

LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

Land use activity is the product of natural and human activities shaping the landscape. The prime concern of land use planning is understanding the overall relationship of human and natural influences by examining past trends, present conditions, and proposed and future uses. Appropriate land use planning decisions must be based upon a sound understanding of past, present, and future trends for the maximum benefit to be realized by the community.

LAND USE CHARACTERISTICS

Uses of the Land

Comparing the amount of land “developed” versus “undeveloped”, overall the land area is vastly undeveloped. However, a significant number of persons live in close proximity to one another due to residential development of lake shore property. As a percentage, forestry is the dominant land use category. Table 8.1 represents land use by category.

Table 8.1 Land Use

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Forestry	61,300	87.97
Open Water	5,634	8.09
Residential	1,885	2.71
Agriculture	432	0.62
Golf Course	246	0.35
Commercial/Resort	160	0.23
Government	24	0.03
Total	69,681	100%

Public land ownership plays a significant factor in the local development pattern. Town, County, State, and Federal land holdings limit residential and other land use development from occurring on nearly 60% of area land. Private land ownership represents nearly one-third of the land area (see Table 8.2)

Table 8.2 Public and Private Ownership

	Acres	Percent of Town Land
Public Ownership		
National Forest	32718	46.95
Sawyer County	7944	11.40
State of Wisconsin	70	0.10
Private Ownership	23,314	33.46
Open Water (non-land area)	5635	8.09
Total	69,681	100%

Source: NWRPC GIS database

TRENDS IN LAND - SUPPLY, DEMAND AND PRICE

Supply

A significant amount of land is county, state or federally owned, with approximately 34% of the land owned privately. The past three to five years saw rapid housing development, primarily on lake shore properties. While it is difficult to predict, there will always be a supply of available land for sale. However, whether this land is buildable and affordable remains the question.

Demand

The greatest demand for land is currently along and near the Birkibeiner ski trail and in the Town’s northwest corner. This demand is likely the result of access to the ski trail and the Chequamegon Mountain Bike Trails and the relative proximity to Hayward and Cable.

The Town has not seen a demand for manufacturing property nor is there expected to be a demand. Manufacturing enterprises have located in and around key communities within the county where primary municipal services (water/sewer) are readily available and where greater access to the transportation network is found. Little demand is present for the establishment of commercial retail development. While a few family-resorts still remain, many have been sold off over the years as condominiums.

Price

The price of land is per front foot and without a doubt is one variable that fluctuates from year to year based on local and national economic trends. Lake shore frontage has the highest price value with land selling from \$1,200 to \$2,000 per front foot, depending on location and desirability of the frontage. Woodlands vary from \$2,500 to \$3,500 per acre with some 5-acre development tracts selling for between \$35,000 and \$45,000.

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES & EXISTING LAND USE CONFLICTS

Redevelopment

Opportunities for redevelopment in the Town are relatively limited and lie in either rehabilitating or demolishing abandoned residential dwellings. As previously noted manufacturing properties

are not present. While some commercial establishments may be vacant, redevelopment is likely due to their proximity to recreational areas.

Conflicts

While existing land use conflicts are limited, one area may be the home rental with or without property management as some of the renters are not advised of Town ordinances. While there always remains the potential for land use conflicts, the Town sees no major concern at present.

LAND USE PROJECTIONS

Land use characteristics and the transition from one land use type to another is based on a combination of factors, and are influenced by local, regional and national trends. Year-round population has continued to increase. Since at least 1950, the Town’s population has seen a strong increase every decennial census year. Future projections point to a continued increase, however smaller than past trends. While not used in future land use projections, the seasonal population is a significant factor contributing to the overall community population and residential development. The assumptions used in projecting over the 20 year planning horizon are based on assessment data covering 1980-2006 and demographic trends.

Residential

Over the planning horizon, residential development will continue to occur, represented by both year-round and seasonal dwellings. The trends toward larger residential lots and homes is predicted to continue and will influence the need for additional residential acreage. While the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) population projections show a significantly slowing trend to 2025, local consensus puts the growth per decade at about 40 persons. Persons per household have declined significantly since 1980 and are predicted to be below 2.0 persons per household in 2010. With a projected population increase and a declining persons per household housing growth is occur.

DOA projections identify a year-round household increase of 47 to 2025 while other projections identify 56 over the next 20 years. Seasonal housing development continues to influence residential development. Based on assessment data for residential acreage, a total of 499 residential acres was added from 2000-2006 (approx 83.2 acres year). It is believed seasonal and year-round residential development will continue to influence the need for residential acreage.

Table 8.3 Future Residential Acreage Needs

	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Residential Acres	2,824	3,157	3,573	3,989	4,405	4,821
Change in Acres		333	416	416	416	416

Commercial

Up until 2000 commercially accessed acreage had seen steady declines. Data from 2006 identifies an increase of 54 acres since 2000. However, improved parcels declined. The Town’s rural location and population levels cannot support a central business district and large commercial/retail complexes. While data represented from 1980-2000 in Table 8.6 reveals a decline, an increase was identified from 2000-2006. For these reasons, it is predicted that limited

commercial acreage will be needed. However, in the future if local trends change, and greater demand for commercial acreage appears a revision to these figures is recommended.

Table 8.4 Future Commercial Acreage Needs

	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Commercial Acres	416	452	497	542	587	632
Change in Acres		36	45	45	45	45

Manufacturing

The Town has no manufacturing activity and is not projected to have any in the future.

Agricultural

The percentage of land attributed to agriculture by percentage is relatively small. While assessment data represented in Table 8.6 trended to a decline in acreage from 1998 to 2000, 2006 data identified a significant increase. However it is thought this increase was not an actual increase in agricultural practices, rather a reassessment of properties due to a tax law change in valuing agricultural land. However a slight change in agricultural acreage is projected anticipated additional change in agricultural assessed land.

Table 8.5 Future Agricultural Acreage Needs

	2006	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Agricultural Acres	611	623	638	653	668	683
Change in Acres		12	15	15	15	15

TAX PARCEL TRENDS, 1980-2006

Examining past trends can serve as an indicator of future occurrences. Table 8.6 demonstrates the number, acreage, and value characteristics of the Town’s privately owned lands in seven tax classification categories: residential, commercial, forestry, manufacturing, agricultural, undeveloped, and other.

Table 8.6: Parcel Counts and Tax Assessment Values

RESIDENTIAL	1980	1988	1993	2000	2006
TOTAL PARCELS	577	754	801	945	1,011
IMPROVED PARCELS	418	544	606	711	789
TOTAL ACRES	2,049	1986	1955	2325	2824
LAND VALUE \$	5,699,911	10,392,350	13,938,400	34,962,200	176,317,400
IMPROVED VALUE \$	9,698,534	18,801,970	27,677,900	64,574,300	93,113,000
TOTAL VALUE \$	15,398,445	29,194,320	41,616,300	99,536,500	269,430,400
AVERAGE PARCEL SIZE	3.55	2.63	2.44	2.46	2.79

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COMMERCIAL	1980	1988	1993	2000	2006
TOTAL PARCELS	54	67	61	56	57
IMPROVED PARCELS	49	65	58	52	49
TOTAL ACRES	749	617	542	362	416
LAND VALUE \$	2,142,810	2,200,200	2,451,700	2,467,500	11,227,600
IMPROVED VALUE \$	2,780,528	3,601,400	4,520,900	5,791,800	8,301,000
TOTAL VALUE \$	4,923,338	5,801,600	6,972,600	8,259,300	19,528,600
AVERAGE PARCEL SIZE	13.8	9.20	8.80	6.46	7.29

MANUFACTURING	1980	1988	1993	2000	2006
TOTAL PARCELS	0	0	0	0	0

FORESTRY	1980	1988	1993	2000	2006*
TOTAL PARCELS	533	484	480	494	537
IMPROVED PARCELS	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL ACRES	18,284	14,226	14,133	13,943	12,868
LAND VALUE\$	3,131,331	3,131,350	3,101,600	8,787,400	32,282,100
IMPROVED VALUE \$	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL VALUE \$	3,131,331	3,131,350	3,101,600	8,787,400	32,282,100
AVERAGE PARCEL SIZE	34.3	29.4	29.4	28.2	23.9

*combines forest and ag forest

AGRICULTURAL	1980	1988	1993	2000	2006
TOTAL PARCELS	9	23	23	20	21
IMPROVED PARCELS	4	2	1	0	0
TOTAL ACRES	348	539	515	482	611
LAND VALUE \$	77,240	156,050	130,700	118,500	97,100
IMPROVED VALUE \$	109,330	110,300	84,200	0	0
TOTAL VALUE \$	186,570	266,350	214,900	118,500	97,100
AVERAGE PARCEL SIZE	38.7	23.4	22.4	24.1	29.1

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UNDEVELOPED	1980	1988	1993	2000	2006
TOTAL PARCELS	18	233	232	240	232
IMPROVED PARCELS	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL ACRES	258	3,322	3,247	3,225	2,811
LAND VALUE \$	6,280	88,850	93,300	182,200	1,323,600
IMPROVED VALUE \$	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL VALUE \$	6,280	88,850	93,300	182,200	1,323,600

OTHER	1980	1988	1993	2000	2006
TOTAL PARCELS	0	0	0	1	1
IMPROVED PARCELS	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL ACRES	0	0	0	3	3
LAND VALUE \$	0	0	0	7,500	15,500
IMPROVED VALUE \$	0	0	0	122,000	161,500
TOTAL VALUE \$	0	0	0	129,500	177,000

TOTAL TAX ACRES	21,688	20,690	20,392	20,337	19,533
TOTAL ASSESSED VALUE*					322,838,800

- Does not include personal property

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue, *Sawyer County Statistical Report of Property Values, 1980, 1988, 1993, 2000, 2006*

An analysis of the above data reveals a number of trends taking place. These changes will have land use, taxation, and other impacts.

Residential Parcels

Residential growth has continued to expand during the period with a net gain of 775 residential acres. Of note, total residential parcels and parcels with improvements both grew steadily from 1980 to 2006. While the average residential parcel size decreased during the first half of the period, during the second half of 2000 shows a trending increase in parcel size, from 2.44 acres in 1993 to 2.44 to 2.76 acres in 2006. The early decrease in parcel size may indicate the subdivision of existing residential parcels (particularly in lakeshore areas) and emergence of smaller parcels in off-lake areas, while the trend in increased parcel size may be attributed to the more recent development of 5-acre plus residential subdivision lots and personal demand for larger acre lots.

Commercial Parcels

The total number of commercial parcels and improved parcels has continued to remain relatively stable. While the trend from 1980 to 2000 showed a net loss of 387 acres of commercial land, the period from 2000 through 2006 showed an increase of 54 acres. The early decline suggests the sale and conversion of commercial parcels for other uses (primarily residential) and overall the loss of resorts and resort related business activity in the Town.

Manufacturing Parcels

The Town reported no parcels assessed for industrial or manufacturing use for the period of 1980 to 2006.

Forestry Parcels

The number of forest parcels had been declining until 2006 when forest and ag forest parcels were combined. For the reporting period (Table 8.6) a net loss of 5,416 acres was realized. These declines may be accounted for due to the conversion of some forest parcels into residential use and the transfer of private forest lands into public ownership. Of note, the average forestry parcel size has gradually decreased from 34.3 acres in 1980 to 23.9 acres in 2006. This change also reflects the on-going subdivision and sale of forest parcels for residential development or other non-forest uses in the Town.

Forest land valuations have increased dramatically in recent years partly as a result of increasing raw land values for recreational properties and partly as a result of increasing stumpage values. Lands classified as forest land represent 88 percent of all land and water acreage.

Publicly owned forest land totals 40,732 acres or 66 percent of the total forest land. The vast majority of the public forest land is national forest (32,719 acres). While harvest levels from national forest lands nationally have declined dramatically, harvest levels on the Chequamegon/Nicolet have remained fairly stable. This is expected to continue in the near future barring major changes in policy or appeals by environmental groups.

The national forests in general tend to emphasize management directed at maintaining certain wildlife and plant species or unique habitats compared to the more multiple use type – orientation of state and county land managers. The amount of management undertaken also tends to be higher on county properties compared to national forest properties on a per acre basis.

Research has also shown that most privately owned forest land will be harvested in some manner over time and that a large percentage of that harvest will be done in the absence of a management plan.

Agricultural Parcels

Data points to a slight increase in agricultural parcels (net gain of 12 parcels) from 1980-2006 and a significant increase in agricultural acres (net gain of 263 acre) from 1980-2006.

Undeveloped (formerly swamp and waste parcels represented in 1980, 1988, 1993, and 2000)

This category is comprised of marshlands, swamps, and forested areas unable to produce marketable timber. Very little changes have occurred in this classification since 1988, with the exception of the “value” of land in 2006 being \$1,141,400 higher than represented in 2000.

Other

The emergence of the “other” category also reflects the Wisconsin Department of Revenue tax classification reassessment of 1998. Parcels in this “other” category are primarily lands with buildings and improvements used for agricultural purposes.

Total Taxable Acreage

The years since 1980 have seen a net decline of 2,155 acres from the Town’s taxable land. This gradual decline indicates that a continual amount of the Town’s privately held lands are being

transferred, either through direct sale, deed, or other arrangement into public ownership. The 26 year span and 2,155 acre decline represents a loss of 82.8 acres per year.

TOWN ENFORCED LAND USE ORDINANCES

Spider Lake continues to be the only town in Sawyer County with its own adopted and enforced zoning ordinance and other land use controls.

EXISTING LAND USE

In the Town of Spider Lake, forestry is the dominant land use as is evidenced by Map 8.1. Less than 88 percent of the Town is in forest, most of which is found in the Chequamegon National Forest.

As is illustrated in Map 8.2, residential areas are found in the highest concentrations around the lakeshore areas and the western portion of the Town. State and county held lands—primarily forested lands—are found in the west and northwestern area of the Town, while the eastern portion of the Town is dominated by the federal holdings of the Chequamegon National Forest.

Public Ownership

Approximately two-thirds of the Town of Spider Lake is in public (county, state, federal) ownership (Map 8.3). Table 8.2 indicates the exact acreage of these public holdings compared to private lands and open water areas.

Forest Crop / Woodland Tax Areas

Of the 23,814 acres in private ownership, 2,039 acres (8.7%) are enrolled in the Forest Crop, Woodland Tax, or Managed Forest Crop programs.

Open Water / Shoreline

As is indicated in the table above, just over 8 percent of the Town is open water. The Town has a total of 109 miles of shoreline, of which, 29 miles (26.6% of shoreline) is in public ownership.