wisconsin Rapids School District operates multiple elementary schools, one middle school, two high schools, and two academies. Assumption Catholic Schools operates a K-12 school system and Good Shepard Lutheran Church operates a K-8 school. Emanuel Lutheran and St. Paul's Lutheran also operate schools. These private schools also serve the area.

Post-Graduate Education

Mid-State Technical College is a public two-year technical college with four regional campuses, one in Wisconsin Rapids. They offer degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in a variety of high-demand career fields designed to meet local workforce needs. UW- Stevens Point located in Stevens Point offers 4-year bachelor's degrees as well as master's degrees.

Libraries

McMillan Library in Wisconsin Rapids and Charles & Jo Ann Lester Library in Nekoosa serve the Town. Wood County provides some financial support of these organizations.

Recreation

Parks

There are some DNR natural areas located along Ten-mile Creek that provide some recreational opportunities. There is also a canoe launch at Point Basse and a boat launch at Devil's Elbow. Recently, there has been some discussion related to the development of some additional park and boat/kayak launch facilities near Lake Nepco and along Petenwell Flowage. An outdoor recreation plan is being developed by the Town to address this issue in more detail.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Goals:

1. Maintain high quality Town services and facilities.
2. Guide new growth to areas that are most efficiently served by utilities.
3. Provide recreational opportunities in the Town.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that public and private utilities are constructed and maintained according to professional and governmental standards and do not detract from the rural character of the Town.
2. Annually evaluate the condition of the Town Hall and Garage as well as associated equipment to ensure that it will continue to meet Town needs.
3. Monitor satisfaction with local emergency services, and other utility or community services, and seek adjustments as necessary.
4. Maintain and expand the bike routes and other trail network in the Town.

Policies:

1. Sanitary Sewer – Density and minimum lot sizes should be managed allowing adequate space for replacement of private on-site sewage systems. Continue working with Wood County to ensure that existing private septic systems are adequately maintained and inspected on a regular basis, and that new private septic systems are designed, constructed, and inspected according to WIDNR and Wood County regulations.
2. Water Supply - Encourage landowners with private wells to properly maintain and monitor their wells through inspection and water testing as necessary or required by WIDNR

regulations. Landowners with private wells that are no longer in use shall properly close and abandon wells according to Wisconsin DNR regulations.

3. Stormwater Management – Control stormwater quality and quantity impacts from development. Maintain natural drainage patterns, as existing drainage corridors, streams, floodplains, and wetlands can provide for stormwater quality and quantity control benefits at no cost to the community. Direct that developers be responsible for stormwater quality and quantity control both during and after site preparation and construction activities. Collaborate with other jurisdictions as necessary to enforce stormwater management and erosion control ordinances.
4. Solid Waste & Recycling – Provide solid waste collection, disposal and effective recycling services that protect public health and the natural environment. Periodically review levels of service provided by the contracted solid waste disposal and recycling carrier and meet with them to address any concerns raised by residents or local businesses. Hazardous materials shall be disposed of properly.
5. Parks - Evaluate the need for recreational or natural preserve areas in the Town and work with Wisconsin River Power Company, WIDNR, City of Nekoosa, Village of Port Edwards, and Wood County as necessary to develop and maintain these areas if established.
6. Utilities - Ensure the provision of reliable, efficient, and well-planned utilities to adequately serve existing and planned development. Actively participate in the planning and siting of any major transmission lines, facilities, natural gas lines, or telecommunication towers. If such facilities are proposed, they should be located in an area safely away from existing residential uses. In addition, such uses shall be sited and designed to minimize impacts on adjacent uses. Underground placement and co-location for new public and private utility facilities is encouraged. Above ground utilities shall incorporate site, design, and landscaping features that minimize impacts to adjacent uses.
7. Cemeteries – Collaborate with local churches regarding the need for additional cemeteries or cemetery expansion.
8. Special Needs Facilities – Work with the City of Nekoosa, Village of Port Edwards, and Wood County to maintain and improve access to special needs facilities (i.e. health care, childcare) for Town residents. Actively participate in the planning of any new special needs facility.
9. Emergency Services - Work with the City of Nekoosa, Village of Port Edwards, Wood County, City of Wisconsin Rapids, Nekoosa Fire District, Rome Fire District, and the Grand Rapids Fire District to maintain adequate provision of emergency services (i.e. fire, police, EMS, first responders) for Town residents and businesses, and review service provision levels with the appropriate agencies annually.
10. Schools - Collaborate with the Nekoosa & Wisconsin Rapids School Districts to provide high quality educational facilities for Town residents. Actively participate in the planning and siting of any new school facility.

11. Libraries - Work with Wood County to maintain and improve access to public library facilities for Town residents. Actively participate in the planning and siting of any new library facility.

Chapter 5: Transportation

A community's transportation system consists of a variety of roads; some are owned and maintained by local officials, others are part of the county or state road systems. In addition to roads, the transportation system includes separate facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, railroads, airports, and public transit. This section describes the transportation system in the Town of Saratoga and related improvements or issues affecting the system.

PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION

Connections 2050

Connections 2050 is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) long-range transportation plan for the state. Adopted recently, the plan addresses all forms of transportation over a 20-year planning horizon: highways, local roads, air, water, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit. WisDOT is currently updating several of the modal plans.

State Trails Network Plan

This 2003 document clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in the provision of all types of trails. The plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in the creation of recreational and alternative transportation corridors.

Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2018

This plan is a region-wide effort to improve bicycling and walking across communities within North Central Wisconsin. The plan assesses existing conditions related to bicycling and walking, identifies other potential trail and route user groups, identifies routes, and describes policies and programs to assist local governments in improving bicycling and walking to promote connectivity between communities and destinations throughout North Central Wisconsin.

Regional Livability Plan, 2015

Transportation is one of four elements included in the Regional Livability Plan (RLP), adopted by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in 2015. The Transportation Assessment Report, a component of the plan, looks in detail at the transportation network throughout the ten-county region and identifies trends and issues facing transportation.

The Regional Livability Plan addresses three issues: the modes of transportation to work, the age of drivers in the region, and the high transportation maintenance cost. The three transportation goals of the RLP are as follows:

- Provide and improve transportation access to people of all ages and abilities to ensure lifelong mobility and accessibility.
- Fund the maintenance and expansion of the transportation system.
- Enhance the regional economy by supporting airports and freight rail.

Wood County Coordinated Public Transit – Human Service Transportation Plan, 2019

Wood County developed this five-year plan that was facilitated by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The plan analyzes service gaps and needs in public transit and human services transportation and proposes strategies to address the gaps and needs. This plan will be updated later this year.

Wood County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

This plan is currently being updated to better guide the development of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, recommendations, and policy that will create a safe and accessible network across Wood County’s various communities.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act)

This current federal transportation program authorizes up to \$108 billion to support federal public transportation programs, including \$91 billion in guaranteed funding. It also reauthorizes surface transportation programs for FY 2022-2026 and provides advance appropriations for certain programs. Major goals include improving safety, modernizing aging transit infrastructure and fleets, investing in cleaner transportation, and improving equity in communities with limited transportation access. These funds will be distributed via formulas and grants to the states. Local units will be able to access the funds through various grant programs.

ROAD NETWORK

Road Classification

Functional

A functionally classified road system is one in which street and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of service they provide, ranging from a high degree of travel mobility to land access functions. At the upper limit of the system (i.e. principal arterials), are facilities that emphasize traffic mobility (long, uninterrupted travel), while at the lower limits are local roads and streets that emphasize access over speed and efficiency.

The functional classifications are generally defined as:

- Principal Arterials serve corridor movements having trip length and travel density characteristics of an interstate of interregional nature. These routes generally serve all urban areas greater than 5,000 population or connect major centers of activity and the highest traffic volumes and the longest trip desires.
- Minor Arterials, in conjunction with principal arterials, serve cities, large communities, and other major traffic generators, providing intracommunity continuity and service to trips of moderate length, with more emphasis on land access than principal arterials.
- Collectors provide both land access service and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial areas. The collector system distributes trips from the local streets and channel it onto the arterial system.
- Local Streets comprise all facilities not on one of the higher systems. They serve primarily to provide direct access to abutting land and access to the higher order of systems. Local streets offer the highest level of access, but the lowest level of mobility for automobiles.

Jurisdictional

Roads are commonly classified in one of two ways: by ownership or by purpose. Jurisdictional responsibility refers to ownership of a particular road, while functional classification, as described above, identifies the road by the level of service it provides.

Jurisdiction refers to government ownership, not necessarily responsibility. For example, some state-owned roads are maintained by local jurisdictions. Additionally, the designation of a public road as a “federal-aid highway” does not alter its ownership or jurisdiction as a state or local road, only that its service value and importance have made that road eligible for federal-aid construction and rehabilitation funds.

Ownership is divided among the federal, state, and local governments. States own over 20 percent of the national road network. The federal government has responsibility for about 5 percent, primarily in national parks, forests, and Indian reservations. Over 75 percent of the road system is locally controlled.

In some cases, Wood County is responsible for conducting routine maintenance and minor repairs on state and federal highways within their jurisdictional boundaries. In return, the state generally provides financing to those jurisdictions. However, major repairs and reconstruction are generally still the responsibility of the State Department of Transportation.

Road Facilities

The road system within the Town of Saratoga is a network of state highways, county highways and local roads. The jurisdictional and functional breakdown is shown in Table 18.

Jurisdiction	Arterial	Collector	Local	Totals
Federal	0	0	0	0
State	16.09	0.00	0.00	16.09
County	2.30	7.48	0.00	9.78
Town	0.00	17.63	76.35	93.98
Totals	18.39	25.11	76.35	119.85

Source: WisDOT

Following is a brief description of the major road facilities located in the Town of Saratoga. All major roads are summarized by functional classification, jurisdiction, and annual average daily traffic (AADT), when available. Map 4 Transportation provides detailed transportation information for the Town.

Examining AADT information over time can provide some insight into roads that may need upgrading or increased maintenance in the future. At the points with multiple collection periods, the AADT count on most roads within the Town has decreased substantially. The most significant decreases have been on state highways and some local roads including a 67.8 percent decrease on Ranger Road west of STH 13, a 45.0 percent decrease on STH 13 south of STH 73 between Tower Rd and Evergreen Ave, and a 36.0 percent decrease on CTH Z south of STH 73.

Location	2011 AADT	2021 AADT	2011-2021 % Change
CTH Z North of Ranger Road	3,200	3,300	3.1%
CTH Z north of STH 73.	2,700	2,000	-25.9%
CTH Z south of STH 73	2,500	1,600	-36.0%
STH 73 at Wisconsin River Bridge	8,800	7,700	-12.5%
STH 73 Between Church Ave & CTH Z	7,600	6,500	-14.5%
STH 73 1.0 mile west of CTH Z	6,700	5,700	-14.9%
STH 73 west of STH 13	6,000	4,800	-20.0%
STH 73 northwest of CTH U	2,500	2,000	-20.0%
STH 13 north of STH 73	11,700	9,900	-15.4%
STH 13 south of STH 73 between Hasa Ave and Nature's Way	10,000	5,500	-45.0%
STH 13 south of STH 73 between Tower Rd and Evergreen Ave	6,300	5,900	-6.3%
STH 13 between Larry Ave and Townline Rd	13,100	11,200	-14.5%
Ranger Rd west of STH 13	590	190	-67.8%
Ranger Rd east of STH 13	860	700	-18.6%

Source: WisDOT

State Highway 13

State Highway 13 is a minor arterial that runs north and south, bisecting the Town and serving as the Town's busiest road and main gateway into Wisconsin Rapids. Four different AADT locations are recorded in Table 19, with a considerable AADT decrease in all locations ranging from 6.3 percent to 45 percent between 2011 and 2021.

State Highway 73

State Highway 73 is a minor arterial that runs from the Wisconsin River at the City of Nekoosa eastward to the center of the Town where it intersects STH 13 where it begins to angle towards the southeast corner of the Town. Five AADT locations are recorded in Table 19, all of which decreased between 12.5 percent and 20.0 percent from 2011 to 2021.

County Highway Z

County Highway Z is a major collector that runs north and south along the eastern border of Petenwell Lake, a flowage on the Wisconsin River, connecting Nekoosa and Port Edwards to the Town of Rome. Another segment runs parallel to STH 13 in the northern half of the Town, with the two segments being connected by STH 73. Three AADT locations are recorded in Table 19, with a slight increase in AADT of 3.1 percent at the northernmost location, but considerable decreases of 25.9 percent and 36 percent closer to STH 73.

Ranger Road

Ranger Road is an east-west major collector, but it features traffic volumes much lower than the Town's state and county highways. Two AADT locations are recorded, both having a decreased AADT between 2011 and 2021, with the western portion having the greatest decrease in AADT for all roads in Table 19 (67.8 percent).

It should be noted that some of these 2021 counts were impacted by the covid pandemic. There has been an increase in local traffic due to major construction in the Town of Rome to the south, including but not limited to the Sand Valley destination golf course and general population increase in that area. In addition, traffic was impacted during the construction of the solar fields in the Town as well as new housing starts. In general, traffic generated and attracted by any new land use can increase congestion on the roadway system. Even without creating new access points, changes in land uses can alter the capacity of the roadway. Uncontrolled division of land tends to affect highways by increasing the amount of turning traffic into and out from intersecting driveways, therefore impairing safety and impeding traffic movements. Though Saratoga's population has declined slightly since the 2000 Census, an increase in housing units may result in increased AADTs in the future, especially as people return to work following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Road Maintenance

The Town of Saratoga uses the Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) system, which was designed by the Transportation Information Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The PASER system is the rating system used by most Wisconsin communities. The PASER system rates road surfaces of a scale of 1 to 10.

- “1” and “2” = very poor condition
- “3” = poor condition
- “4” and “5” = fair condition
- “6” and “7” = good condition
- “8” = very good condition
- “9” and “10” = excellent condition

Table 20 shows a summary of Town road pavement conditions in the Town of Saratoga. Note that these totals only include local roads, so County and State Highways are excluded. Town roads exhibiting a surface condition rating at or below “fair” must be examined to determine what type of reconstruction or strengthening is necessary. The roads that display a surface rating of “good” or better will only require minimal preventative maintenance to promote safe travel conditions. Most Town roads are in relatively good condition, as less than one percent of roads rate as “Poor” or “Very Poor” and about 99 percent of roads rate as “Fair” or better. However, with over half of roads rated “Fair,” there will likely need to be several significant road projects in the coming years.

Table 20: Summary of Pavement Conditions, 2021	
Surface Type	Miles
Unimproved	3.46
Gravel	0.16
Sealcoat	8.70
Asphalt	81.64
Surface Rating	Miles
Very Poor	0.08
Poor	0.46
Fair	51.43
Good	23.45
Very Good	13.17
Excellent	5.13
No Rating	0.24
Total	93.97

Source: WisDOT

Trucking

STH 73 and STH 13 are long truck routes within the Town as designated by WisDOT. Local truck routes often branch out from these major corridors to link local industry with the main truck routes

as well as for the distribution of commodities within the local area. Local issues such as safety, weight restrictions, and noise impacts play significant roles in the designation of local truck routes.

Rail

There is freight rail service available across the Wisconsin River from the Town. According to the 2021 DOT Wisconsin Railroads and Harbors Map, Canadian National owns all rail tracks through the Cities of Nekoosa, Port Edwards, and Wisconsin Rapids.

Air Transportation

Two airports serve the Town. The South Wood County Airport – Alexander Field is managed by the City of Wisconsin Rapids and jointly owned by South Wood County Airport Commission, the City of Wisconsin Rapids, Town of Grand Rapids, Village of Port Edwards, and the City of Nekoosa. The airport has three runways and there is no commercial service. The Central Wisconsin Airport in Mosinee provides commercial air service to the area. Currently, three airlines have daily scheduled flights from the facility. There is one known private, unpaved airport in the Town of Saratoga.

Transportation Services for Specialized Populations

The Aging and Disability Resource Center provides information on transportation services for those that are elderly and for those with disabilities including the Wood County Transportation Program. The Wood County Elderly and Disabled Transportation program provides rides to persons over the age of 55, and people who have a disability that prevents them from driving. Rides are provided for shopping, medical appointments, or to other locations as needed. Bus transportation is provided on weekdays and is equipped with a wheelchair lift.

Bicycling and Walking

All roads in the Town are available for bicycle and pedestrian travel. Currently there are some designated trails in the Town, as part of the Heart Trail System coordinated within the Wisconsin Rapids area. Wood County coordinates trail planning throughout the county and is in the process of developing a county bike plan. See the Transportation Map.

Recreational Vehicles

There is an extensive snowmobile trail system throughout Wood County that includes the Town of Saratoga. There is also an extensive ATV system throughout Wood County. The Town allows the use of ATV/UTVs on Town roads.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal:

1. Maintain the Town's transportation network at a level of service desired by Town residents and businesses.

Objectives:

1. Provide for a safe, efficient, multi-modal, and well-maintained transportation network for all modes of transportation.
2. Manage access to the transportation network in order to effectively maintain the safe and functional integrity of town roads.
3. Coordinate major transportation projects with neighboring communities, Wood County, and WisDOT.

Policies:

1. Coordination of Bicycle and ATV/UTV Planning – Ensure that the Town has an active role in providing any input on bicycle and ATV/UTV routes through the Town planned by Wood County, WIDNR, the City of Nekoosa, Village of Port Edwards, Towns of Grand Rapids and Rome, or local organizations.
2. Incorporation of Pedestrian & Bicycle Planning – Encourage that developments and road construction/maintenance address the necessity of adequate walking & bicycling areas and routes in both residential and commercial areas. Bicycle and pedestrian trails within developments shall be designed to connect to any adjacent existing or planned pedestrian or bicycle facility.
3. Designation of Truck Routes – Continue to designate weight restrictions and truck routes as needed.
4. Protection of Town Roads – Encourage traffic patterns that do not increase traffic on Town Roads unnecessarily and require intergovernmental agreements that define the responsibilities of the Town, the developer and the neighboring community regarding any required improvements to Town roads and funding of such improvements.
5. Coordination of Improvements to County Highways – Stay apprised of Wood County's efforts to maintain and improve County roads. Coordinate bicycle and pedestrian upgrades when these roads are scheduled for improvement.

6. Continue Implementation of Town Driveway Ordinance – Continue to implement the Town driveway ordinance to minimize the amount of access points onto Town roads and to ensure adequate sight distances.
7. Maintain Condition Standards for Town Roadways – Maintain an average PASER rating of 7 for all Town Roads, and establish and prioritize future road projects based on the applicable PASER scores and ADT data.
8. Joint Planning of Roads that Cross Jurisdictions – Work with neighboring municipalities to plan, construct and maintain those roadways that affect both jurisdictions, including cost sharing where appropriate.
9. New Development Proposals – Development proposals shall address the impacts to transportation systems including:
 - a. Traffic flow and volume,
 - b. Road conditions, construction, and maintenance,
 - c. Emergency vehicle access,
 - d. Safe ingress and egress,
 - e. Future connectivity to surrounding properties,
 - f. Transportation of students (e.g. bus turn-arounds),
 - g. Pedestrian and bicycle improvements.
10. Future Cooperation and Planning – The Town may consider participating in planning for public transit, public air transportation or water transportation in the Town should these alternatives become feasible in the future.

Chapter 6: Economic Development

Economic development examines the local and county economy. Economic activity is an important driver for current and future land use. A variety of economic characteristics such as labor force, comparative employment growth, employment by industry, unemployment rates, and commuting patterns are explored. Employment patterns and economic trends generally occur on a regional scale. Residents of one community often work in another. Similarly, changes in a major industry can impact jobs and growth far beyond the community where the business is physically located. Therefore, it is important to understand a local community's economy as part of the regional economy.

Assessment of these components of the economic base provides an important historical perspective on current land use patterns and provides insights that help to predict possible future directions and opportunities for growth of the local economy.

PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

North Central Wisconsin Regional Recovery Plan, 2022

The purpose of this plan is to guide economic stabilization, recovery, and resiliency efforts within the North Central Wisconsin Region in the face of the current pandemic as well as future events that cause economic shocks. The goal of this plan is to develop a set of strategies that will help the Region's local economies recover from and become more resilient to economic shocks by identifying best-practice strategies that help spur economic stabilization and recovery in the wake of economic shocks and that will help build local economic resilience. Helping local recovery and resiliency efforts will help the regional economy as a whole recover and grow back even stronger than before the disaster struck. A dashboard that monitors the status of economic metrics for broadband, childcare, housing, transportation, workforce and talent attraction, tourism, hospitality, economic indicators, and social indicators is found on NCWRCP's website.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), 2021

Wood County is one of ten counties included in the North Central Wisconsin Economic Development District as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). The NCWRPC is the agency responsible for maintaining that designation. As part of the designation, the NCWRPC annually prepares a CEDS. Economic development is an organized process to expand the number and types of businesses, increase employment levels and opportunities, and increase the tax base. This report summarizes and assesses economic development activities over the past year and presents new and modified strategies to promote growth.

Regional Livability Plan (RLP), 2015

Economic Development is one of four elements included in the RLP, adopted by the NCWRPC in 2015. The Economic Development Assessment Report within the RLP observes in detail the economic health of the ten-county region and identifies trends and issues facing the local economy. The RLP addresses three economic development issues:

- Available Labor Force and Employment – Businesses need a workforce with the proper education to meet the demands of an ever-changing job market. High labor needs combined with an older workforce preparing for retirement will result in a labor force shortage and inability to meet the workforce needs of area businesses. The future availability of a quality labor force is a major concern for the business community.
- Living Wage – over the past ten years, the region’s cost of living (i.e. home prices and rent) have increased faster than per capita and household incomes. Consequently, many working adults must seek public assistance and/or hold multiple jobs to meet the basic needs of their families. Occupations paying a living wage provide families resources for savings, investments, education, and the purchasing of goods which improves the local economy and increases the quality of life of the region’s population.
- Broadband – High-speed broadband connections are crucial for government services, healthcare, education, library systems, private businesses, and residents. Improving the region’s telecommunication network can assist existing businesses, attract new businesses, and allow residents to access education opportunities.

Rural Economic Development Innovation (REDI) Plan, 2021

This plan was developed with a grant that provided technical assistance from Purdue University and University of Kentucky to help develop this strategic plan for Wood County. The Wood County Rural Economic Development Innovation Plan includes evidence-based assessments, quantifiable goals, plans to improve the local and regional economy, and metrics to track progress. Wood County staff and County Board Supervisors worked together with numerous county organizations and individuals to develop [Wood County’s first-ever Economic Development Plan](#). It was adopted in 2021.

The Economic Development Plan will now act as a guiding document for the county with clear economic development priorities to be executed over the next five years. The collaborative process used during the development of the plan has facilitated connections and coordination among key individuals and organizations. These connections will undoubtedly help efforts to grow the regional economy and strengthen the quality of place in Central Wisconsin. The identified initiatives include:

- Ensuring robust technology infrastructure throughout the County,
- Developing a plan to address the housing needs in the County,
- Establishing a n entrepreneurial ecosystem, and
- Transforming the economic development network to a collaboration economic development group.

Wood County Comprehensive Plan, 2010

The Wood County Comprehensive Plan was created as the impacts of the Great Recession were being realized. The plan analyzes labor patterns, the economic base, employment projections, and existing facilities. The plan outlines the following goals:

- Continue to maintain a strong presence in area economic development organizations.
- Retain local businesses and jobs and help them expand.
- Attract new businesses to Wood County.
- Continue to improve the logistics in Wood County.
- Provide a quality of life that is attractive to young company executives.

ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin, 2020

This report, developed by the United Way, described the 22 percent of households in Wood County that are above the federal poverty level, but still struggle to afford basic household necessities, or “ALICE” households (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). These households are largely employed but do not earn enough in wages to meet the “household survival budget,” which does not allow for any savings. The report states that many ALICE households provide vital services, such as retail, health care, childcare, and security, but cannot make ends meet on the income provided from these jobs.

The ALICE report shows that 26 percent of Saratoga households are either below the federal poverty level or are considered ALICE households, indicating that the average household in Saratoga is slightly more financially strained than the average Wood County household at-large, but less constrained than the average Wisconsin resident (34 percent).

City of Wisconsin Rapids Renewal

The City of Wisconsin Rapids has been undertaking a planning effort since the closure of the Verso Mill. The city secured a consultant with Federal grant funding to develop a Recovery and Reuse Plan. To date some opportunities have been identified, these include:

- Emerging Forest Products production, including Cellulosic Food Packaging, Exterior & Structural Building Products, and Bio-Fuels;
- Industrial and Logistics Park;
- Renewable Energy Park;
- Pulp Facility; and
- Value-Added Agricultural Production.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

County Economic Environment

Once dominated by manufacturing, especially related to the paper industry, the economy is changing. And has become more diverse. Health care and education now employ more than manufacturing. This is due mainly to Marshfield Clinic located within the City of Marshfield which is an integrated health system that employs a total of 12,000 people in more than 50 locations in 34 Wisconsin communities. Leisure and hospitality are the largest segment in the county. There is still some agriculture in the county. In fact, Wood County is Wisconsin's leading cranberry producer.

In July of 2020, the City of Wisconsin Rapids and surrounding economy experienced a significant impact when Verso Papers closed its mill in Wisconsin Rapids. The mill employed 900 people and cited the COVID-19 pandemic as the cause of closure. The mill was the largest employer in Wisconsin Rapids and had been in operation since 1904.

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Economic Sectors

In 2021, there were 2,230 persons employed in the ten basic economic sectors in the Town, down 11.3 percent since 2010. Table 21 details employment by sector for the Town of Saratoga. Wood County data is presented for comparison. It should be noted that nationwide the economy was impacted by the pandemic. Most counties are now just recovering from that economic setback. Some sectors are still slightly behind where they were.

Between 2010 and 2021, there were several dramatic shifts throughout most of the sectors. The three fastest growing sectors were 1) Construction, 2) Information & Financial Activities, and 3) Professional & Business Services. In terms of total employment, Education & Health Services is the largest segment of the economy, followed by Manufacturing, and Trade, Transportation, & Utilities.

In Wood County there were 35,628 persons employed in 2021, down 3.5 percent since 2010. The highest percentage of people were employed in Education and Health Services, followed by Manufacturing. The fastest growing sector from 2010 to 2021 was Professional & Business Services. The area that experienced the most significant downward trend was Natural Resources and Mining.

Table 21: Employment by Sector						
	Town of Saratoga			Wood County		
Sector	2010	2021	2010-2021 % Change	2010	2021	2010-2021 % Change
Natural Resources & Mining	83	28	-66.3%	1,411	1,024	-27.4%
Construction	112	259	131.3%	2,229	2,261	1.4%
Manufacturing	787	413	-47.5%	7,530	6,352	-15.6%
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	561	380	-32.3%	7,024	7,097	1.0%
Information & Financial Activities	110	211	91.8%	2,391	2,420	1.2%
Professional & Business Services	114	215	88.6%	1,713	2,346	37.0%
Education & Health Services	334	418	25.1%	9,695	9,384	-3.2%
Leisure & Hospitality	184	121	-34.2%	2,375	2,185	-8.0%
Other Services	180	131	-27.2%	1,732	1,542	-11.0%
Public Administration	49	54	10.2%	824	1,017	23.4%
Total	2,514	2,230	-11.3%	36,924	35,628	-3.5%

Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates 2010 & 2021

Labor Force Analysis

Labor Force

Labor force is defined as the number of persons, sixteen and over, employed or looking to be employed. Consistent with the Town’s population decrease from 2010 to 2021, the number of people in the labor force has declined. There were 367 fewer people in the labor force in 2021 compared to 2010, for a loss of 13.4 percent. The percent reduction was greater than in Wood County as a whole, which experienced a net decline of 3,938 individuals in the labor force, for a 10.0 percent decrease. The state of Wisconsin had a marginal increase in the labor force from 2010 to 2021, at a rate of 1.5 percent.

Table 22: Labor Force				
	2010	2021	Net Change	% Change
Population 16 years and over	4,209	4,218	9	0.2%
Labor Force	2,746	2,379	-367	-13.4%
Employed	2,514	2,230	-284	-11.3%
Unemployed	232	149	-83	-35.8%
Unemployment Rate	8.4%	6.3%	N/A	-25.0%
Participation Rate	65.2%	56.4%	N/A	-13.5%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2010 & 2021

Unemployment

Unemployment is defined as the difference between the total civilian labor force and total persons employed. Stay-at-home parents, retirees, or persons not searching for employment are not considered unemployed because they are not considered part of the labor force. In 2010, the Town of Saratoga had an 8.4 percent unemployment rate, and in 2021 unemployment was down somewhat to 6.3 percent. The higher unemployment rate in 2010 was likely a result of the Great Recession of 2008. The unemployment rate was higher than both Wood County (4.5%) and the State of Wisconsin (3.5%) in 2021.

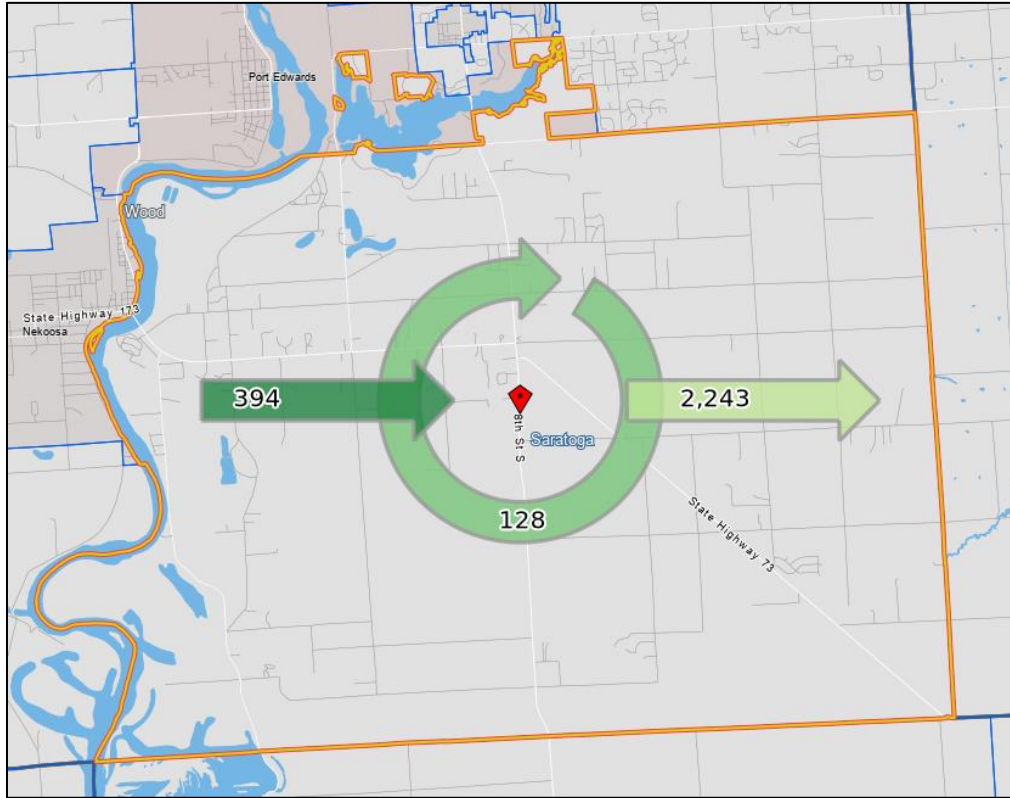
Workforce Participation

Workforce participation is a measure expressed in terms of a percentage of persons actively seeking employment divided by the total working age population. People not participating in the labor force may not seek employment due to a variety of reasons including retirement, disability, choice to be a homemaker, or are simply not looking for work. In 2010, 65.2 percent of Saratoga's population over the age of 16 was in the labor force. By 2021, that percentage dropped to 56.4 percent. The state participation percentage was 65.1 percent in 2021, while Wood County's participation rate was 59.6 percent.

Laborshed

A labor-shed is an area or region from which an employment center draws its commuting workers. In 2019, approximately 128 of the 522 total jobs within the Town of Saratoga were filled by Saratoga residents. About 394 workers traveled to Saratoga during the average workday. There were 2,243 Saratoga residents that commuted to locations outside of the Town for work, indicating that Saratoga's laborshed extends beyond its municipal boundaries. This indicates that there is a local labor force that could be tapped for local business growth.

Figure 6: Inflow/Outflow Analysis Town of Saratoga, 2019



Source: U.S. Census-on-the-Map 2019

- **In-Migration**

The majority of the in-commuters live in close proximity to Saratoga. They come from various locations, with the largest concentration of 103 workers, or 19.7 percent of in-commuters, coming from the City of Wisconsin Rapids. 26 workers commute in from the Village of Port Edwards and 23 from the City of Nekoosa. The balance travel from a variety of locations including the Village of Plover and the City of Stevens Point, along with other smaller communities in the area.

- **Out-Migration**

The most substantial group of outbound commuters includes 686 residents that travel to the City of Wisconsin Rapids for work (28.9 percent). The remaining outbound commuters work mainly in nearby locations including the Cities of Nekoosa (6.0 percent) and Stevens Point (5.1 percent), and the Village of Plover (4.0 percent).

Occupations

Table 23 identifies the five main occupational categories by number and percentage and provides comparison with the Town, county, and state. Management, Business, and Science workers are the largest component of the labor force in the Town of Saratoga, followed by Production and Transportation, and then Sales and Office workers. In both the county and the state, most workers in in the fields of Management, Business, and Science occupations followed by Sales and Office occupations. In Saratoga, the county, and the state, the smallest number of residents work in Natural Resources and Construction occupations.

Table 23: Employment by Occupation						
	Town of Saratoga		Wood County		Wisconsin	
Management/Business/Science	567	25.4%	11,171	32.9%	1,180,744	39.5%
Service	335	15.0%	5,338	15.7%	443,972	14.8%
Sales/Office	489	21.9%	7,053	20.8%	569,596	19.0%
Natural Resources/Construction	316	14.2%	3,625	10.7%	265,809	8.9%
Production/Transportation	523	23.5%	6,749	19.9%	531,015	17.8%
Total	2,230	100%	33,936	100%	2,991,136	100%

Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates 2021

SOLAR AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Background

The Town of Saratoga’s landscape has recently been transformed by two large solar projects developed by Savion, LLC. Wood County Solar – Project 1 generates 150 megawatts of electricity on 1,647 acres and Saratoga Solar – Project 2 will generate an additional 150 megawatts of electricity on 1,926 acres.

The two facilities are located adjacent to one another, occupying the area north of Blue Ridge Ln east of CTH Z and on either side of STH 13. The projects utilize land that has high solar potential and low environmental impact, with an estimated revenue of \$42 million over 35 years for the Town and County combined. Due to the magnitude of this project and increasing demand for solar energy in the United States, it is important to evaluate the economic development and land use implications of these solar projects. This section will focus on economic development.

Methods of Solar Energy Generation

Solar power uses photovoltaic panels, which contain solar cells, to convert sunlight into electricity. Photovoltaic systems are the most common because they are the most affordable and easiest to install and maintain, according to Ohio University. There is also concentrating solar power, which uses mirrors to direct heat from the sun into a receiver, which spins a turbine to generate electricity. For the purposes of solar in the Town of Saratoga, this section of the Comprehensive Plan will focus on photovoltaic systems when discussing solar energy.

Solar Development Benefits

According to the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), the solar industry has experienced an average growth rate of 33 percent per year due to declining costs, increased demand, and tax credit availability. The result is an estimated 130.9 gigawatts of solar capacity in the United States, which is enough to power 23 million homes. In 2021, over 255,000 Americans were employed in solar-related fields in over 10,000 companies, generating nearly \$33 billion in investments.

The largest share of new electricity generation has come from solar over the past 9 years, and 46 percent of new electric capacity added in 2022 was generated by solar. Nationwide, solar generation comprised only 0.1 percent of overall generation in 2010 compared to 4 percent in 2022. Over the next five years, solar capacity is expected to double with the addition of 200 gigawatts of generation, and the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022 is expected to boost solar sales by 40 percent through 2027. Solar has been popular with large corporations who benefit from cost savings and an improved public image as companies work towards meeting clean energy goals. In general, the popularity of solar has increased dramatically over the past decade and is expected to continue to expand.

The University of Minnesota conducted a case study on a solar farm in Freeborn County, Minnesota. The project involved a \$128.8 million investment, which estimated to increase direct spending in Freeborn County by \$15.6 million. The project expects 204 on-site employees and a total of \$7.9 million in wages, generating an estimated \$30.9 million in economic activity during construction and will support an estimated 115 jobs in the area, such as real estate agents, clinics, hospitals, and professional services. The construction period of the project will also generate an estimated \$461,870 in state and local taxes. While in operation, an expected \$2.2 million will be spent on operations, maintenance, land leases, and wages. An overall increase of \$3.3 million is expected in the county every year, adding \$99,040 in annual taxes, and supporting 14 jobs (4 on-site and 10 in other area industries). This case study demonstrates that solar projects impact the local economy both during construction and operation.

Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), a nonprofit organization focused on energy and efficiency, states that solar and wind energy have the potential to bring revenue to rural America unlike any other industry that presently exists. The organization has studied the impacts of solar projects to rural communities extensively, and it recently conducted a case study on a solar project in West Texas. Over the next several years, solar production in Texas is expected to increase eight-fold, and the largest solar farm in the state is currently 497 megawatts. During its construction, this single project generated \$20 million in wages which boosted the local economy during the challenging COVID-19 business environment. During its lifetime, the project will generate \$60 million in taxes that will benefit the local school and hospital districts. The project is renovating a historic building in downtown McCamey to support 6 full time workers who will operate and maintain the project. In total, the company who initiated the project has a 1,000-megawatt portfolio in Texas, which averages \$3,500 per megawatt in annual lease payments to existing landowners, further benefiting the local economy by supporting local businesses.

In addition to Economic Benefits, solar power also has environmental benefits, such as reduced air pollution, reduced carbon emissions, and reduced water use compared to other forms of energy generation, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. This is particularly true for low-income areas in the United States, where residents are more likely to live near fossil fuel-based power plants that produce harmful emissions. Therefore, solar increases economic activity and electricity supply while minimizing pollution to its immediate environment.

Solar Development Potential Drawbacks

Although solar power has proven to be economically and environmentally beneficial, it also has its limitations. The initial construction cost of solar projects is expensive, and solar arrays often take several years before they generate a profit, according to the University of Minnesota. According to SEIA, the supply chain and trade instability has increased solar costs over the past year and a half, reducing projected installations from 30 gigawatts to 15 gigawatts in 2022 nationwide. Utility-scale solar prices are also 12.7 higher in 2022 compared to 2021. Solar generation is also weather-dependent, requiring batteries to store energy when generation is low. As of 2020, solar power often generates an average of 15 percent of its capacity, compared to an average of 80 percent for coal power plants, according to the University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment. But declining costs for panels and batteries is reducing the main barriers to widespread solar installations, and long-term maintenance costs are low compared to other forms of energy generation.

There are several environmental concerns regarding solar energy. Solar arrays must be sited to minimize damage to wildlife, ecosystems, soil, and water, since they often require extensive open land. The Sierra Club interviewed residents in Vermont concerned that solar projects are removing agricultural soils out of productivity as the planet's population continues to grow. In these interviews, they found that many pro-solar residents are against large-scale solar farms and favor smaller-scale installations. This reflects a concern of rural areas losing their own character as farms and forests, due to their affordable land costs, are purchased and developed for solar by utility companies. Land use impacts of solar are discussed in greater detail in the Land Use chapter of this plan.

As solar arrays reach the end of their life in the future, bulk materials like glass, aluminum, and silicon are often recycled, but more research is needed to effectively recycle trace materials like tin, lead, copper, and silver, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). This is due to concerns over limited material availability and the environmental impact of manufacturing solar panels. While this raises environmental concerns, there could also be an opportunity for new jobs for highly specialized repair and/or recycling of solar panels.

Solar Energy’s Impact on Jobs and the Supply Chain

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics lists several occupations related to solar energy production along with median wages:

Table 24. Solar-Related Jobs	
Occupation	Median Yearly Salary
Materials Engineers	\$98,300
Chemical Engineers	\$105,550
Electrical Engineers	\$101,780
Industrial Engineers	\$95,300
Mechanical Engineers	\$95,300
Computer Software Developers	\$109,020
Engineering Technicians	\$60,460

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Based on Table 24, solar development has the potential to attract high wages, benefitting the local economy. It is important to plan for a variety of housing types where solar is developed so that an increase in higher-income workers doesn’t drive up housing costs for existing residents near a solar project.

Manufacturing solar energy requires the following products: polysilicon, ingots, wafers, cells, modules, mounting systems, and inverters. The U.S. Department of Energy analyzed solar energy’s supply chain and found that it is reliant on products from China or companies affiliated with China. Because of the expected exponential growth in solar energy in the United States, there is potential for existing polysilicon companies in the United States to increase manufacturing capacity and reduce trade-related concerns. Currently, many polysilicon plants in the U.S. are idle or supplying products to non-solar industries, so there is capacity to help meet future solar panel demand. The supply chain for thin film used in solar panels is concentrated in Ohio and not dependent on materials for China. Overall, capacity to manufacture solar panel components exists in the United States, and there is potential for expansion.

Strategies for Large-Scale Solar Installations

A May 25, 2022 Forbes article features a solar project in North Carolina where solar panels coexist with a herd of sheep. The sheep graze around the solar panels, building soil health and controlling erosion, and help the solar panels blend in better with a rural landscape. This is an example of “agrivoltaics” where agricultural and solar uses are blended to help rural areas maintain an agriculture-based economy while capitalizing on the benefits of solar power. According to this article, converting just 1 percent of the country’s farmland to agrivoltaic systems could meet 20 percent of the country’s electricity demand. Certain plant and animal species can thrive in a mixed sun-and-shade environment

that solar panels provide. This keeps vegetation in check, saving utility companies money and benefiting the environment by reducing the need for chemicals and fossil fuel-powered mowers.

One farm in Belgium found that the shaded environment under panels improved potato production, and a University of Oregon study showed reduced irrigation needs of fruit growing with more shade. As pollinators continue to decline, these environments also benefit honeybees and can result in opportunities for honey production. Additional financial benefits are realized when landowners generate multiple revenue streams by leasing to both solar companies and farmers concurrently. Carbon emissions are also further reduced as local crop and meat production reduces the distance that these commodities must be transported. When combined strategically, agricultural uses boost the value of solar projects by maximizing valuable land and producing agricultural products.

Summary of Solar Impacts to Economic Development

Solar provides a mix of economic and environmental benefits to a community when planned strategically. Barriers to solar development continue to be overcome with declining costs and increased support through grant programs. The projected increase in solar demand may benefit existing and future manufacturers in the United States and help the solar panel supply chain become less reliant on imported materials. Concerns over solar energy's negative impacts can be addressed by creatively mixing solar with other uses to maximize the value, productivity, and environmental quality of land. Careful planning can ensure that a community can accommodate new jobs and minimize impacts that solar projects have.

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

As part of the planning effort undertaken by the Town was the creation of the Sustainable Energy Economic Development Plan with a consultant. Five public meetings, landowner interviews, and a community survey were used to gain input. Some of the findings are incorporated here. See the Strategy document for complete details.

Economic Development Strengths and Weaknesses

A part of the process to prepare for economic development is to identify local strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to promote strengths and address weaknesses. During the planning process the following have been identified.

- **Residential Strengths and Weaknesses**

The Town's strength for attracting and retaining residential development is its rural atmosphere. In addition, the Town provides the basic services needed to support residential growth, such as emergency services and roadways. There is demand for housing throughout the community as shown by the numerous parcels have been sold over the last few years.

The most significant weaknesses with attracting residential development include the lack of infrastructure such as water, sewer, and in some areas broadband and high-water tables. It is also important to balance residential development with natural resources, such as groundwater quality.

- **Business Strengths and Weaknesses**

The Town is home to several small businesses located along State Highways 13 and 73 and some home occupation related businesses. Commercial areas are clustered around, The Town's strengths include its location at the intersection of two major highways and its proximity to several communities such as the Cities of Wisconsin Rapids and Nekoosa, the Village of Port Edwards, and the Town of Rome. There have been recent lands sales along these corridors as well. The Town also has several outdoor recreation amenities within its borders or in neighboring communities. Weaknesses in attracting commercial or industrial uses are lack of municipal sewer and water, broadband in some areas, and concerns over groundwater contamination.

Community Survey

To gain community-wide input an Economic Development survey was conducted in the fall of 2022. The survey was completed by 120 people. Most of respondents were home owners, lived in the Town over 20 years, and were 55 years of age and older. Five major take aways were identified:

- About 75 percent of respondents thought the current rate of development (defined as residential, and commercial/industrial growth) as about right.
- Nearly 80 percent supported more residential development in the Town, while about 70 percent do not support high density multi-family housing.
- About 80 percent of respondents support commercial development along Highways 13 & 73, while 65 percent do not support commercial development in other areas of the Town. Some of the types of desired development include retail, restaurants, and grocery.
- About 75 percent of respondents support recreational development at key locations throughout the town.
- The survey asked why do you like living in the Town? The responses were Peaceful, Quiet and Country living.

These findings establish the key priorities in the Town and are incorporated in the various goals, objectives and policies developed in the various chapters. Note that these findings are similar to other recent surveys conducted by the Town.

Strategies and Recommendations

Strategy 1: Preserve the Rural Character of Saratoga. It is clear the community wants o to maintain its rural quality and desires only compatible development.

Strategy 2: Protect recreation, water quality and the environment. More recreation is desired along with protection of water quality and the natural environment.

Strategy 3: Support energy efficient development and renewable strategies. Develop opportunities to create supply chain connections or employment opportunities from the existing solar developments.

Strategy 4: Support orderly commercial development along Highways 13 and 73. Higher density uses for commercial uses should be focused along these corridors.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

There are several economic development programs available to businesses and local governments in Wood County. The following is a partial list of those programs.

Wood County

Create Portage County

CREATE Portage County accelerates creativity, connection, and collaboration to advance vibrant and welcoming communities. Residents of Wood County are able to participate in this programming. One of the primary programs they manage is the Idea Center. The IDEA Center is a co-working and makerspace in the heart of Stevens Point and is a launchpad for ideas that expand entrepreneurship to include the arts, business, community impact, and personal development. CREATE is committed to dismantling demographic barriers that have historically limited access to creative work by offering the following to IDEA Center members:

- Co-working and private spaces. Host an event, conference, or collaborative meeting at the IDEA Center and bring people together. Multiple spaces are available for free to our IDEA Center Users, or for a small fee to non-Users.
- Maker spaces. From audio recording, graphic design, and filmmaking to 3D design and printing, we provide members the tools to pursue innovative skills and grow their personal or professional capacity.
- A continuously evolving network. Innovation is fluid and responsive. Members develop ideas and passions as part of a community. Our low membership rate ensures that the IDEA Center is accessible to community members with the newest ideas.

McMillan Memorial Library

McMillan's Makerspace is a new service that supports our mission of strengthening the community through lifelong learning. Makerspace is a resource for education and training, supplementing programs at local schools, MSTC and UW-Stevens Point.

This 1,500 square foot space is underdevelopment to inspire our community to explore their creativity by providing tools for projects in video, sound, photography, art, prototyping, robotics, electronics and automation, and prototype design. We provide fabrication tools in the form of a range of filament and resin 3D printers, a laser printer/etcher, and a small CNC mill to allow people to create tangible objects from computer designs. Our design software builds on the curriculum at WRAMS, Assumption High School and Lincoln High School. It also provides an entry point for adults exploring

classes at technical schools or universities. The makerspace doubles as a training and program space. McMillan also provides the software loaded on the computers there. The training tables, computers, 3D printers and other equipment are all mobile, so that they can be used elsewhere in the library. A full featured recording studio with a digital audio workstation completes the package.

How it works - To use a piece of equipment in the makerspace, one first watches an orientation video, then earns a badge (microcredential) by using that equipment to create a simple object. This will not be a barrier to those familiar with the equipment. For those new to the equipment, we provide links to educational videos and online classes, as well as regularly scheduled in-library programs.

Conservation, Education, and Economic Development (CEED) Committee

The Conservation, Education & Economic Development Committee is a standing committee of the Wood County Board. Members are committed to the department mission "to encourage orderly development and land uses that preserve property values and protect the County's natural resources to enhance the quality of life of Wood County residents."

Chamber's Community Progress Initiative Entrepreneurial Boot Camp

The Heart of Wisconsin's Community Progress Initiative Entrepreneurial Boot Camp is designed to train potential entrepreneurs. The camp provides the framework necessary to participants to take ideas and develop them into workable business plans.

Regional

Central Wisconsin Economic Development (CWED) Fund

Low-cost financing is available through this revolving loan fund program. There are available to entrepreneurs and their lenders to structure financing packages for start-up and expanding businesses to encourage economic growth in the area. CWED manages a revolving loan fund designed to address a gap in private capital markets for long-term, fixed rate, low down payment, low-interest financing. Wood County is one of ten counties eligible in this fund.

State

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation is the state's primary department for the delivery of integrated services to businesses. Their purpose is to 1) foster retention of and creation of new jobs and investment opportunities in Wisconsin; 2) foster and promote economic business, export, and community development; and 3) promote the public health, safety, and welfare through effective and efficient regulations, education, and enforcement. WEDC manages a variety of programs intended to assist businesses and communities, including:

- Brownfield Program
- Capacity Building Grants (CB)

- Certified Sites
- Historic Preservation Tax Credit
- Business Opportunity Loan Fund
- Workforce Training Grants
- Idle Industrial Sites Redevelopment Program
- The Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB) Program
- Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant Program
- Fast Forward Program

Wisconsin Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP)

As part of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the Office of Rural Prosperity was recently created to foster vibrant, prosperous, and resilient rural communities across Wisconsin. ORP functions as a one-stop shop to help rural stakeholders navigate programs and resources serving rural communities and businesses. ORP’s website contains a list of available grant programs, grant writing consultants, and grant writing training opportunities.

Wisconsin Small Cities Program

The Wisconsin Department of Administration provides federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to eligible municipalities for approved housing and/or public facility improvements and for economic development projects. Economic Development grants provide loans to businesses for such things as: acquisition of real estate, buildings, or equipment; construction, expansion or remodeling; and working capital for inventory and direct labor.

Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

The UW SBDC is partially funded by the Small Business Administration and provides a variety of programs and training seminars to assist in the creation of small business in Wisconsin.

Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)

This program, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, provides immediate assistance and funding for the cost of transportation improvements necessary for major economic development projects.

Federal

Economic Development Administration (EDA)

EDA offers both an economic adjustment and public works grant program. In addition, EDA has a technical assistance program available. Local units of government are eligible applicants to spur local economy growth and, indirectly, private enterprise. Partial funding for both the Comprehensive Plan Update and Sustainable Energy Economic Development Strategy was secured through EDA’s technical assistance program.

US Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA – RD)

The USDA Rural Development program is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in all of rural America. Financial programs include support for such essential public facilities and services as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and electric and telephone services. USDA-RD promotes economic development by supporting loans to businesses through banks and community-managed lending pools. The program also offers technical assistance and information to help agricultural and other cooperatives get started and improve the effectiveness of their member services.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

SBA provides business and industrial loan programs that will make or guarantee up to 90% of the principal and interest on loans to companies, individuals, or government entities for financing in rural areas. Wisconsin Business Development Finance Corporation acts as an agent for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) programs that provide financing for fixed asset loans and for working capital.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Goals:

1. Attract and retain businesses that strengthen and diversify the local economy.
2. Reduce the potential for land use conflicts between business and non-business uses.

Objectives:

1. Improve coordination between the Town and other municipalities or organizations to pursue economic development growth.
2. Seek local & regional businesses that strengthen and diversify the economic base, expand and enhance the tax base, improve wage and salary levels, utilize the resident labor force, and pay for their own infrastructure.
3. Develop the existing business corridor along Highway 13 & 73.

Policies:

1. Collaborate with neighboring municipalities and local economic development organizations to promote economic development.
2. Encourage small-scale or rural-related businesses as the primary economic development type in the Town.

3. Encourage local & regional tourism businesses, which do not diminish the quality of natural, historical, or cultural resources.
4. Ensure home businesses will not adversely impact adjacent residences.
5. Develop commercial and industrial design guidelines for businesses to better address landscaping, aesthetics, lighting, noise, parking, and access.
6. Encourage industrial and commercial businesses to locate within or adjacent to existing commercial/industrial areas where existing utilities, services, roads, and other infrastructures are available.
7. Implement the components of the Sustainable Energy Economic Development Strategy.

Chapter 7: Land Use

Land use is a major component of the Comprehensive Plan. Analysis of land use is a means of broadly classifying how land is used across the entire Town. Each type of use has its own characteristics that can determine compatibility and location to other land uses in the Town. Land use information is used to examine the current pattern of development and serves as the framework for formulating how land will be used in the future. There are two primary maps associated with this chapter: the first is a land use map, that examines how land is currently being used, and the second is a future land use map, that lays out desired land use in the future.

PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

Regional Livability Plan, 2015

Wisconsin requires that regional planning commissions develop a comprehensive plan for the area they serve. These plans are advisory only. The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan which serves Wood County prepared the Regional Livability Plan (RLP) in 2015. The RLP is focused on four elements, one of these is Land Use. The plan identifies two land use goals:

- Preserve and protect the Region's landscape, environmental resources and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.
- Manage and redevelop vacant structures.

Wood County Comprehensive Plan, 2010

Wisconsin requires counties to prepare a comprehensive plan. In 2010, the Wood County Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The land use chapter on land use analyzes patterns of development, existing land use, and future land use. The plan sets the following land use goals:

- Encourage local units of government to work together.
- Encourage Wood County towns to develop zoning regulations.
- Encourage small cities and villages that have not had much business development to plan for and provide adequate areas for future business growth in their comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.
- Encourage planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.

- Encourage preservation, restoration, and reuse of historically significant buildings referencing success stories from other smaller size communities.
- Encourage strong partnerships to develop and showcase industrial business parks and create joint boards to “sell” Wood County to developers.
- Continue to work toward connection of communities and major recreation areas with multi-use trails.

EXISTING LAND USE

The Town of Saratoga covers about 33,000 acres in the southeast corner of Wood County. The Town is bounded by the City of Nekoosa and Town of Port Edwards to the west, the Village of Port Edwards and Town of Grand Rapids to the north, the Town of Rome (Adams County) to the south, and the Town of Grant (Portage County) to the east.

Knowledge of the existing land use patterns within a town is necessary to develop a desired “future” land use pattern. The Existing Land Use Map was developed using air photos from a countywide flight in 2021, with updates by residents in 2023. Twelve basic categories were used to classify the various existing land uses. The categories include Agriculture, Commercial, Cranberry Bog, Governmental/Institutional, Industrial, Open Lands, Outdoor Recreation, Quarry, Residential, Transportation, Utility, Water, and Woodlands.

Land use classifications are groups of land uses that are compatible, and that separate conflicting uses. The classifications are not zoning districts and do not have the authority of zoning but are intended for use as a guide when making land use and zoning decisions.

Existing Land Use Classifications

The land use map outlines the existing land use pattern throughout the Town. See Map 5. The intent of an existing land use map is to illustrate the location of existing land use categories within the Town for planning purposes. Land use classifications are grouped by the use most central to each parcel. For example, lands classified as residential may also have a barn or home-based business on site.

Existing land use classifications and acreage totals are presented in Table 25. Woodlands occupy the largest share of the Town’s land area at about 67 percent. The next largest land use category is Open Lands-Solar Fields at about 11 percent, followed by residential at about 8 percent. Uses such as industrial, outdoor recreation, quarry, or utilities each occupy less than half of a percent of the Town. Note that “outdoor recreation” refers to developed facilities like parks and golf courses, which is different from recreation like hunting or snowmobiling that takes place within land uses like woodlands.

Table 25: Existing Land Use, 2020		
Land Use	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	796	2.4 %
Commercial	298	0.9%
Cranberry Bog	241	0.7%
Governmental/Institutional	234	0.7%
Industrial	27	0.1%
Open Lands	1,128	3.4%
Open Lands – Solar Fields	3,529	10.7%
Outdoor Recreation	28	0.1%
Quarry	25	0.1%
Residential	2,525	7.7%
Transportation	760	2.3%
Utility	7	0.0%
Water	1,101	3.4%
Woodlands	22,316	67.6%
Total	33,025	100.0%

Source: WROC 2020 & NCWRPC

Most of the Town’s land is not developed. Most residences are spread throughout the town, mainly in low density, with few multifamily buildings. There is highway-oriented commercial development throughout the Town, but the only industrially zoned property is a water treatment plant.

There are a variety of issues that have been identified during the planning process, including conversion of forested lands into other uses, increased traffic congestion on rural roads, uncontrolled commercial growth along Highways 13 and 73, degradation of environmentally sensitive areas and substantial turnover of land ownership.

Managed Forest Law (MFL) & Public Lands

There are 8,903 acres enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program and an additional 1,898 acres of tax-exempt land in the Town. This is a voluntary program between willing landowners and the state of Wisconsin.

Land Supply and Demand

The population in the Town of Saratoga has increased slightly since 1990, but it decreased between 2010 and 2020. The number of households has risen more consistently since 1990 due to a decrease in the average household size. The Wisconsin Department of Administration population and household projections predict an upward trend in both population and number of households through 2040. There are a limited number of commercial and industrial uses throughout the Town, and this is not expected to change significantly. As shown by the existing land use inventory, a substantial portion

of the Town is undeveloped woodlands, open space, and residential, so the supply of land available for development appears to be adequate. However, the Town must balance long-term development and growth against priorities for preservation of natural resources, determining the most desirable residential parcel sizes, and appropriate development patterns for both residential and commercial uses. There have been substantial land sales in the Town over the last few years indicating interest in the area.

Table 26 shows the estimated land demand in acres over the next 20 years. Residential and commercial land demand was calculated based using the number of acres per person in 2021 multiplied by Department of Revenue population projections. Since there is virtually no industrial uses and very limited agriculture uses, demand for these land uses was not calculated.

Table 26: Estimated Land Demand in Acres				
2020 Population: 4,954	2025	2030	2035	2040
Projected additional residents	236	226	196	61
Residential acres needed (0.51 ac/person)	120.4	115.3	100.0	31.1
Commercial acres needed (0.06 ac/person)	14.2	13.6	11.8	3.7

Source: Wisconsin DOA, NCWRPC

Land Values

Table 27 displays the assessed land values in the Town of Saratoga. It is important to note that lands enrolled in the Managed Forest Law and Forest Crop Law programs and other exempt lands (such as the State lands) are not included in values for Table 27. Overall, land value per acre in the Town is valued at about \$21,500 per acre based on assessed land values from Wood County tax information. Residential properties have the highest value per acre, followed by those properties designated as manufacturing and commercial.

Table 27: Town of Saratoga Land Values, 2022			
Land Classification	Total Value of Land and Improvements	Total Acres	Average Value per Acre
Residential	\$360,134,800	5,055	\$71,243
Commercial	\$22,404,800	412	\$54,381
Manufacturing	\$420,500	6	\$70,083
Agricultural	\$225,200	1,360	\$166
Undeveloped	\$1,040,000	1,267	\$821
Agricultural Forest	\$703,200	528	\$1,332
Forest Lands	\$29,599,300	10,669	\$2,774
Other	\$1,726,700	64	\$26,980
Total	\$416,254,500	19,361	\$21,500

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Opportunities for Redevelopment

Most of the Town currently consists of undeveloped woodlands and some open lands, with primarily rural and suburban residential and commercial development concentrated near main highways. Some developed areas may not meet current development standards or may have fallen into disrepair since they were initially developed. Some of these properties may need rehabilitation. Although there is extensive developable land, sensitive groundwater limits the intensity of development that is feasible. The Town's Future Land Use Map identifies where development is preferred and where open space should be preserved.

Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts

There is an abundance of open land and generally stable land ownership. The most common land use conflicts in the past involved existing agricultural uses and the environmental impact on sensitive groundwater. More recently, the presence of large photovoltaic solar projects has altered the Town's wooded, rural character. The Town generally values maintenance of large tracts of undeveloped land and enabling residential development where appropriate.

Solar Energy and Land Use

Since 2019, large-scale solar energy production has impacted Saratoga's landscape as over 3,000 acres of wooded and open lands have been converted into two large solar projects. As discussed in the Economic Development chapter of this plan, land use concerns over solar projects typically include visual changes to rural landscapes, the removal of agricultural or forested uses from productive lands, wildlife and ecosystem impacts, erosion, and the environmental impacts of manufacturing and recycling solar panels. Since solar projects continues to expand in the United States, it is important to consider how these concerns impact land use.

Ecosystem and Wildlife Impacts

Wildlife, birds, bats, and native pollinators are impacted most by habitat loss with fenced solar projects according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Careful siting of solar panels and proper management of vegetation can benefit wildlife populations.

Erosion, Soil Health, and Water Quality

Managing stormwater runoff and infiltration protects surface water and groundwater supplies, which is especially important in locations with a high-water table or water-based outdoor recreation, both of which exist in Saratoga. Native or cultivated vegetation can assist with directing runoff and preventing soil erosion.

Visual Considerations

Perimeter screening can be enforced through zoning in places where existing neighbors have views obstructed by new solar equipment, protecting property values.

The Rocky Mountain Institute, a nonprofit focused on clean energy and energy efficiency, provides the following recommendations for local government related to solar power and land use:

- Ensure existing policies enable solar where appropriate,
- Consider grid connection locations when solar projects are planned,
- Work with solar developers to understand solar project priorities, processes, and potential value they can bring to a community,
- Consider altering tax structures so new tax revenue from solar projects can be spent where it is needed the most,
- Engage with and provide educational materials to the public to highlight the benefits of solar power,
- Work with area businesses so they can prepare for a temporary influx of workers while projects are under construction, including housing impacts of where workers will live during construction,
- Support community members who are working to gain skills needed to obtain solar operations and maintenance jobs so existing residents directly benefit from solar job creation
- Advocate for the use of the local labor force when negotiating with developers during a solar project proposal
- Work with solar developers on identifying community revitalization opportunities that can be paid for with new tax revenue, and
- Encourage solar-friendly uses such as agriculture or pollinator habitat that enhance the local economy and environment.

Summary

While solar power has inevitable land use impacts and can cause conflicts with property owners in the community, careful planning and advocacy ensures that impacts are minimized, and economic and environmental benefits are maximized. Implementing agrivoltaics, planning and zoning tools, erosion and habitat management, and landscaping are strategies that can help a new solar project minimize environmental and visual impacts to Saratoga’s rural landscape.

FUTURE LAND USE

For a plan to be both effective and implemented, the plan must account for past development activity as well as current market factors and conditions that shape where and how land will be developed. The Future Land Use Map is general in nature and was developed as a guide for future development in the Town. Map 6 is the Future Land Use Plan Map, which illustrates the desired arrangement of preferred land uses for the future of the Town of Saratoga. Although the future land use plan map indicates appropriate future land uses, it is not a zoning map. In many areas the existing zoning districts already reflect the desired future land uses; while in other areas, zoning map or text changes may be required to meet some desired future land use.

The identification of desired future land use types through the map does not imply that an area is immediately appropriate for rezoning. Given service demands and a desire for controlled growth, careful consideration of the timing of zoning decisions is essential. In some places, it may be appropriate to rezone land to reflect the planned land use designations, while in other cases, it may be desirable to wait to rezone the area until an actual development proposal is brought forward. Wisconsin's comprehensive plan law requires all zoning decisions to be consistent with the comprehensive plan. Development should only occur in suitable areas, based on a variety of criteria, such as:

- Compatibility with surrounding areas,
- Ability to provide needed utility and services, and
- Environmental considerations (soils, floodplains, wetlands steep slopes, etc.)

The desire by the public to live in rural settings near larger communities such as the Cities of Nekoosa and Wisconsin Rapids and the Village of Port Edwards will continue to make the Town of Saratoga an attractive place for residential development. Future land use planning assists local governments with balancing individual property rights and community goals, minimizing conflict between different land uses, and maximizing use of public expenditures. It is essential that future land use planning is ongoing and flexible. Periodic plan updates ensure that the plan continues to reflect future community preferences.

Future Land Use Map Classifications

Residential Suburban

Identifies areas recommended for residential development typically consisting of smaller lot sizes.

Rural Residential

Identifies areas recommended for residential development typically consisting of larger lot sizes.

Rural Preservation

Identifies areas recommended for minimal development to maintain the Town's rural, wooded character. This generally will require larger parcels. Also includes most floodplains and wetlands.

Highway/Light Commercial

Identifies areas that are recommended for commercial and business development, varying in scale and intensity, as well as existing commercial establishments located throughout the Town.

Public & Utilities

Identifies existing or planned governmental or utility facilities within the Town.

Transportation

Identifies the existing road network along with the recommendations for safe and improved traffic movement within the Town.

Solar Fields

Identifies areas utilized for solar power generation.

Water

Surface waterbodies.

LAND USE PROGRAMS AND TOOLS

The principal land use program in Wisconsin is the comprehensive planning program, while the primary land use tools are zoning, subdivision ordinance, and official mapping.

Comprehensive Planning Programming

Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law was established in state statutes in 1999. The comprehensive plan is intended to be a local government's guide to community physical, social, and economic development. Comprehensive plans are not meant to serve as land use regulations in themselves; instead, they provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a twenty-year vision for future planning and community decisions.

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law does not mandate how a local community should grow, but it requires public participation at the local level in deciding a vision for the community's future. The uniqueness of individual comprehensive plans reflects community-specific and locally driven planning processes.

While a local government may choose to include additional elements, a comprehensive plan must include at least all of the nine elements below as defined by the Comprehensive Planning Law (s. 66.1001).

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

Zoning

Basically, zoning is a set of regulations used to minimize land use conflicts and promote development that supports a community's values. It regulates how property is used and how development occurs as well as the physical placement of buildings on land. Under Wisconsin Statutes, counties and local units of government are authorized to adopt zoning ordinances.

A zoning ordinance consists of a written text and a map. The text of a zoning ordinance specifies the permitted land uses, the size of buildings, yard/lot dimensions, and other prerequisites in obtaining permission to develop, while the zoning map arranges the community into districts or zones, such as agriculture, residential, commercial, or industrial. Each of these districts has different regulations. The goal of the zoning ordinance is to establish a reasonable development pattern by keeping similar and related uses together and separating dissimilar, unrelated, incompatible uses, particularly in relationship to transportation facilities, utilities and public services and facilities.

The Town of Saratoga has its own Zoning Ordinance, adopted in 2016, with nine zoning districts and five zoning overlays, and it provides development guidelines including height restrictions, minimum lot area, and guidelines for accessory uses and structures. Currently the Town is developing a variety of recommendations to revise and update the ordinance.

Shoreland Zoning

All counties, including Wood County, are mandated by Wisconsin law to adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates development in shoreland and floodplain areas for the entire county outside of villages and cities in accordance with state shoreland zoning standards. Towns may apply their own zoning in shoreland areas as long as it does not impose requirements on matters regulated by a county.

Land Division

At present, land division within the Town of Saratoga is regulated by Wood County Land Subdivision Ordinance. Subdivision regulation relates to the way in which land is divided and made ready for development. A community can control the subdivision of land by requiring a developer to meet certain conditions in exchange for the privilege of recording a plat. While imposing conditions restricting the use of private property, the cumulative effect of land subdivision on the health, safety, and welfare of a community is so great as to justify public control of the process.

There is some overlap between zoning and subdivision codes in terms of standards. Both ordinances, for example, can set lot sizes. Both can deal with the suitability of land for development. Implementing important plan techniques such as rural cluster development often requires use of the zoning ordinance and the subdivision ordinance.

A town land division code can provide the town the means to review and regulate new divisions of land to ensure consistency with the vision, goals, objectives, land protection criteria, and other recommendations of an adopted plan. The ordinance would require administration and enforcement

by the town. Therefore, local control of divisions of land would require town funding. It also adds a layer of government involved in regulating proposals for land divisions.

Official Mapping

An Official Map is a map adopted by a municipality that specifies locations of future roads and other utilities or public facilities, along with right-of-way widths and other specifications. When a land division is approved, it must accommodate dimensions for future facilities according to the Official Map. Currently, the Town of Saratoga does not have an official map.

Other Tools

Additional tools and approaches can be utilized by the Town to achieve the goals of the plan. These include but are certainly not limited to the following: fee simple land acquisition, easements (purchased or volunteered), deed restrictions, land dedication, and ordinances or programs regulating activities such as impact fees, land division, building permits, and erosion control.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goals:

1. Preserve the Town's rural, woodland character.
2. Maintain orderly planned growth that promotes the health, safety, and general welfare of the Town residents and makes efficient use of land, public services, facilities, and tax dollars.
3. Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.
4. Maximize solar projects positive impacts on land use and community character.

Objectives:

1. Promote and regulate development that preserves the rural character of the Town and minimizes groundwater impacts from on-site septic systems and other sources.
2. Land use should be planned so that development occurs in an orderly manner and land use conflicts are avoided.
3. Use buffer areas to lessen the impacts of potentially conflicting land use types located in relatively close proximity, i.e. using vegetation to screen large-scale solar projects.

Policies:

1. The Town will maintain a Comprehensive Plan, which will serve as a guide for future land use and zoning decisions.

2. New development will be permitted based on consideration of this plan, as well as other plans and regulations, including the Sustainable Energy Economic Development Strategy.
3. The location of new development will be restricted from areas in the Town shown to be unsafe or unsuitable for development due to flood hazard, potential groundwater contamination, loss of natural features, highway access problems, incompatibility with neighboring uses, etc.
4. Future commercial development should be clustered along major highway corridors, as identified in various community surveys.
5. Encourage land uses, densities, and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental, and utility costs.
6. Provide adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial, and other uses.
7. Consider conservation/cluster subdivisions to maintain more open land in the Town.
8. Develop commercial design guidelines for businesses to better address landscaping, aesthetics, lighting, noise, parking, and access.
9. New development should not adversely impact the property values or livability of neighboring properties.
10. Develop a Town land division ordinance.

Chapter 8: Intergovernmental Cooperation

Intergovernmental cooperation is increasingly important; since many issues cross political boundaries, such as watersheds and labor force. Communities are not independent of each other, but rather dependent on each other. The effects from growth or decline in one community spill over to all surrounding communities and impact the entire region.

OVERVIEW

Wisconsin statutes enable local governments to jointly do together whatever one can do alone. Unfortunately, state law neither encourages or requires horizontal governmental relationships such as town to town and municipality to county or town. The result is that towns, municipalities, and counties often act more as adversaries than as partners.

There are over 2,500 units of government and special purpose districts in Wisconsin. The significant number of governmental units allows for local representation, but also adds more players to the decision-making process. In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communication and information sharing, or it can involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue.

Intergovernmental cooperation makes sense for many reasons including trust, cost savings, consistency, and ability to address regional issues. As jurisdictions communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another's needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them. Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions. It can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. It can lead to consistency of goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities. Finally, by communicating and coordinating their actions and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities can address and resolve issues that are regional in nature.

Residents are the major beneficiary of intergovernmental cooperation. They may not understand, or even care about, the details of a particular intergovernmental issue, but residents can appreciate their benefits, such as cost savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy. A variety of factors, some long-standing and others more recent, have brought the issue of intergovernmental cooperation to the forefront. Some of these factors include:

- A local government’s financial situation
- Opportunity to reduce costs by working together
- Elimination of duplication of services
- Population settlement patterns and population mobility
- Economic and environmental interdependence

In addition, as more jurisdictions create and implement comprehensive plans and share them with surrounding communities, new opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation will be identified.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Shared Services

As discussed in the Utilities and Community Facilities Chapter, the Town does not maintain its own fire department, but contracts with surrounding Towns of Grand Rapids and Rome, as well as the City of Nekoosa. The Town also contracts for ambulance service. Protective services in the Town of Saratoga are provided by the Wood County Sheriff’s Department.

Adjoining Units of Government

The recycling program, snow plowing, and road grading are the most common areas of cooperation.

School Districts

Primary and Secondary Schools

The Town of Saratoga is served by the Nekoosa School District and the Wisconsin Rapids School District. There are no public school district facilities located within the Town, however, there is a school associated with the Good Shepard Lutheran Church.

Post-Secondary Educational Facilities

The town is in the Mid-State Technical College district. This is a public two-year technical college with four regional campuses, one in Wisconsin Rapids. The Town has little participation in issues pertaining to administration or siting of new facilities. All school and college board meetings are open to the public.

Wood County

Wood County directly and indirectly provides a number of services to the Town, and the Town enjoys a good working relationship with many of the responsible departments. These departments include law enforcement through the Sheriff’s Office, 911 dispatch services, access permits, maintenance and improvement of county highways, planning and permitting oversight regarding shoreland, wetland and floodplain regulation, and private sewage system regulation.

In many cases where state and federal agencies require area-wide planning for various programs or regulations, Wood County sponsors a county-wide planning effort to complete these plans and include each individual local unit in the process and resulting final plan. An example of this is the County All Hazard Mitigation Plans which are required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, in order for individual local units of government to qualify for certain types of disaster assistance funding.

Wood County Planning & Zoning also administers the county's shoreland zoning. Shoreland zoning covers areas within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a lake, pond, or flowage, or within 300 feet of the ordinary high water mark of a river or stream, or to the landward side of the floodplain, whichever distance is greater.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) was formed under Wisconsin Statute §60.0309 as a voluntary association of governments within a ten-county area. Wood County is a member of the NCWRPC, which includes all local units within the county. Typical functions of the NCWRPC include economic development, land use, transportation, and geographic information systems (GIS) mapping.

State and Federal Government

Two state agencies, the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Transportation are the primary agencies the Town deals with most often. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources takes a lead role in wildlife protection and sustainable management of woodlands, wetland, lakes, and other wildlife habitat areas, while Wisconsin Department of Transportation is responsible for the planning and development of state highways, railways, airports, and other transportation systems.

State agencies make several grant and aid programs available to local units of government like the Town of Saratoga. Examples include local road aids, the Local Roads Improvement Plan (LRIP) and the Priority Watershed Program. There are also several mandates passed down from the state that the Town must comply with, such as the biannual pavement rating submission for the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR).

Most federal programs are administered by the states, so the Town would be dealing with the responsible state agency about federal programs and regulations. Many of the goals and objectives of this plan will require continued cooperation and coordination with these agencies.

Existing or Potential Intergovernmental Conflicts

The Town has a good working relationship with other governmental agencies. The process for resolving these conflicts will in part be a continuation of past practices as new mechanisms evolve and take shape. The Town of Saratoga will continue to meet with governmental entities when significant issues of mutual concern arise.

Programs

There are three major programs that are provided by state statute. These are intergovernmental agreements, municipal revenue sharing, and boundary agreements.

Intergovernmental Cooperation: Wisconsin Statute §66.0301 permits local agreements between the state, cities, villages, towns, counties, regional planning commissions, and certain special districts, including school districts, public library systems, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, sanitary districts, farm drainage districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, and sewer utility districts, Indian tribes or bands, and others.

Intergovernmental agreements prepared in accordance with §66.0301, formerly §66.30, are the most common forms of agreement and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as police, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide for revenue sharing, determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement and boundary changes must be accomplished through the normal annexation process.

Municipal Revenue Sharing: Wisconsin Statute, §66.0305, Municipal Revenue Sharing, gives authority to cities, villages, and towns to enter into agreements to share revenue from taxes and special charges with each other. The agreements may also address other matters, including agreements regarding services to be provided or the location of municipal boundaries.

Boundaries of the shared revenue area must be specified in the agreement and the term of the agreement must be for at least ten years. The agreement must specify the formula or other means for sharing revenue, the date of payment of revenues, and how the agreement may be invalidated after the minimum ten-year period.

Cooperative Boundary Agreements: Wisconsin Statute, §66.0307, helps to resolve boundary issues through mutual agreement. Cooperative boundary plans or agreements are established for ten or more years and include a plan for the physical development of the territory covered by the plan, a schedule of changes to the boundary, plans for delivery of services, and a description of any environmental concerns.

Boundary agreements are often used between a city or village and an adjoining town to establish a known progression of boundary change, rather than haphazard annexations. It provides stability for planning and service delivery.

In addition, there are a variety of other arrangements that can be established. These include renting equipment, contracting with other governments or firms, municipal staff sharing, service consolidation, and joint purchase of equipment, among others.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Goal:

1. Maintain mutually beneficial relationships with neighboring municipalities, Wood County, State & Federal agencies, and the Nekoosa & Wisconsin Rapids School Districts.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate Town planning efforts with local school districts as necessary to allow those districts to properly plan for facility needs.
2. Coordinate with other neighboring municipalities to jointly plan boundary areas and coordinate their long-term growth plans with the Town Comprehensive Plan.
3. Identify opportunities for shared services or other cooperative planning efforts with appropriate units of government.
4. Identify existing and potential conflicts between neighboring municipalities and establish procedures to address them.

Policies:

1. Encourage an efficient and compatible land use pattern that minimizes conflicts between land uses across municipal boundaries and preserves forestry and environmentally sensitive areas in mutually agreed locations. To the extent possible, coordinate the Town's Comprehensive Plan with the City of Nekoosa's, Village of Port Edwards, town of Grand Rapids, town of Rome's (Adams County), Town of Grant (Portage County), and Wood County's Comprehensive Plans.
2. Prior to the adoption of the Town Comprehensive Plan, and for subsequent updates, request comments from Nekoosa & Wisconsin Rapids School District Officials, neighboring municipalities, and Wood County.
3. Request that School District officials keep the Town apprised of any plans for new facilities that could either be in the Town or near enough to the Town's jurisdiction to affect Town roads.
4. Request that neighboring municipalities, Wood County, State or Federal agencies communicate to the Town land use or planning activities which would affect the Town of Saratoga.
5. Collaborate with neighboring municipalities, special districts, and other providers to ensure that Town residents and businesses receive adequate service levels.
6. Continually work with neighboring municipalities to identify opportunities for shared services or other cooperative planning efforts.
7. Continue to participate in the Wood County Town's Association monthly meetings.

Chapter 9: Implementation

A primary reason for a community to prepare a comprehensive plan is to establish a framework for the future, especially as it relates to decisions regarding growth and regulation of development to protect and maintain the health, safety and welfare of the community. A plan also helps to set priorities for public expenditures. To be effective, this plan should be actively used as a tool to guide decisions concerning:

- The implementation and enforcement of regulatory ordinances based on the goals and objectives identified in this plan.
- The development of programs and support systems that further the goals and objectives set forth in this plan.
- The location of specific land uses as identified in the comprehensive plan and based on goals and objectives.
- The establishment and support of a continued planning process providing for periodic review and updates to this plan and other land use control measures.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

Having the appropriate tools to implement the recommendations in this comprehensive plan is critical. Zoning ordinance and subdivision (land division) regulations are used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development as identified in this comprehensive plan. There are also non-regulatory approaches to implementing the comprehensive plan. These generally involve decisions about how the community will spend its limited funding resources on capital improvements, staffing and maintenance. These decisions will affect the development demand and the location of development in the Town.

Zoning Ordinance and Map

The Town of Saratoga Zoning Ordinance and Map are the primary land use regulations for the Town. Zoning is used to manage and control how land is used and developed. The Town's Zoning Ordinance establishes detailed regulations concerning how land may be developed, including setbacks, the density or intensity of development, and the height and bulk of building and other structures. The general purpose of zoning is to minimize undesirable externalities from development by segregating and/or buffering incompatible uses and by maintaining standards that ensure development will not negatively impact the community's character or environment. The Zoning Ordinance also controls the scale and form of development, which heavily influences how people will interact with their environment and their neighbors. State planning law requires land use decisions must be consistent with the locally adopted comprehensive plan.

The establishment of zoning districts and the zoning map indicates where specific types of development can and should be located. Zoning districts shown on the zoning map should be coordinated with the land use plan and map. While the zoning map and land use map do not need to directly match at the time the land use map is adopted, the intent is that the land use map will serve as a guide indicating how the property should eventually be zoned. Therefore, indiscriminate zoning changes may result in weakening of the comprehensive plan. In fact, changes to zoning district boundaries should only be made if they are consistent with the adopted land use map and the goals of the comprehensive plan. The Town of Saratoga recently evaluated and updated its zoning ordinances.

Subdivision (Land Division) Ordinance

Land division within the Town of Saratoga is regulated by Wood County Land Division Ordinance. Subdivision regulations are an important tool ensuring the orderly development of unplatted and/or undeveloped land. These regulations may regulate lot sizes, road access, street design, public utilities, storm water drainage, parks and open space, and other improvements necessary to ensure that new development will be a public asset.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

This is an ongoing financial planning program that allows local communities to plan ahead for capital expenditures and minimize unplanned expenses. A capital improvement plan consists of a list of proposed projects according to a schedule of priorities over a four-to-six year period. It identifies needed public improvements, estimates their costs, and identifies financing methods and sources. Public improvements or expenditures typically considered in a CIP include:

- Public buildings (i.e., fire stations)
- Park and trail acquisition and development
- Roads and highways (maintenance and new construction/paving)

A CIP is simply a method of planning for and scheduling expenditures for public improvements over a period of several years in order to maximize the use of limited public funds. Each year the CIP should be reviewed and extended one year to compensate for the previous year that was completed. This keeps the improvement program current and allows for modifications to meet the community's changing needs.

The preparation of a CIP is normally a joint responsibility between the town board, plan commission, staff, and citizen commissions. The preparation of a capital improvement program may vary from community to community depending on local preferences, the local form of government and available staff. The proposed capital improvement plan should be reviewed in light of the priorities outlined in the comprehensive plan.

Annual Operating Budget

The Town prepares a budget each year and it is one of the most important policy documents prepared. It is a statement of the prioritization and allocation of financial resources to achieve certain objectives over a specific time period. The budget is based on the needs of Town residents and priorities set by the Town Board. The budget and the services provided by that budget are instrumental in achieving the goals and objectives of the plan.

Brownfield Redevelopment

Pursuing funding from state agencies for redevelopment of contaminated sites can reduce the uncertainty that otherwise prevents contaminated properties from being redeveloped. Action by the Town to evaluate contaminants or begin remediating the property is often necessary before the private sector is willing to invest in redevelopment. This may require some upfront investment from the community. However, as sites are improved and reused, they generate tax base. Both WisDNR and WEDC have programs available to assist in these types of efforts.

CONSISTENCY AMONG PLAN CHAPTERS

The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the Implementation Chapter describe how each of the required chapters will be integrated and made consistent with the other chapters of the plan. Since the Town of Saratoga completed all planning chapters simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. It is noted that some overlap naturally exists between the nine plan chapters. Where deemed appropriate, goals, objectives, and policies have been repeated under all applicable chapters to reinforce their importance.

PLAN ADOPTION, AMENDMENTS, UPDATES, AND MONITORING

While this comprehensive plan provides a long-term framework to guide development and public spending decisions, it must also respond to changes that occur in the community and region that were not foreseen when the plan was initially adopted. Some elements of the plan are rarely amended while others need updating on a more regular basis. Plan maps should also be updated periodically. In general, key maps, such as the future land use map, should be reviewed annually to make sure they are still current.

Plan Adoption

The first step in implementing this plan involves adoption of the plan by local officials. The formal review and adoption process involves plan review by the Plan Commission which must recommend the plan to the Town Board via resolution. The Plan Commission recommendation is forwarded to the Town Board who must adopt the plan by ordinance. A public hearing is required to allow public comment on the ordinance during a 30-day review period prior to final action to adopt the plan. Adoption formalizes the plan document as the framework to guide local development decisions over the next 20 years. The adopted plan should also be recognized as a tool for communicating the

community's land use policy and goals and objectives regarding coordination of growth and development.

Plan Amendments

The Town of Saratoga Comprehensive Plan may be amended at any time by the Town Board following the same process described above for initial Plan adoption, regardless of how minor the proposed amendment or change. Amendments may be appropriate throughout the lifecycle of the plan, particularly if new issues emerge or trends change. These amendments will typically consist of minor changes to the plan text or maps. Large-scale changes or frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals should be avoided or the plan loses integrity.

The following criteria shall be considered when reviewing plan amendments:

- The change corrects an error made in the original plan.
- The change is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the Town of Saratoga Comprehensive Plan.
- The change does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated.
- Development resulting from the change does not create an undue impact on surrounding properties. Such development shall be consistent with the physical character of the surrounding neighborhood or would upgrade and improve its viability.
- The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- The change does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment that cannot be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- There is a change in town actions or neighborhood characteristics that would justify a change.
- There is a community or regional need identified in the comprehensive plan for the proposed land use or service.
- The change does not adversely impact any landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties unless mitigated through relocation, commemoration, or dedication.
- The change does not adversely affect water quality and the overall health of residents.

Proposed amendments must be reviewed by the Plan Commission prior to final action and adopted by the Town Board. The public should be notified of proposed Plan changes and allowed an opportunity for review and comment. For major amendments, the Town might consider soliciting public opinion through surveys and/or community meetings prior to the official public hearing.

Plan Updates & Monitoring

According to the State comprehensive planning law, comprehensive plans must be updated at least once every ten years. As opposed to the more routine amendments described above, plan updates often involve rewriting of whole sections of the plan document and significant changes to supporting maps. A plan update should include a thorough examination of the community's goals and objectives based on an analysis of current growth trends and major changes that have occurred since the plan was initially adopted or last amended. Plan updates must be formally adopted following the same procedure described above for initial plan adoption.

The adopted plan should be used as a guide by the Town of Saratoga when making land use and development decisions. Decisions concerning private development proposals, public investments, regulations, incentives, and other actions should be consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations outlined in this plan.

Although this plan describes policies and actions for future implementation, it is impossible to predict the exact future condition. As such, the goals, objectives, and actions in this plan should be monitored on a regular basis to maintain concurrence with changing conditions and respond to unanticipated events.

PLAN EVALUATION

As part of the comprehensive planning process, several goals, objectives, and policies were developed. When implemented these are intended to provide direction to the Town. However, things change, and this plan should be evaluated at least every five years and updated at least every ten years. Members of the Town Board, Plan Commission, and any other local decision-making bodies should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated.

The evaluation should first involve reviewing the goals and objectives to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires. Then the policies should be reviewed and refined to eliminate completed tasks and identify new approaches if appropriate. Many of the policies identified in the plan are continuous or on-going and should also be monitored to measure the plan's overall success. Thus, many of the objectives and their related policies can be accomplished in the short term, say 1 to 5 years. However, some will take longer to accomplish, say 6 to 10 or more years.

To measure progress towards meeting these goals, objectives, and policies, is as simple as determining if any action was taken or not. That information will provide guidance to the Plan Commission on when specific actions are to be initiated. Based on the targets, measures of progress in achieving implementation of the comprehensive plan can be examined. A periodic "Plan Status" report could be prepared to summarize the progress toward implementation.