

LAND USE

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Land Use element is intended to provide important background data, analyze trends, and define future needs related to community land use. This information will serve as the foundation for the development of goals, objectives, policies, programs and actions. This planning element must be defined and utilized in conjunction with the other elements and will serve as a guide to future growth and development within the community. Tools to implement the community actions related to land use are defined and described under the Implementation element.

Defining appropriate land use is about more than making ecologically and economically intelligent choices. It is also about retaining values, lifestyles, cultural assets, and community character. The planning of future land uses is sometimes perceived as an intrusion on the rights of private property owners. The actual purpose of this activity is to protect the rights of the individual and to give landowners, citizens, and local communities the opportunity to define their own destiny.

8.2 66.1001 REQUIREMENTS

This element contains a listing of the amount, type, intensity, and net density of existing uses of land; analyzes trends in the supply, demand, and price of land, opportunities for redevelopment, and existing and potential land use conflicts; contains projections of future residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial land uses; and includes a series of maps that show current and future land use activities.

8.3 GENERAL SETTING

Washburn County is located within the northwestern part of the State of Wisconsin. This region is characterized by an abundance of lakes, rivers, and streams set amongst a heavily forested landscape. Agricultural activity is a prominent feature of the landscape within the central and southern parts of the county. Like most northern Wisconsin counties, the overall land use and development pattern has been heavily influenced by tourism and recreational home development. Washburn County is predominantly rural with only four incorporated communities. The highest population densities within the county are found in the cities and villages, with a generally low overall population density in the rural areas except along certain lakes. Most home development within Washburn County has occurred in the rural areas. According to the 2000 US Census, 9,576 homes (88.5%) are located in areas outside of urbanized zones (Spooner, Shell Lake, etc.), with a substantial proportion of the county's existing development focused on the county's 968 lakes.

8.4 EXISTING LAND USE

An inventory of existing land uses was compiled through analysis of 1996 digital aerial photography (Table 8.1). The determined land use boundaries are approximations based on photo-identifiable changes in land use and are not based on parcel classifications used for assessment and zoning purposes. Based on the photo interpretation and review by town representatives, an existing land use map was created for each of the 21 townships. Existing land use maps of towns not participating in a comprehensive plan development process are included in this element. Town maps not included in this element can be found in their respective jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan. A standard land use classification system was used to assign different use areas by category.

Agriculture These lands include croplands, livestock grazing, and dairy farming.

Commercial Retail sales establishments, restaurants, hotels/motels, and service stations.

Commercial Forest The use of land primarily for the cultivation of trees for timber and other forest products.

Communications/Utilities Facilities Land used for generating and/or processing electronic communication, or water, electricity, petroleum, or other transmittable product and for the disposal, waste processing, and/or recycling of by-products.

Government/Institutional These lands include: government-owned administration buildings and offices; fire stations; public hospitals and health care facilities; day care centers; public schools, colleges and educational research lands; and lands of fraternal organizations (BSA, VFW, etc.). Cemeteries, churches, and other religious facilities are included in this land use category.

Industrial Manufacturing and processing, wholesaling, warehousing and distribution, and similar activities.

Shed Accessory buildings.

Farm Approximately five acres or greater of farm buildings and accessories.

Mobile Home Park Designated multi-unit mobile home clusters.

Table 8.1: Washburn County Existing Land Use Acreage (Unincorporated Areas)

Existing Land Use	Total Acres
Agriculture	62,977.1
Communications/Utilities	33.4
Commercial	176.8
County Highways	1,153.6
County Roads	250.1
Farm	76.4
Federal Highways	709.5
Government/Institutional	84.8
Industrial	327.0
Local Roads	6,204.2
Mobile Home Park	3.2
Open Space	1,689.3
Park & Recreation	291.1
Residential	3,565.0
Shed	35.3
State Highway	444.6
Water	32,439.1
Woodlands	425,347.9
Total	535,808.3

Source: NWRPC GIS Inventory, 2002

Open Space Privately owned non-wooded undeveloped lands, fallow fields.

Parks and Recreation Recreation lands under public or private ownership. Publicly owned recreational lands may include: town parks, nature preserves, athletic fields, boat landings, campgrounds, etc. Examples of privately owned lands may include: golf courses, campgrounds, marinas, shooting ranges, etc.

Residential Lands with structures designed for human habitation including: permanent, seasonal, and mobile housing units (not in a designated mobile home park) and recreational cabins and cottages.

Transportation Use of land corridors for the movement of people or materials, including related terminals and parking facilities.

Water Open water areas, including natural and impounded lakes and streams.

Woodlands Forested lands under public and private ownership.

8.5 EXISTING LAND USE PATTERN (UNINCORPORATED AREAS)

Agriculture

Agricultural land use is the second most prevalent land use in Washburn County, comprising 62,977 acres or nearly 12 percent of the county's total area (Table 8.2). Most agricultural land use is centered in the central and southern portion of the county where soil conditions are generally more favorable for agricultural uses. Areas of the county defined as "prime farmland" (NRCS) are primarily limited to the southern and central portions of Washburn County. Farmland classification identifies the location and extent of the most suitable land for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops.

Table 8.2: Washburn County Agricultural Acreage by Minor Civil Division (acres)

Town of Bashaw	8,237.2	Town of Bass Lake	2,199.9
Town of Evergreen	5,614.1	Town of Springbrook	2,098.9
Town of Barronett	5,168.4	Town of Brooklyn	2,022.1
Town of Sarona	4,996.1	Town of Frog Creek	1,825.7
Town of Crystal	4,713.4	Town of Birchwood	1,695.3
Town of Beaver Brook	4,328.1	Town of Minong	1,053.0
Town of Trego	4,302.5	Town of Gull Lake	1,007.4
Town of Long Lake	3,414.5	Town of Stinnett	799.0
Town of Spooner	3,391.8	Town of Casey	709.7
Town of Madge	2,698.9	Town of Chicog	421.2
Town of Stone Lake	2,279.6		

Source: NWRPC GIS Inventory, 2002

Commercial

In terms of physical space, commercial land use comprises a relatively small portion of the land base in Washburn County. Most commercial growth is found within the incorporated communities where access to a larger population base is available. Commercial land uses in the rural portions of the county are primarily taverns, resorts, gas station/convenience stores, and restaurants. Commercial growth nodes are based on the density of businesses in the area and access to those businesses in Washburn County (Table 8.3). Primary nodes are major commercial centers where access and densities of businesses are much greater than secondary or minor commercial nodes (where business densities and points of access are generally lower). Rural growth commercial areas are at an even lower density than secondary and generally are located along county highways.

Table 8.3: Commercial Growth Nodes/Corridors within Washburn County

Primary (Major)	
River Street/ US Highway 63	City of Spooner
Maple Street/ State Highway 70	City of Spooner
US Highway 63	City of Shell Lake
Fifth Avenue	City of Shell Lake
Business Highway 53	Village of Minong
State Highway 77	Village of Minong
State Highway 48/Endenharter Road	Village of Birchwood
Secondary (Minor)	
US Highway 53 Corridor	Town of Sarona
US Highway 53 Corridor	Town of Trego
State Highway 70 Corridor	Town of Evergreen
US Highway 63/South of Spooner	Town of Beaver Brook
US Highway 63	Town of Bashaw
Rural Areas	
County Highway M/County Highway D	Town of Long Lake
County Highway B	Town of Madge
County Highway B/County Highway M	Town of Madge
County Highway B	Town of Birchwood

Government/Institutional

Government/Institutional land use represents a fraction of the overall land use in Washburn County. Town halls, cemeteries, and churches are the most common uses within this classification in Washburn County. The largest single use area within this classification is the Northwood School in the Town of Minong.

Industrial

The community land use evaluation identified 327 acres of industrial land use within the unincorporated areas of Washburn County. Nearly all of these sites are active extractive (gravel pits or quarries) operations. Industrial uses often require urban services such as sewer and water and access to transportation (major) corridors. For this reason, most industrial use within the county occurs within the incorporated communities where these services are readily available.

Open Space

Open space lands consist of privately owned non-wooded undeveloped lands and fallow fields. Open space land use represents approximately 0.3 percent of the total land use within Washburn County; the majority of open space areas are idle farmland.

Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation land uses within the county are primarily boat launches, campgrounds, and golf courses. Traditional “parks” with playground equipment and recreation facilities are not found within Washburn County’s unincorporated communities. Most of these “active recreational areas” are found within the county’s incorporated communities.

Residential

Residential land use within the unincorporated areas of Washburn County accounts for 3,565 acres or about 0.7 percent of the county’s total land use (Table 8.4). (Note: residential land uses calculated during the community land use inventory by NWRPC in 2002 reflect that portion of lands actively utilized for residential purposes, including home and surrounding yard.)

Table 8.4: Residential Land

Town	Acres	Town	Acres	Town	Acres
T. Beaver Brook	340.1	T. Barronett	180.9	T. Crystal	110.0
T. Minong	312.8	T. Evergreen	180.2	T. Bass Lake	107.7
T. Bashaw	301.1	T. Trego	163.4	T. Springbrook	96.3
T. Birchwood	264.7	T. Long Lake	146.6	T. Stinnett	93.9
T. Madge	254.8	T. Sarona	144.1	T. Stone Lake	87.5
T. Brooklyn	200.2	T. Casey	118.5	T. Chicog	83.2
T. Gull Lake	197.8	T. Spooner	114.5	T. Frog Creek	66.8
				Total Residential	3,565.0

Source: NWRPC GIS Inventory, 2002

Analysis of the spatial distribution of development in Washburn County reveals that the highest residential development densities are experienced along lakes. Many of these structures are seasonal and recreational homes and cottages, which may not be continuously occupied. Some lakes within Washburn County have exceptionally high development densities, as reflected by the land use inventory and the Washburn County Lakes Classification System (Table 8.5).

Table 8.5: Number of Structures on Washburn County Lakes

Lake	Number of Structures	Lake	Number of Structures
Long Lake	750	Big McKenzie	169
Shell Lake	380	Gilmore Lake	154
Trego Lake	212	Birch Lake	114
Nancy Lake	171	Stone Lake	110
Spooner Lake	170	Minong Flowage	106

Source: NWRPC GIS Inventory, 2002

The highest shoreland development density (entire lake) is found on Shell Lake, where there is one structure for every 142 feet of shoreline (Table 8.6). Shell Lake also has the second highest number of total structures on a Washburn County lake with approximately 380 total structures.

Table 8.6: Dwelling Density Per Foot of Shoreline

Lake	Ft/Structure	Acres
Shell Lake	142	2,580.30
Stone Lake	192	523.4
Middle McKenzie	210	529.7
Dunn Lake	211	192.3
Big McKenzie	219	1,142.30

Residential development within the county is also found in the rural forested and agricultural portions of the county. Much of this growth is single-family housing, occupied on a permanent basis. While a portion of this growth is related to residential development on agricultural land, much of the new growth in these areas is single-family residential (non-farm). Washburn County has continued to lose its agricultural land base, and much of this loss can be attributed to the conversion of agricultural land into residential development.

Residential growth is especially notable in areas surrounding the incorporated communities. In the unincorporated areas near the Cities of Spooner and Shell Lake, including the Towns of Beaver Brook, Bashaw, and Evergreen, rural residential growth has become pronounced. In portions of the county with a large public land base, residential development is somewhat less prominent.

About three acres of land in the county were classified under the “mobile home park” residential sub-classification.

Transportation

Washburn County has nearly 1,400 miles of roadways. These corridors include the actual road surface and the associated right-of-ways. Within the county nearly 8,800 acres or 1.6 percent of the county’s land base is being utilized for transportation purposes (Table 8.7).

Woodlands

Nearly 80 percent of the total land use within Washburn County is classified as woodland use. Ownership of these forested areas influences human use and permitted activity. While there are about 425,338 acres classified as woodlands in Washburn County, nearly 141,500 acres are part of the Washburn County Forest. An additional 6,400 acres are under state ownership (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources) and 20,374 acres are used as industrial forest. The National Park Service owns and manages 9,269 acres along the Namekagon River as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system.

Table 8.7: Roadway Acres

Type	Acres
County Highways	1,153.6
County Roads	250.1
Federal Highways	709.5
Local Roads	6,204.2
State Highway	444.6
	8,762

County forest lands were created by acquisition of tax delinquent lands through tax deed, the Wisconsin Forest Crop Law (Chapter 28.11, Wisconsin Statutes), and willing private party sales to the county. The first entry into the Washburn County Forest under the Forest Crop Law was made in 1930. The county forests are used for recreational purposes including hunting, trapping, horseback riding, and other uses. These lands are primarily managed for timber production and wildlife habitat (Table 8.8).

Table 8.8: Washburn County Forest Acreage by Minor Civil Division (acres)

Town of Barronett	4,912.1	Town of Frog Creek	35,103.8
Town of Bass Lake	3,128.0	Town of Gull Lake	13,950.0
Town of Beaver Brook	2,756.1	Town of Madge	3,228.4
Town of Birchwood	16,619.4	Town of Minong	7,828.3
Town of Brooklyn	5,987.2	Town of Sarona	2,137.4
Town of Casey	7,518.2	Town of Springbrook	6,886.0
Town of Chicog	8,482.7	Town of Stinnett	13,786.1
Town of Crystal	3,456.7	Town of Stone Lake	5,715.7

Source: NWRPC GIS Inventory, 2002

Industrial forestlands within Washburn County encompass nearly five percent of the total woodland acreage. The majority of industrial forest in the county is located in the western half of the Town of Minong and is owned by the Wausau Mosinee Paper Company. Industrial forest lands are company owned and managed lands, utilized primarily for the production of forest products (Table 8.9).

Table 8.9: Washburn County Industrial Forest Acreage by Minor Civil Division (acres)

Town of Bass Lake	312.9	Town of Madge	78.2
Town of Brooklyn	164.3	Town of Minong	12,308.0
Town of Casey	247.2	Town of Spooner	194.4
Town of Chicog	1,853.8	Town of Springbrook	1,247.9
Town of Crystal	862.1	Town of Stone Lake	863.6
Town of Evergreen	256.8	Town of Trego	1,945.5
Town of Gull Lake	39.9		

Source: NWRPC GIS Inventory, 2002

Federally owned and managed forestland in Washburn County consists of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers (NWSR) land along the Namekagon River. Wild and Scenic Rivers, along with their immediate surroundings, possess remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act states that these rivers shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. NWSR lands are under public ownership and may be used for certain forms of public recreation and other permitted activities.

A number of privately owned woodlands in Washburn County are enrolled in forest management programs such as Managed Forest Law (MFL) and Forest Crop Law (FCL) programs. In the year 2002, there were 54,319 total acres enrolled in state administered forest management programs (37,136 acres Managed Forest Law, 17,183 acres Forest Crop Law). Both programs encourage proper management and use of private forestlands by providing tax incentives and benefits to enrollees. Enrollment of forestlands in these programs does provide a reasonable measure of assurance that these lands will continue to be utilized as woodlands and not converted to other uses. The Managed Forest Law replaced the Forest Crop Law in 1985. Both FCL and MFL in part, may be open to the public for hunting, fishing, and other recreational uses.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources owns and manages nearly 6,400 acres of land in Washburn County (Table 8.10). These lands consist of fishery areas, natural areas, state owned islands, public recreation areas, wildlife management areas, and other use areas.

Table 8.10: State-Owned Lands in Washburn County (acres)

Fishery Areas	3,327.1
Natural Areas	439.6
State Owned Islands	183.0
Public Recreation Areas	439.2
Wildlife Management Areas	862.9
Other	160.2

The remaining woodlands in the county are predominantly under private ownership; public access and recreational or other uses are at the discretion of the landowner (within the context of existing land use controls).

8.6 PRIMARY FACTORS INFLUENCING WASHBURN COUNTY'S EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Transportation Network

The county road network provides access to land, jobs, and resources. The spatial development pattern in Washburn County is closely linked to the county's road network, and most rural development has occurred along transportation corridors. A major north-south highway (STH 53) provides greater connectivity to the larger population centers to the north and south of Washburn County. As indicated by the 2000 decennial census, 1,668 (24 percent) Washburn County workers traveled 30 minutes or more to get to work. This commuter pattern has implications on rural development in that access to transportation routes enables workers to live throughout Washburn County and commute to outlying communities.

Surface Water Resources

Washburn County has long been a vacation destination. A primary factor influencing the county's attractiveness as a recreational destination is the abundance of lakes. Prior to the 1970's, most shoreland development in Washburn County consisted of seasonal cabins, resorts, and a few permanent homes. The decade of the 70's saw a tremendous boom in large-scale

recreational home development in the county. By 1980, nearly 40 percent of the county's total housing units were classified as "recreational" by the U.S. Census. By the mid 1980's, the pace of recreational home development had slowed due to changes in the housing market and the availability of lake lots. In the economic prosperity of the 1990's, a resurgence in the recreational housing market was experienced across northern Wisconsin. Today, demand for recreational, particularly lake-lot, homes remains very high; and the supply of undeveloped shoreline has diminished substantially. Some lakes within Washburn County have attained nearly 100 percent shoreland build-up. Many of the modest seasonal cabins constructed prior to 1970 have been torn down and replaced with large, expensive homes or refurbished to accommodate permanent residency. A trend across northern Wisconsin continues to be the development of private lakeshore frontage and, in some cases, second tier (backlot) growth. This form of development, while not pronounced, is occurring on some Washburn County water bodies. Long Lake, the county's largest lake, has experienced second tier development within the past ten years.

Washburn County Forest

Washburn County has about 141,500 acres of county forest land (CFL), distributed among 16 towns. CFL lands are publicly owned lands primarily utilized for timber production, wildlife habitat, and various forms of recreation. Because these are publicly owned lands, they effectively block development, much like a national or state forest. Additionally, road density within Washburn County forest land blocks is substantially lower than is found elsewhere in the county. It should be noted that private parcels are found within the CFL, and some development has occurred on these parcels. A growing trend in the north is the construction of housing in close proximity to large tracts of publicly owned land. Referred to as "fringe growth", this form of development takes advantage of the access provided by these parcels. Historically, these fringe parcels have been small hunting cabins or seasonal recreational homes. Much like the conversion of lakeshore cabins to permanent residences, these fringe structures are being converted from hunting cabins to homes or larger recreational structures.

Industrial Forest Lands

There are over 20,300 acres of industrial forestland within Washburn County. The use of these lands for the production of forest products has prohibited other forms of development. While continued industrial use is not ensured, it has in the past served as a "barrier to development". Most of industrial forest land in Washburn County is found in the Town of Minong, with smaller holdings in the Towns of Chicog, Trego, Springbrook, Crystal, Stone Lake, Bass Lake, Evergreen, Madge, Spooner, Brooklyn, Gull Lake, and Casey.

Lands Enrolled in Forestry Management Programs (Forest Tax Law)

Lands that are enrolled in forest management programs such as Managed Forest Law (MFL) or Forest Crop Law (FCL) can provide some assurance that these lands will continue to be utilized as forest. These lands are under contractual commitment, which may or may not be renewed upon expiration. Development or conversion of use is possible on Forest Tax Law lands; although, various program incentives encourage continued enrollment. Forest Tax Law program enrollment in Washburn County includes 37,136 acres in MFL (20,379 acres open, 16,757 acres closed), and 17,183 acres in the Forest Crop Law program.

Proximity to Metropolitan Areas

Washburn County's geographic proximity to larger population centers has undoubtedly impacted development within the county. The Twin Cities metropolitan area, with a population of over 2.5 million people, is within a 2½-hour drive of Washburn County. Additionally, the Duluth/Superior metropolitan statistical area (2000 population 243,815) is located about 75 miles to the north. Non-resident landowners own numerous recreational/vacation properties in Washburn County.

Rural Forested Lands

Much of Washburn County's landscape consists of rural forested lands. The seclusion and attractiveness of these areas has caused increased residential development and fragmentation of the forested landscape. Scattered rural development within the forest mosaic of Washburn County can be found in every community. As lake frontage becomes less available, it is probable that recreational development will consume more of the rural forested areas on the county. This type of development poses challenges for emergency/police/fire response, especially those developments with long, unimproved driveways.

Agriculture

The use of land for agricultural purposes has influenced the county's development pattern considerably. This is especially true in the southern communities of Washburn County, where most of the productive soils are found. In these areas, agricultural use continues to be a co-dominant land use, whereas much of the agricultural land base in the northern communities has been restored as forest or converted to other uses. Large tracts of farmland, interspersed with farmsteads, woodlots, and pasture characterize the general development pattern in many southern Washburn County communities. The trend towards conversion of agricultural land to residential uses is also evident, as many rural residential "non-farm" developments exist within the agricultural areas of the county. Many of these structures are built upon lands that were previously utilized as farmland. Farmland conversion and loss of farmland are further detailed in Figure 8.5, Parcel Change and Acreage Change in Agricultural Assessments 1981-2001.

Land Trends

Throughout Washburn County, the value of and price paid for vacant and developed properties have been on the rise and equalized values have continued to see significant increases. In 2004, Washburn County's increase in equalized valuation ranked 9th in the state at 11.06 percent. The county's 2004 equalized valuation stood at \$1,943,715,100, compared to the 1993 valuation of \$1,750,202,400

Demand for properties varies depending on location and attributes of particular properties. At a county scale, it is difficult to provide a price for vacant and developed properties due to the property and location attributes.

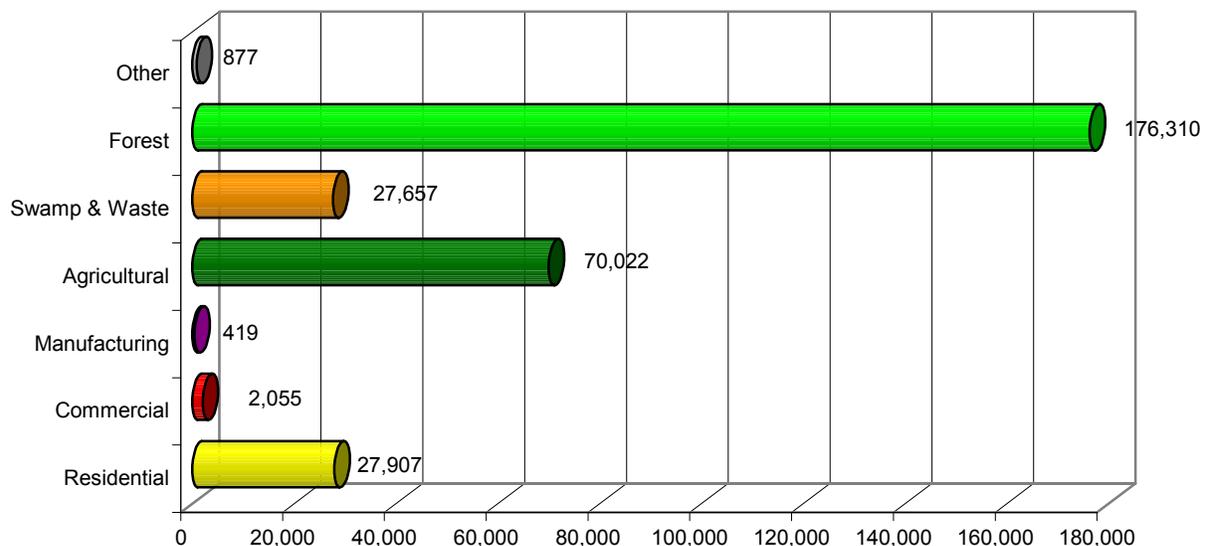
Based on market listings of undeveloped rural lands within Washburn County, the average price per acre is about \$2,500. This includes all vacant rural lands such as forests, non-forested areas, and agricultural areas. The range in price variability is high with some areas selling for as little as \$1,000 per acre and others near \$5,000 per acre.

Undeveloped lake frontage within the county is in very high demand. The supply of vacant lake frontage is low and decreasing at an increasing rate. These factors have resulted in historically high prices for lake frontage and lots, which can provide direct lake access or even lake views. Based on market listings of lake frontage, the average price is \$700-\$1,000 per linear foot. There is a very high range of variability in these prices, and many properties are marketed at prices up to several thousand dollars per linear foot of shoreline

8.7 WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE ASSESSMENT STATISTICS

Wisconsin Department of Revenue real estate classes are used to determine land assessments and valuations. Because these data cover extensive time periods, they can be useful in conducting a simplified land use analysis and for examining trends, which are determined by the conversion from one type of assessment class to another over a period of time. The real estate classes used for assessment purposes are: Residential, Commercial, Manufacturing, Agricultural, Swamp and Waste, Forest, and “Other” or tax-exempt lands. Figure 8.1 denotes the total 2001 acreage in each of the tax assessment classes utilized by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR).

Figure 8.1: Washburn County Tax Class Acres - 2001



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Wisconsin Real Estate Class Definitions

- **Residential** includes any parcel or part of a parcel of untilled land that is not suitable for the production of row crops, on which a dwelling or other form of human abode is located.
- **Commercial** includes properties where the predominant use is the selling of merchandise or a service. Apartment buildings of four or more units and office buildings.
- **Manufacturing** property consists of all property used for manufacturing, assembling, processing, fabricating, making or milling tangible personal property for profit. It also

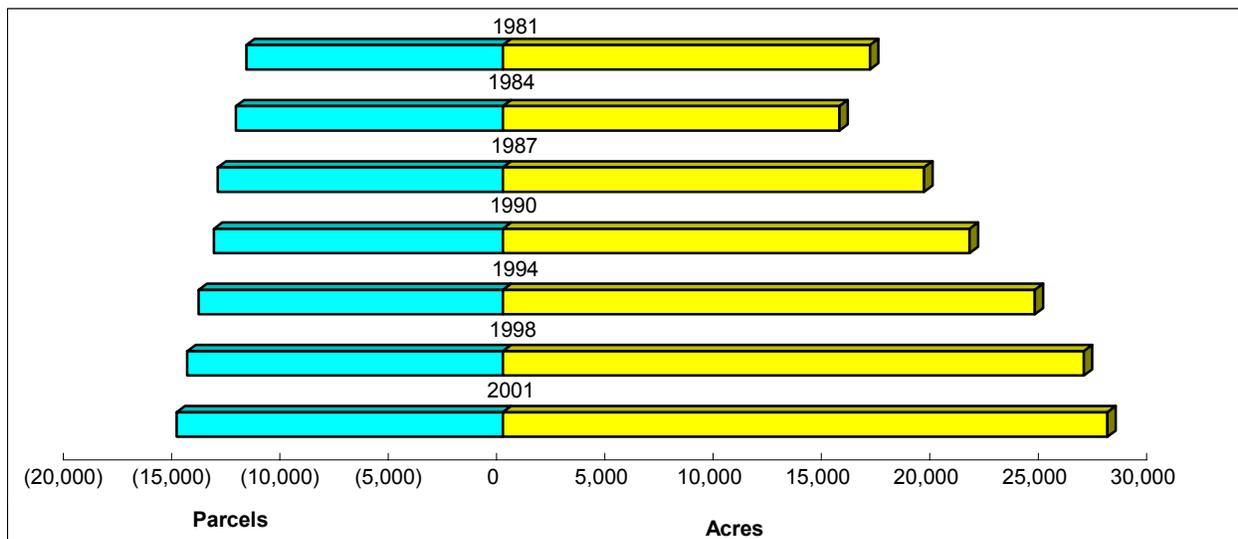
includes establishments engaged in assembling component parts of manufactured products. All manufacturing property is assessed by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

- **Agricultural** land means land, exclusive of buildings and improvements that is devoted primarily to agricultural use, as defined by rule.
- **Swampland or wasteland** means bog, marsh, lowland brush, and uncultivated land zoned as shoreland under s. 59.692 and shown as a wetland on a final map under s. 23.32 or other nonproductive lands not otherwise classified.
- **Forest** means productive forestland that is producing or is capable of producing commercial forest products.

Trends in Tax Class Assessments

The number of residential parcels in Washburn County has increased steadily since 1981 (Figure 8.2). In 2001, there were 10,954 more acres assessed as residential than in 1981, a 64.6 percent increase. The number of residential parcels also increased by 3,222, a 27.2 percent increase. At the local level, the Towns of Evergreen and Bass Lake gained the most residential land between 1981 and 2001. Evergreen’s residential assessments increased by 1,717 acres (250 percent), while Bass Lake’s residential assessment increased by 1,471 acres (504 percent). The only communities to experience a decline in residential acreage assessments were the Village of Minong (-17.7 percent) and the Town of Stone Lake, which saw a 23 percent decline in overall acreage between 1981 and 2001 (Figure 8.3).

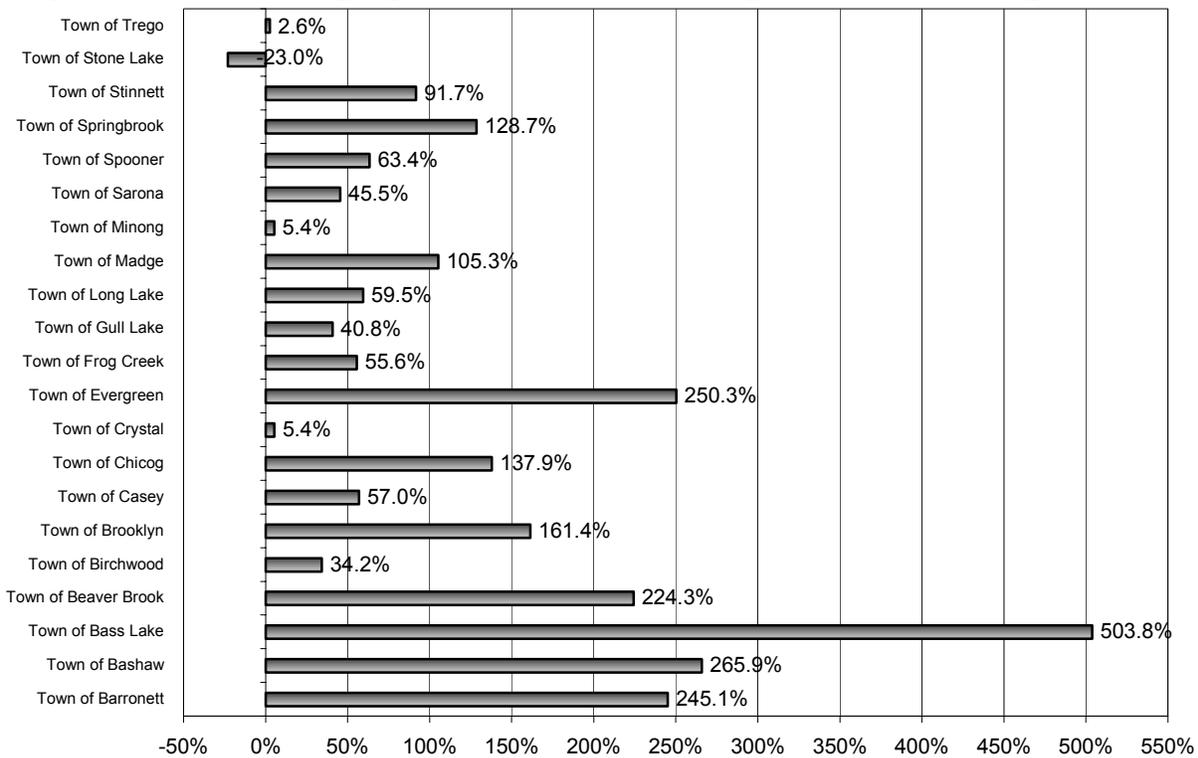
Figure 8.2: Washburn County Residential Assessments 1981-2001



	2001	1998	1994	1990	1987	1984	1981
Acres	27,907	26,814	24,553	21,545	19,443	15,543	16,953
Parcels	15,052	14,562	14,041	13,336	13,159	12,319	11,830
Avg Parcel Size (Acres)	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.4

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 8.3: Percent Change by Towns in Washburn County of Residential Acreage 1981-2001



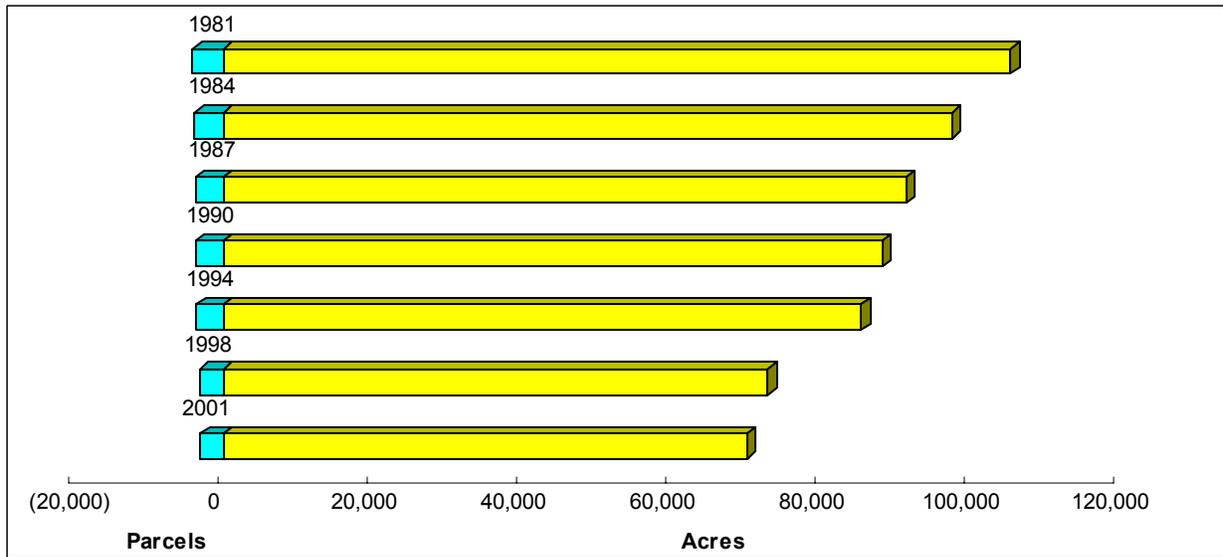
Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Examination of the percent change in residential parcels reveals that both the Village of Minong and the Village of Birchwood experienced declines in the total number of parcels between 1981 and 2001, losing 30.8 and 47.9 percent respectively. The Cities of Spooner and Shell Lake experienced increases in residential parcels during this period. The number of parcels increased 7.4 percent in the City of Spooner and 11.5 percent in the City of Shell Lake.

As outlined in the **Agricultural Resources** section of the Washburn County Comprehensive Plan, Washburn County has experienced a net decline in overall farmland acreage and the number of farms. Historical data from the U.S. Census indicates that the number of farms in the county has decreased steadily from a high of 1,754 in 1935 to 354 by the year 1997. Total farmland acreage in Washburn County has also declined significantly, from a high of 215,829 acres in 1945 to the 1997 total of 97,839 acres. Figure 8.4 indicates the continuation of these trends from the period 1981 to 2001. During this timeframe, Washburn County’s agricultural acreage (assessed) declined by 33.4 percent. The number of agricultural parcels declined from 4,169 in 1981 to 3,162 by the year 2001, a loss of 24.2 percent.

At the local level, every community except the Town of Brooklyn experienced declines in 20-year farmland acreage (Figure 8.5). The most notable losses occurred in the Towns of Bass Lake (-70 percent), Spooner (-58.5 percent), Crystal (-57.5 percent) and Minong, which lost 56.4 percent of its agricultural land base.

Figure 8.4: Washburn County Agricultural Assessments 1981-2001

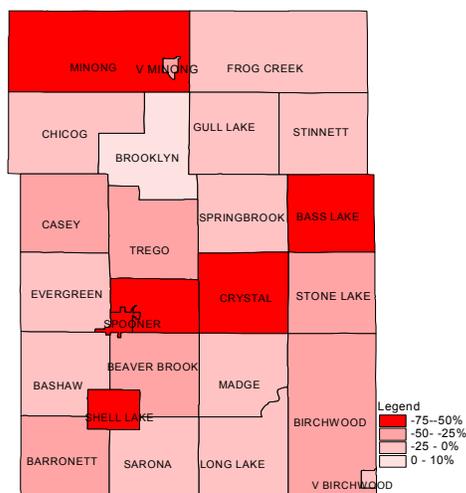


	2001	1998	1994	1990	1987	1984	1981
Acres	70,022	72,722	85,333	88,062	91,317	97,353	105,216
Parcels	3,162	3,218	3,621	3,734	3,862	3,972	4,169
Avg Parcel Size (Acres)	22.1	22.6	23.6	23.6	23.6	24.5	25.2

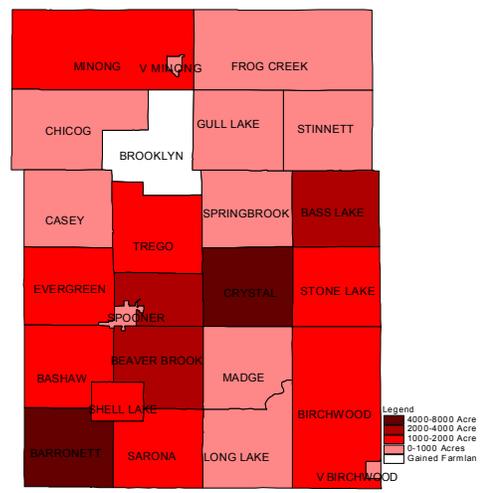
Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Figure 8.5: Percent Change and Acreage Change in Agricultural Assessments 1981-2001, Washburn County Communities

A. Percent Change



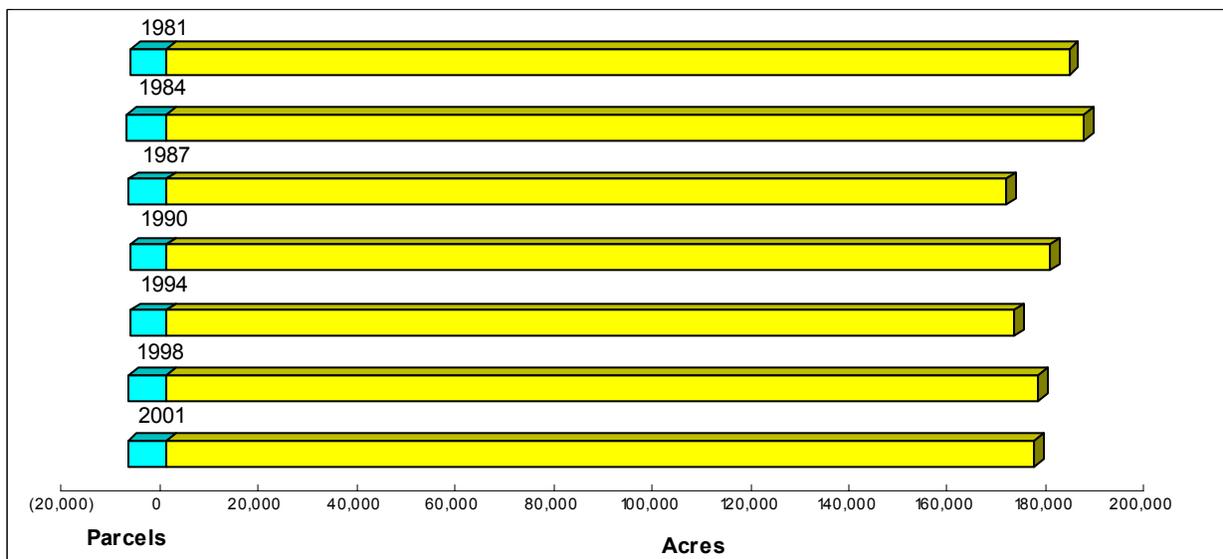
B. Change in Acres



In terms of overall acreage, the Town of Crystal saw the greatest decline, losing 4,434 acres in just the past 20 years. The Town of Barronett lost 4,861 acres during this same period. Other notable losses occurred in the Towns of Beaverbrook (-3,140 acres), Bass Lake (-2,521 acres) and the Town of Spooner (-2,384 acres). The Town of Brooklyn actually gained 203 acres of agricultural land between 1981 and 2001. Additional change in farms and farmland at the local level are depicted in Table 5.14, Washburn County Farmland Trends 1989-1997.

Overall, forest assessments by acreage have continued to decline (Figure 8.6). Although there were fluctuations between the reporting years of 1981 to 2001, the overall net decline in acreage is nearly 4 percent. Total parcels had been on the decline from 1984 to 1994, however since 1994, the total parcels have increased 7 percent.

Figure 8.6: Washburn County Forest Assessments 1981-2001

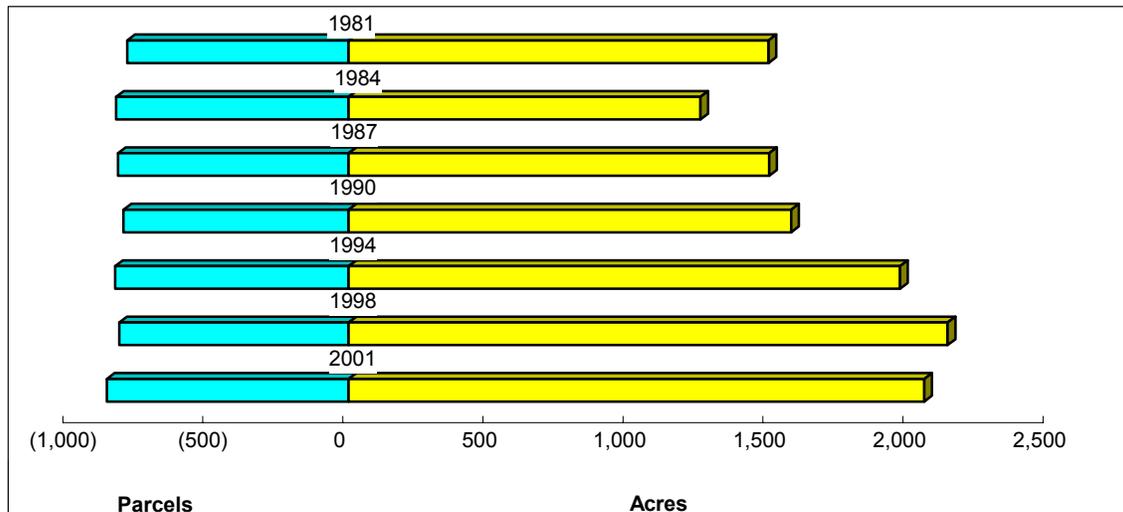


	2001	1998	1994	1990	1987	1984	1981
Acres	176,310	177,082	172,376	179,632	170,608	186,501	183,353
Parcels	7,906	7,742	7,317	7,540	7,624	7,979	7,328
Avg Parcel Size (Acres)	22.3	22.9	23.6	23.8	22.4	23.4	25.0

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Significant change in the total acres of commercially assessed land occurred over the period reported for 1981-2001 (Figure 8.7). Total acres of commercially assessed land increased by 37 percent while the total parcels for the 20-year period increased nearly 8.5 percent.

Figure 8.7: Washburn County Commercial Assessments 1981-2001

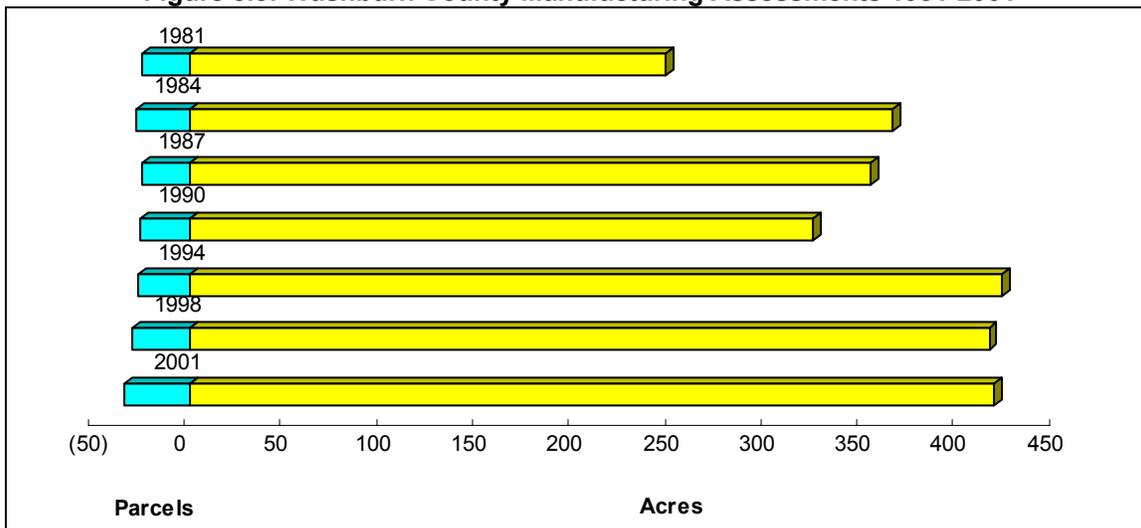


	2001	1998	1994	1990	1987	1984	1981
Acres	2,055	2,139	1,969	1,580	1,502	1,256	1,499
Parcels	864	819	834	804	824	831	791
Avg Parcel Size (Acres)	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.0	1.8	1.5	1.9

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Manufacturing assessed acreages increased nearly 69 percent during the period from 1981-2001 (Figure 8.8). This increase represents a significant change. The interesting comparison is that although there was an increase of 171 acres, total parcels increased by only 9 during the period.

Figure 8.8: Washburn County Manufacturing Assessments 1981-2001



	2001	1998	1994	1990	1987	1984	1981
Acres	419	416	423	324	354	366	248
Parcels	34	30	27	26	25	28	25
Avg Parcel Size (Acres)	12.3	13.9	15.7	12.5	14.2	13.1	9.9

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

8.8 LAND USE REGULATION

General Land Use

Zoning is the regulation of the use of land and buildings that permits a community to control the development of its own jurisdiction. Zoning is a locally enacted law that regulates and controls the use of private property that involves dividing the countryside into districts or zones for agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, and public purposes. The zoning law or ordinance then states which specific uses are permitted in each district and under what circumstances. It provides for orderly growth by protecting homes and property from harmful uses on neighboring properties.

Zoning is the primary tool regulating land use in Washburn County. The Washburn County Board of Supervisors adopted a zoning ordinance in 1968, which was amended and replaced by the current zoning ordinance in 1978. Twenty of the 21 towns in Washburn County have adopted the county zoning ordinance, with the Town of Bashaw being the only un-zoned county community. The Cities of Shell Lake and Spooner, along with the Village's of Birchwood and Minong have developed, adopted, and enforce their own respective zoning regulations. Zoning districts under the authority of the county are represented in Table 8.11. Portions of existing zoning districts had conditions put on some of the parcels at one time. This is reflected in the table as (district)/Conditional.

Table 8.11: Existing Zoning District Acreage –Washburn County Map GIS Analysis

Zoning District	Parcels	Total Acres	Percent of Total Area
Forestry	7,316	256,281.8	46.0%
Agricultural	4,991	179,787.1	32.2%
Residential Agricultural	1,263	38,141.6	6.8%
Residential Recreational (2)	1,517	37,214.2	6.7%
Residential Recreational (1)	993	15,402.5	2.8%
Resource Conservation	934	12,439.7	2.2%
Residential	510	9,051.5	1.6%
Residential Mobile	157	3,492.7	0.6%
Commercial	143	1,618.7	0.3%
Conservation/CHG	128	1,208.6	0.2%
Industrial	28	666.1	0.1%
Residential Shorelands	48	539.4	0.1%
Commercial Highway	27	537.4	0.1%
Agricultural/Conditional	22	478.6	0.1%
Residential Ag/Conditional	7	183.8	<0.1%
Planned Unit Development	12	170.4	<0.1%
Residential Recreational (2)/Conditional	7	113.7	<0.1%
Residential Shorelands/Conditional	7	113.0	<0.1%
Commercial Highway/Conditional	3	84.1	<0.1%
Industrial/Conditional	1	40.1	<0.1%
Commercial/Conditional	2	38.1	<0.1%
Forestry/Conditional	3	24.1	<0.1%
Residential Recreational	1	5.2	<0.1%
Residential Recreational (1)/Conditional	2	4.2	<0.1%

Source: Washburn County Zoning

Counties are granted general zoning powers within the unincorporated areas (towns) of the county. However, a general county zoning ordinance becomes effective only in those towns that approve the county ordinance. Towns in a county having a general zoning ordinance, which have not adopted the county zoning ordinance, may adopt village powers and use the city zoning enabling authority to adopt their own zoning, subject to county board approval.

Zoning ordinances must be based on a land use plan in order to be effective and protect the public interest. The current general Washburn County Zoning Ordinance is not plan based and to some extent fails to recognize the interests of local government, landowners, and the general public. The planning for future land uses as a component of the Washburn County comprehensive planning process will form the basis for revision of the existing zoning ordinances.

Existing zoning maps of towns not participating in a comprehensive plan development process are included in this element. Town maps not included in this element can be found in their respective jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. The representative zoning maps are based on categories as of 2002 and may not reflect current zone districts.

Shorelands and Wetlands

All unincorporated areas of Washburn County located within 1,000 feet of a navigable body of water or within 300 feet of a navigable river or stream are covered by the county ordinance as required by state law. The Washburn County Shoreland/Wetland Zoning Ordinance establishes development standards for lands adjacent to county surface waters. These standards are based on the lakes classification system, which assigns each county water body into one of three classes (I, II, III). The lakes classification rating is based on the individual characteristics of each lake, with class I lakes requiring minimum protection and class III needing the most. Mapped wetlands are also regulated under this ordinance.

8.9 BUILDING AND SANITARY PERMIT DATA

Waterfront Zoning Permits, 2000 & 2001

Table 8.12 details zoning permits issued for the construction of waterfront homes, which accounted for approximately half of all zoning permits issued in both 2000 and 2001 in Washburn County. In 2000, 197 permits were issued, with 97 issued for dwellings. In 2001, 197 permits were issued, with 93 permits for dwellings. The remaining zoning permits were issued for additions, accessory buildings, deck and stairs, or other structures.

	2000	2001
Rezoning requests	24%	35%
Variance requests	55%	55%
Conditional use requests	7%	11%

Source: Washburn County Zoning Department

8.10 WASTE DISPOSAL SITES

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources publishes a registry of known waste disposal sites in Wisconsin. The registry was created by the WDNR to serve as a comprehensive listing of all sites where solid or hazardous wastes have been or may have been deposited. Inclusion of a site on the registry is not intended to suggest that environmental problems have occurred, are occurring, or will occur in the future. There are 50 sites located within Washburn County known to be former soil or hazardous waste sites. A complete listing of these locations is found in *Utilities and Community Facilities* element.

8.11 REDEVELOPMENT & SMART GROWTH AREAS

Wisconsin Chapter 66 planning legislation requires local communities to explore and plan for redevelopment options such as infill housing, brownfield sites, and obsolete buildings. By way of §16.965, local communities are also responsible for identifying potential “smart growth areas” or areas with existing infrastructure and services in place, where development and redevelopment can be directed. These areas may also be recently developing land contiguous to existing development that will be developed at densities that will have relatively low public service costs.

Throughout the county, there may be parcels of land in towns, villages, and cities that could use varying levels of redevelopment. However, the vast majority of the county is currently undeveloped. The county encourages the redevelopment of properties, where practical, to protect local land values and neighboring property rights. At the county level, the former highway facility located along STH 63 in the City of Spooner could be considered a property that may need some redevelopment activities in the future, depending on future development proposals.

8.12 FUTURE LAND USE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The future land use development strategy for Washburn County is based on several components. Early in the planning process, surveys were distributed to all landowners in the county; the results of these surveys assisted the planning committee in defining community issues and opportunities. A series of goals and objectives were developed which provided the direction for development of a preferred future land use scenario. These tools were utilized in conjunction with GIS analysis of existing environmental, infrastructure, and transportation conditions to determine the most appropriate locations for future growth and development. Finally, growth forecasts based on the projections found in the *Issues and Opportunities* and *Housing* elements provided the means to assess future needs related to land use. The combination of public involvement, assessment of conditions, and expected future needs led to the development of a future land use maps, recommendations, policies, programs, and actions.

8.13 ANTICIPATED FUTURE TRENDS IN WASHBURN COUNTY

Over the 20-year planning horizon, several factors may influence the development patterns of the county. Individually and combined with other factors, some portions of the county may realize more rapid development patterns. Factors anticipated to impact Washburn County include the following.

- A. The overall population will continue to increase. The age class most influencing the population increase will be the over 55 age class, as more people retire and relocate to Washburn County or convert seasonal homes into permanent residences.
- B. The number of seasonal residents and tourists is expected to increase.
- C. Demands for rural housing will continue to increase, coupled with increased demand for larger parcels of land.
- D. Demand for waterfront property will continue to be high, with increased pressure to develop smaller lakes and riverfront property.
- E. Increased traffic on roads to accommodate a larger population base, along with more tourists and seasonal residents.
- F. Increased recreational use of county forest and demand for additional recreational facilities, particularly both motorized and non-motorized. Increased forest usage is likely to cause additional user conflicts, particularly with regards to motorized trails.
- G. More lake users resulting in a more intensive recreational use of county water bodies.
- H. Areas within the county will be attractive to developers wishing to create condominium and retirement properties.
- I. Seasonal housing units will continue to be converted to year-round permanent residences.
- J. Home-based business and tele-commuting will become more prevalent allowing more people the flexibility to live in rural areas.
- K. The sale of industrial forest lands to private landowners and investors.
- L. Continued decline of the county's agricultural land base. It is projected that agricultural lands will continue to be converted to residential or other land uses.
- M. The average household size will continue to decrease.

8.14 GROWTH FORECASTS

Residential

The population projection model for Washburn County indicates that by the year 2020 an additional 3,856 people will be county residents (Table 8.13).

Table 8.13: Population and Housing Projections 2000-2020

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Population	16,036	16,950	17,848	18,868	19,892
Average Household Size	2.39	2.31	2.24	2.17	2.1
Total Housing Units	10,814	12,122	13,307	14,713	16,240
Single Family (Owner Occupied)	5,345	5,939	6,449	7,037	7,667
Rental Units	1,259	1,399	1,519	1,658	1,806
Seasonal Housing Units	3,974	4,521	5,055	5,710	6,432

Note: Vacant housing units are factored into the figure for "Total Housing Units"

Based on housing unit projections, the total number of housing units in Washburn County by 2020 is expected to be 16,240, a 50.2 percent increase in 20 years. Figure 8.9 projects total Municipal Civil Division (MCD) housing units to 2020. Projected increases in the number of seasonal housing units account for a substantial portion of this overall increase. The number of seasonal homes is expected to increase by 2,458 units, a 61.9 percent increase. The number of single-family homes or owner-occupied housing units is expected to rise by 2,322, or 43.4 percent. The number of rental units within the county is also expected to rise by 547 housing units. These projected increases in housing units are due, in part, to the steadily decreasing average household size. This trend is also being experienced at both the state and national levels. The number of projected future homes is based on projected population and the proportion of seasonal/year round dwellings in census year 2000. When these data are projected in a regression analysis based on historical values, increases in both seasonal and permanent housing are also suggested, to a somewhat lesser extent. It is important to note that the proportion model used represents a high demand or maximum anticipated growth scenario. Not factored into the projection model is the rate of conversion of seasonal homes to permanent year-round residences. This phenomenon is certainly occurring in many Washburn County communities but is difficult to quantify due to the lack of available data.

Acreage requirements for residential growth will be a factor of both number of housing units required and housing unit density. Table 8.14 reflects the varying acreage requirements for residential growth based on different housing unit densities. Optimal housing density varies significantly by community and should be based on the community's goals and objectives. The purpose of the table is to show how differing development densities will impact the overall land base.

Figure 8.9: 2020 Projected Total Housing Units by MCD

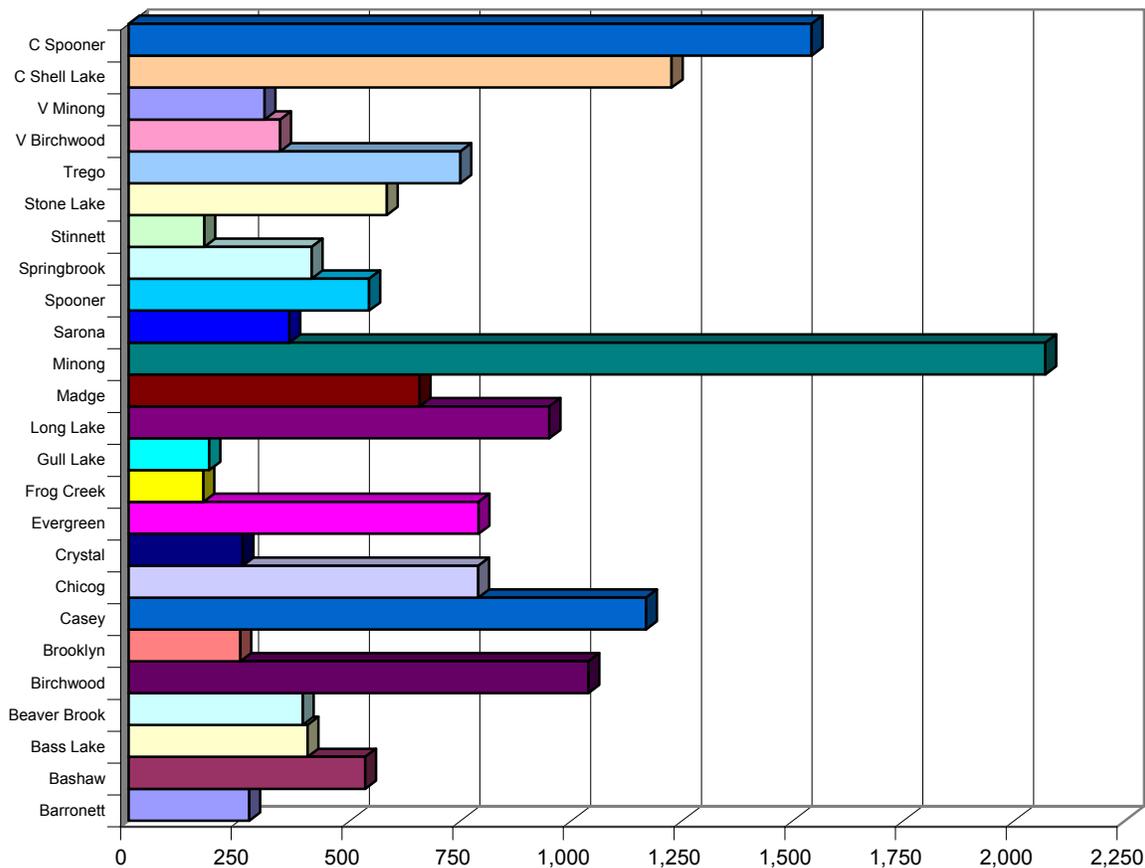


Table 8.14: Potential Acreage Required for Residential Housing Units 2005-2020

Average Density (Acres)	2005 Potential New Units	2005 Acres	2010 Potential New Units	2010 Acres	2015 Potential New Units	2015 Acres	2020 Potential New Units	2020 Acres
40	1,308	52,320	1,185	47,400	1,407	56,280	1,526	61,040
20	1,308	26,160	1,185	23,700	1,407	28,140	1,526	30,520
10	1,308	13,080	1,185	11,850	1,407	14,070	1,526	15,260
5	1,308	6,540	1,185	5,925	1,407	7,035	1,526	7,630
3	1,308	3,924	1,185	3,555	1,407	4,221	1,526	4,578
1	1,308	1,308	1,185	1,185	1,407	1,407	1,526	1,526
0.5	1,308	654	1,185	593	1,407	704	1,526	763

Commercial

The amount of land assessed for commercial use purposes increased by 37.1 percent between 1981 and 2001. Projections based on historic trends indicate that by the year 2020, Washburn County will require about 2,880 acres of commercial land, an increase of slightly over 40 percent (Table 8.15).

Table 8.15: Future Commercial Acreage

	2001	2005	2010	2015	2020
Commercial Acres Needed	2,055	2,207.4	2,412.1	2,635.8	2,880.2
Yearly Additional Acres	-	152.4	204.7	223.7	244.4

Industrial

The amount of land assessed for industrial (manufacturing) purposes within Washburn County increased by 69 percent between 1981 and 2001. Projections based on historic trends indicate that by the year 2020, Washburn County will require an additional 156 acres of industrial land (Table 8.16).

Table 8.16: Future Industrial Acreage

	2001	2005	2010	2015	2020
Industrial Acres Needed	419	458	497	536	575
Yearly Additional Acres	-	39	39	39	39

Agricultural

Washburn County has lost an average of 1.7 percent of its agricultural assessments annually since 1981. Projections indicate that by the year 2020, the county's agricultural land base will have declined by 19,743 acres, or 28.2 percent (Table 8.17).

Table 8.17: Future Agricultural Acreage

	2001	2005	2010	2015	2020
Agricultural Acres Needed	70,022	65,337.6	59,873.9	54,867.0	50,278.9
Yearly Additional Acres	-	-4,684.4	-5,463.7	-5,006.8	-4,588.2

8.15 LAND ANALYSIS

In order to determine gross developable land, public ownership, and natural constraints such as wetlands and surface water were deducted from the total county acreage. This total should be viewed as an **approximation** for planning purposes, as **not all lands within this total would typically be considered developable**. Lands proposed for future growth and development must be measured against both local and countywide goals and objectives, natural constraints outlined in the "Natural, Agricultural, and Cultural Resources Element", infrastructure requirements, and other site-specific conditions that will contribute to actual development potential.

Washburn County Total Land Area = 534,808 Acres¹ (unincorporated areas)

Development Factors

Surface Waters =	32,439 Acres
Wetlands =	78,526 Acres
Roads & Existing Development =	13,243 Acres
County Forest ² =	108,327 Acres
DNR Land ² =	2,630 Acres
Industrial Forest ² =	1,562 Acres
Managed Forest Law (MFL) =	37,137 Acres
Forest Crop Lands (FCL) =	17,183 Acres

Total Development Factors = 291,047 Acres

Total Land Area – Development Factors = 243,761 Acres

The above figures indicate the impact of basic development factors on Washburn County’s land development base. Various development factors are deducted from the total acreage of the county’s rural unincorporated area to reveal an overall “working acreage”. In this case, once these preclusion areas are deducted, less than half of the initial total remains. The degree to which these development factors constrain growth is generally considered “high”, with the possible exception of MFL and FCL lands, which may be removed from these programs at any time.

8.16 2020 FUTURE LAND USE SUMMARY

Total Additional Residential Land (2020)	16,278 Acres
Total Additional Commercial Land (2020)	825 Acres
Total Additional Industrial Land (2020)	156 Acres

Based on the county land use analysis and forecasts, it is anticipated that Washburn County will require at least 17,259 acres of land to accommodate growth and development up to the year 2020. The bulk of the future need comes from residential development, and the actual acreage required for this use will be dependant upon several factors, including development density.

The continued loss of agricultural land is projected throughout the planning period; in fact by 2020, the county’s agricultural land base is expected to decline by 19,743 acres. It is not expected, however, that all of this loss will be converted to residential uses. Much of the agricultural land lost will likely become vacant lots, fallow fields, open space, or possibly converted to forest uses.

It should also be recognized that growth, particularly residential, would occur in areas where people wish to live. Presently, the bulk of rural residential development within the county is

¹ 545,945 acres with incorporated communities

² Total after wetlands and surface waters are deducted

being focused on lakes and woodlots. History has indicated that preferences vary over time, and forms of development also change. Changes in social values and/or needs will require plan forecasts and maps to be revised. The county should be prepared to adjust not only the figures related to acreage needs but also the landscape (spatial) development pattern to reflect changing needs and desires.

8.17 LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

A set of recommended goals, objectives and action steps has been developed to assist the county with existing and future land use activities.

<p>Goal: Protect, preserve, and manage the land resources in Washburn County by minimizing incompatible land uses and balance private property rights with that of the public interest. In so doing, improve the capacity for working, and the cooperative relationships between towns and counties in order to maximize local capacity for land use decision-making.</p>	
Objectives	Action-Plan
<p>1. Improve the county’s capacity to function efficiently as a liaison with state and local governments, and other agencies dealing with land use development or activities.</p>	<p>Coordinate necessary meetings between the county and state and local agencies to discuss land use activities and their relationship to one another.</p>
<p>2. Ensure that towns, villages, and cities have information relevant to county, state, and federal land management practices and policies.</p>	<p>Provide towns with documents relating to county, state, and federally owned or managed properties.</p> <hr/> <p>County, state and federal department heads (planning, land/water, zoning, forest, highway) shall meet at least annually with local towns, individually or at Wisconsin Towns Association Unit meetings to discuss land use activities or issues relevant to their management area.</p>
<p>3. Improve the working relationship between the County Zoning Department/ Committee and town boards pertaining to zoning related matters.</p>	<p>Create a transparent and uniform process for land use decision-making between the county and town boards as part of the building permit and zoning process.</p> <hr/> <p>Develop a uniform template to include a checklist of items required for use by all towns under county zoning that would be used in making land-use recommendations, so that the towns and zoning department/committee have the same information in which to base their recommendations.</p>

<p>4. Ensure county and town use of the comprehensive plans on all levels is consistent.</p>	<p>Incorporate all town comprehensive plans into the countywide plan; begin adoption process.</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <p>Invite all town boards and plan commissions to participate in a biannual planning conference to be convened by the county.</p>
<p>5. Enforce current and future zoning laws.</p>	<p>Develop and implement an enforcement policy and manual.</p>
<p>6. Ensure that the county zoning ordinance and official map are consistent with the town comprehensive plans.</p>	<p>Develop and implement a comprehensive revision of zoning ordinances and maps.</p>