

SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 295
A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF POLK

Chapter IV

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the issues and opportunities element is to define a desired future for the Town and provide an overall framework for development of the comprehensive plan. A vision statement was developed by the Town to express the preferred future and key characteristics desired by the Town.

Section 66.1001(2)(a) of the *Wisconsin Statutes* requires that the Issues and Opportunities Element include a “statement of the overall objectives, policies, goals, and programs of the governmental unit to guide the future development and redevelopment of the governmental unit over the planning period.” Although not defined in the *Statutes*, the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) has provided the following definitions of those terms:

Goals: Broad and general expressions of a community’s aspirations, towards which the planning effort is directed. Goals tend to be ends rather than means.

Objectives: More specific targets, derived from goals and necessary to achieve those goals. While still general in nature, objectives are more precise, concrete, and measurable than goals.

Policies: Rules or courses of action necessary to achieve the goals and objectives from which they are derived. They are precise and measurable.

Programs: A system of projects or services necessary to achieve plan goals, objectives, and policies.

The comprehensive planning law also requires that the Issues and Opportunities Element include demographic information and population, household, and employment projections. Demographic information for the Town is presented in Chapter III, along with population and household projections for 2035. An employment projection is set forth in Chapter X.

VISION STATEMENT 2035

Visioning Process

To develop a vision statement for the Town, Washington County University of Wisconsin – Extension (UWEX) staff examined the opinions generated by the public during the input opportunities carried out as part of the comprehensive planning process, along with the Town's zoning ordinance, and identified recurring "key concepts" that could be appropriate for the Town's vision. UWEX staff then met with the Town Plan Commission and Town Board on May 21, 2007, to review the key concepts and determine which ones might best describe the Town’s future. The most supported concepts were subsequently used to draft a vision statement that was brought back to the Town on June 18, 2007, for approval.

Vision Statement

“In 2035, the Town of Polk remains a beautiful place to live and raise a family. Its convenient location, large lots, and low residential density help the Town retain its rural character and remain distinct from nearby urban areas. Town government is responsive to citizens, is fiscally responsible, and makes the protection of natural resources a priority.”

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following public participation events were held to obtain input from Town residents and identify the Town’s issues and opportunities.

Comprehensive Planning “Kickoff” Meeting

A comprehensive planning “kickoff” meeting was held in the Town on February 23, 2006. The meeting was an opportunity for Town residents to learn about the comprehensive planning process and participate in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) assessment. A total of 60 people attended the meeting. The following are the issues identified as being most important by SWOT analysis participants. Some of the weaknesses and opportunities were opinions by a few Town residents who may have had insufficient and incorrect information and the Plan Commission and Town Board do not agree with some of these issues.

Strengths: Something that makes a community stand out when compared to other communities; resources or capabilities that help a community be successful/strong.

- Highway system
- Recreation (skiing, golf, lakes)
- Gravel resources
- Rural nature – five acre lots
- Agricultural history and future preservation opportunities
- Relaxed, low-stress, and safe atmosphere to raise families
- Natural resources (lakes, farmland, gravel)
- Beautiful Kettle Moraine scenery
- Location – easy access to metro area
- Low taxes
- Effective government (common sense approach)
- Recent protection of open spaces for growth
- Potential growth

Weaknesses: Deficiencies in resources for a community to be successful.

- Financial strength for future
- No sewer system
- High cost of real estate
- Losing land to annexation
- Towns are not protected legislatively from cities and villages
- Lack of participation by public
- Lack of dissemination of information
- Lack of respect for citizen input and Town Board responsiveness to citizens on zoning and other issues
- Town’s lack of concern for protecting water quality (landfill)

Opportunities: Something that could be done to improve a community; factors or situations that can affect a community in a favorable way.

- Incorporation as a village to protect borders
- Protect water quality by limiting development and using “green” technologies
- Encourage mini-farms
- Better relationships/communication between town board and residents

- School systems and university system
- Three highway systems in Town
- 25 miles to city (metropolitan)
- Keep taxes low
- Maintaining rural/country character with future development on five acre parcels and/or cluster development
- Controlling population size
- Create relationship with other communities/boundary agreements

Threats: Anything that could jeopardize the future success of a community; factors or situations that can affect a community in a negative way.

- Bigger/wider roads (STH 164 and reliever route)
- Loss of farmland and rural character/urban development
- Water quality and quantity
- Too much development too fast
- Decreasing lot sizes (maintain existing five acre minimum)
- Annexation and annexations without services

Comprehensive Planning Visioning Workshop

A comprehensive planning visioning workshop/open house was held in the Town on August 22, 2006. The event was an opportunity for Town residents to review the inventory chapters of the comprehensive plan, map future land use on an interactive Smart Board using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software, review existing Town development policies (from the Town zoning ordinance), share opinions on development preferences, and develop a vision statement for the Town. A total of 49 residents attended the workshop and the majority wanted to preserve wetlands, agricultural land, natural areas, and open space that are not located along USH 45. Residents in attendance also discussed development appropriate for the Town. It was determined from this discussion that high-density residential, multi-family homes, mobile homes, and shared driveways are not appropriate.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives are overall goals that should guide the protection of natural resources and future development and redevelopment in the Town through the plan design year of 2035. The overall goals are general and provide the framework for more specific goals in the following chapters. Because they are intended to be general rather than specific, no policies or programs are associated with the general goals and objectives presented in this chapter. Policies and programs are presented in each of the following eight element chapters, in association with the more specific element goals and objectives.

A meeting was held with the Town Plan Commission and Town Board on June 18, 2007, to develop goals and objectives for the comprehensive plan. The meeting was facilitated by UWEX staff. The following goals and objectives were developed for the Town comprehensive plan:

Goal: Preserve rural character and support country living by retaining viable farmland.

- **Objective:** Provide zoning that supports local family farm operations, small specialty farms, and hobby farms to maintain agriculture as a part of the rural landscape.

Goal: Restrict building on poor soils or in other areas poorly suited for development.

Goal: Preserve natural vegetation and cover and promote the natural beauty of the Town.

Goal: Attain a proper adjustment of land use and development to the supporting and sustaining natural resource base.

- **Objective:** Nonmetallic mining sites will not negatively impact the environmental features within the Town of Polk or its existing developments.

Goal: Encourage preservation of historic or cultural structures and archaeological sites.

Goal: Support and/or encourage intergovernmental cooperation to provide for adequate transportation, water supply, storm water management, parks, playgrounds, and other public facilities and services.

Goal: In cooperation with neighboring communities, encourage a range of housing types to serve the varied and special needs of area residents.

- **Objective:** Support appropriate county, private, and church efforts and consider new programs that provide needed assistance for elderly and disabled residents who wish to stay in their own homes.

Goal: Secure adequate fire and police protection.

- **Objective:** Require developers to pay their “fair share” for improvements needed to support new development requests.

Goal: The Town of Polk supports small-scale economic development that does not negatively impact the Town’s rural character or natural resources.

- **Objective:** Monitor the impacts (noise, traffic, etc.) of home-based businesses
- **Objective:** Make the Town’s vision statement, comprehensive plan, and future land use map available to developers with potential business proposals.

Goal: Communicate with existing local businesses and work to retain them, if possible.

Goal: Manage congestion on local Town roads.

Goal: Continue to maintain and improve Town roads in a timely and well-planned manner.

- **Objective:** As required by State law, continue to use the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) and continue to update road ratings.

Goal: Further the orderly planning and appropriate use of land.

Goal: Through policy, prevent damage from flooding, water pollution, disease, and other hazards to persons or properties.

- **Objective:** Use the future land use map as a tool to implement the goals of the Town’s comprehensive plan.

Goal: Implement the Town comprehensive plan, enforce Town development standards, and consider the recommendations of County, watershed, and regional plans.

- **Objective:** Encourage dialog about land use regulation issues and boundary issues between local governments.
- **Objective:** Strive for orderly and sequential annexations.

Goal: Ensure the Town of Polk’s comprehensive plan remains relevant.

- **Objective:** Routinely consult the comprehensive plan when carrying out Town government functions and developing the Town budget.

ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Within the framework of the overall goals and objectives, more specific goals and objectives were developed through preparation of the remaining eight comprehensive plan elements. Each of the specific element goals relate directly to its element. Each element also includes recommended policies and programs that directly promote the achievement of specific element goals and objectives.