



Comprehensive Plan

Town of Big Bend Rusk County, Wisconsin

Prepared by Planning Commission Committee

September 11 2021

Town of Big Bend

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Town of Big Bend Comprehensive Plan

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This document represents the core of the Town of Big Bend Comprehensive Plan. It outlines the Town's goals and objectives to address the issues and opportunities identified in the Town Survey to guide future growth. Goals and objectives have been developed relative to each of the required nine plan elements. For each of the goals and objectives, specific policies, strategies and/or actions are indicated to enable the Town to achieve them. The Implementation Element at the end of this document compiles and prioritizes all the recommended action steps and identifies who is responsible for implementation.

Goals, Objectives, Policies, Strategies & Actions

This document investigates a variety of goals, objective, policies, strategies and actions the Town has identified. Definitions are provided below to clarify the purpose and intent of each of these.

Definitions:

- Goal: A goal is a statement that describes a desired future condition. The statement is broad in scope and describes general concepts or things the community hopes to accomplish.
- Objective: An objective is a statement that describes a specific course of action to achieve a goal or address an issue.
- Policy: A policy is a general course of action or rule of conduct to be followed to achieve community goals and objectives.
- Strategies: As the name implies, strategies are strategic approaches that may involve a series of individual actions to achieve a specific goal or objective.
- Actions: An action describes a specific effort that will be undertaken to achieve a specific goal or objective.

1. ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction and Historical Summary

The Town of Big Bend was formed in 1875, while still part of Chippewa County. Rusk County was established in 1901. It is comprised of 36 sections of Wisconsin's congressional township 33 north, range 8 west in Southwestern Rusk County (See Map 1). Rusk County (originally named Gates County) was created from Chippewa County in 1901. In 1905, the name was changed to commemorate Jeremiah Rusk, a Civil War hero. The County is bordered by Barron County to the west, Chippewa and Taylor Counties to the south, Price County to the east, and Sawyer County to the north. The total area is approximately 645,748 acres, or 931 square miles. Twenty-four towns, eight villages, and one city are included in the County. Ladysmith is the largest municipality in the County and is the county seat.



Planning Process

The Town of Big Bend took it upon themselves to fund the development of a comprehensive plan. Work on the Town of Big Bend comprehensive plan began in October 2017 to devise a comprehensive plan in accordance with §66.1001 that was to be concluded in June 2020. A Planning Commission was tasked to oversee the development of the plan. In April of 2019, a Comprehensive Land Use Planning Community Survey was mailed to each property owner in the Town of Big Bend to get input on land use issues facing the town. The results were compiled and presented at a Town meeting and on the Town Web Site.

Public Participation Procedures

The Town of Big Bend recognizes the need to engage the public in the comprehensive planning process. Public involvement provides the citizens of the town an opportunity to express their views, ideas, and opinions on issues they would like addressed on future development of Big Bend. These procedures form the basic framework for achieving an interactive dialog between citizens and local decision-makers.

Comprehensive Land Use Survey

In an effort to gain as much public participation as possible, the Town of Big Bend mailed survey in April 2019 to 654 property owners, with 294 surveys returned, providing a 45% response rate. Results of the survey will be provided throughout this document. Complete results can be found in **Appendix A**.

TOWN DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Big Bend's population has grown steadily since 1950. As displayed in the table below, the town experienced a 16.4 percent increase in the last 50 years. Rusk County's population has increased by 4.8 percent in the last 50 years. The town is about 2.5 percent of the total population of Rusk County.

Annually, the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) publishes population estimates for all municipalities in the state. The 2019 population estimate for the Town of Big Bend is 377 and 14,919 for Rusk County.

<i>Historic Population</i>								
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008	2010	2019	% Change 1950-2000
Town of Big Bend	324	398	386	402	429	358	377	+16.4%
Rusk County	14,238	15,589	15,079	15,347	15,657	14,755	14,919	4.8%

Source: US Census Bureau & WDOA

Population projections for the Town of Big Bend and Rusk County, generated by the WDOA, are displayed through 2030. Big Bend is projected to continue to have a modest, decease in growth through 2030. Rusk County is projected to increase by only 0.2% or 31 persons.

<i>Population Projections</i>						
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	% Change 2010-2030
Town of Big Bend	358	365	355	350	346	-3.4%
Rusk County	15,591	15,709	15,787	15,766	15,622	+0.2%

Source: WDOA

Age

Tables below depict the age distribution of Rusk County residents according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Also depicts the age distribution of Big Bend residents according to the 2010 U.S. Census

<i>Demographic Age 2017 – Town of Big Bend</i>		
Age category	Demographic Age	
85 years and over	7.0	
75 to 84 years	30.0	
65 to 74 years	73.0	
55 to 64 years	91.0	
45 to 54 years	65.0	
35 to 44 years	26.0	
25 to 34 years	10.0	
20 to 24 years	10.0	
15 to 19 years	12.0	
5 to 14 years	9.0	
Under 5 years	9.0	
Selected age categories		
All over 75 years	37	
All over 65 years	110	
All under 18 years	30	
All under 14 years	18	

<i>Demographic Age 2017 – Rusk County</i>		
Age category	Demographic Age	
85 years and over	464	
75 to 84 years	1,018	
65 to 74 years	1,753	
55 to 64 years	2,423	
45 to 54 years	2,018	
35 to 44 years	1,432	
25 to 34 years	1,160	
19 to 24 years	679	
15 to 18 years	858	
5 to 14 years	1,720	
Under 5 years	686	
Selected age categories		
All over 75 years	1,482	
All over 65 years	3,235	
All under 18 years	3,264	
All under 14 years	2,406	

Source: US Census Bureau, 2013-2017

Educational Levels

The 2017 U.S. Census showed that nearly 60.6 percent of Big Bend residents 25 years and older had a high school diploma. Big Bend has a lower percentage of people with less than a 9th grade education than the County. Table below provides a summary of educational attainment in Big Bend, Rusk County and the State of Wisconsin.

Town of Big Bend Educational Attainment

Attainment Level	Town of Big Bend	Rusk County	Wisconsin
Less than 9 th grade	4.6%	4.8%	2.8%
9 th to 10 th grade, no diploma	8.0%	8.2%	5.5%
High school graduate	26.2%	42.5%	31.3%
Some college, no degree	26.7%	19.0%	20.9%
Associate degree	5.9%	10.7%	10.5%
Bachelor's degree	17.2%	10.0%	19.2%
Graduate or professional degree	11.3%	4.8%	9.9%

Source: 2017 U.S. Census Bureau

Household Characteristics & Forecasts

A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit. The number of households in the town has remained flat from 1980 to 2020. Projections indicate it to remain flat through 2035. Follow table details past, present and future household numbers for the Town of Big Bend.

Past, Present & Future Households, Town of Big Bend

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040		
Households	182	191	190	191	190	190	184		

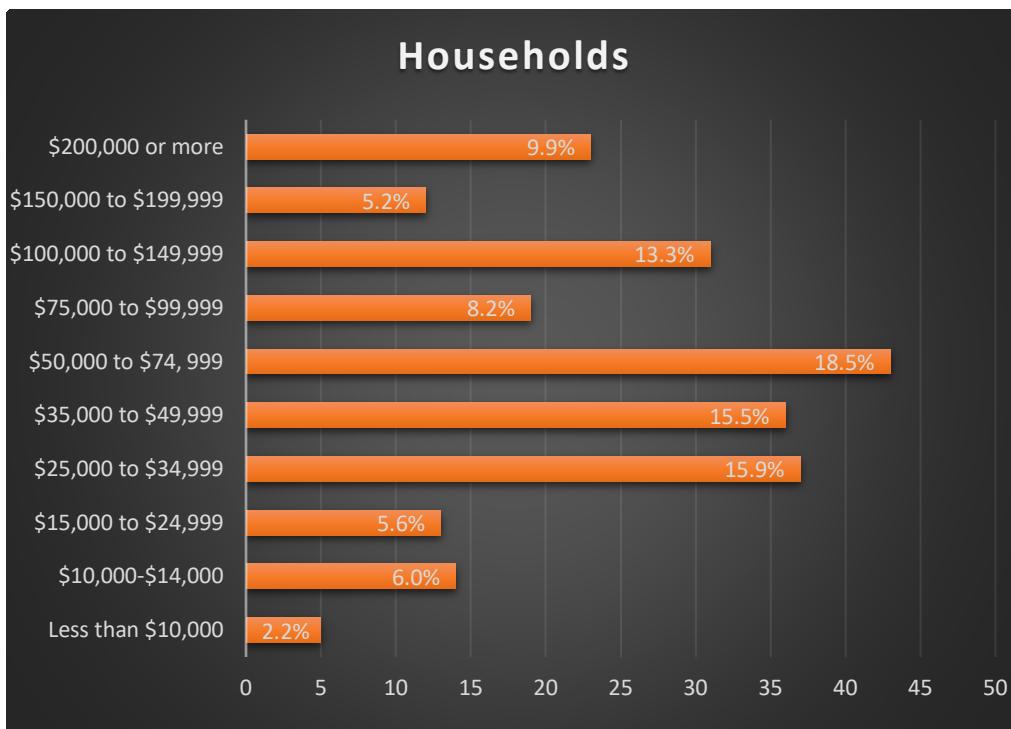
Source: U.S. Census and WDOA

Of the 191 total households in 2017, 159 were family households (households are those with two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption) and 74 non-family households. Of the 159 family households, 22 included children under 18. See following table for more household characteristics.

<i>Household Characteristics</i>	
Total households	191
Family households (families)	83.3%
With own children under 18 years	11.5%
Married-couple family	69.2%
With own children under 18 years	24.6%
Female householder, no husband present	4.2%
With own children under 18 years	1.6%
Non-Family households	38.7%
Householder living alone	30.4%
Householder 65 years and over	16.8%
Average Household Size	2.51

Income Levels

In 2017 the median household income in Big Bend was \$63,021, which was greater than both Rusk County (\$41,930) and the state (\$56,759). Of the total households in the town, 34 percent of the population had a household income between \$35,000 and \$75,000. Figure 3 details 2017 household income in Big Bend.



Household income characteristics for the Town of Big Bend are shown in following table.

<i>Town of Big Bend Household Income Characteristics</i>		
	Number	Percent
With earnings	148	63.5%
Mean earnings (dollars)	\$70313	(x)
With Social Security income	107	45.9%
Mean Social Security income (dollars)	\$19716	(x)
With Supplemental Security Income	3	3.9%
Mean Supplemental Security Income (dollars)	\$11489	(x)
Median Household Income	\$70313	(x)

Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

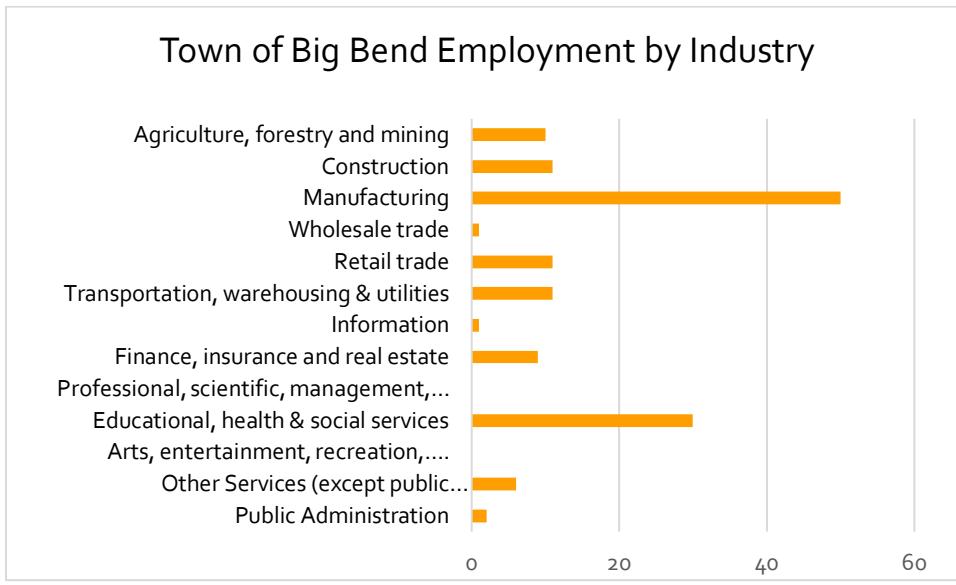
Employment Characteristics & Projections

In 2017, the Town of Big Bend had 409 people who were 16 years and older. Of those, 220 were in the labor force having 51.8 percent employed and 2 percent unemployed. Of the total population, 189 were not in the labor force. Following table details the employment status in the Town of Big Bend in 2017.

<i>Town of Big Bend Employment Status</i>		
	Number	Percent
Population 16 years and over	409	100.0
In labor force	220	53.7%
Employed	212	51.8%
Unemployed	8	2.0%
Armed Forces	-	(x)
Not in labor force	189	46.2%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau

Town of Big Bend employment by industry.



Source: WI Dept. of Workforce Development

Overall Goal Statement

The overall goal is to maintain the quality of life in the Town of Big Bend. To do this, the overall objective of the Town of Big Bend is to guide future development and redevelopment of the community in a manner consistent with the element goals, objectives, actions, and identified programs contained in this document. The overall result is to adopt and implement the comprehensive plan and continue to work with the county and adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions.

2. HOUSING

Introduction

Housing characteristics are indicative of the social economic conditions of a township's residents and are an important element of a comprehensive plan. The ability of a township to address the demand for housing is vital to its economic viability and the well-being of its inhabitants. Adequate housing is a cornerstone of every community. By studying housing characteristics, we can gain an understanding and insight into changes taking place in the community. This element will contain a compilation of goals, objectives, policies and programs specific to the Town of Big Bend, including housing stock assessment information for occupancy, age, structural and value characteristics.

2.1 Housing Characteristics

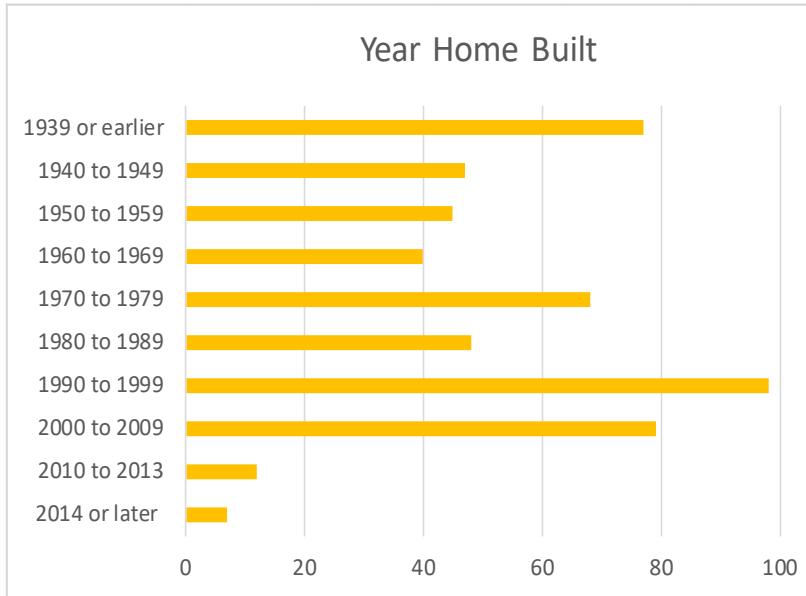
Occupancy Characteristics

Town of Big Bend Occupancy Characteristics			
	2000	2010	2020
Total Housing Units	411	455	
Total Occupied Housing Units	184	182	
Owner Occupied Housing Units	169	161	
Renter Occupied Housing Units	15	21	
Seasonal Units	227	273	
Average Household Size	2.18	1.97	

Source: US Census Bureau

Age of Housing Stock and Structural Characteristics

The 2017 American Community Survey reports 33.9% of all housing units in the town of Big Bend were built between the years 1990 and 2009.



Housing stock characteristics comparisons table shows a direct comparison of the Town of Big Bend to its surrounding townships. These include units in structure, rooms, mobile homes and any lack of utilities and facilities.

Physical Housing Stock Characteristics Comparisons							
Community	Median Rooms	Units in Structure		Mobile Home	Lacking	Lacking	Lacking
		1 unit detached	1 unit attached		Plumbing Facilities	Kitchen Facilities	Telephone Service
Town of Big Bend	5.2	474	1	38	0	0	1
Town Of Rusk	4.8	513	0	47	0	0	14
Town of Stubbs	5.4	301	0	43	0	0	2

Source: American Community Survey

Home heating fuel chart shows the usage of various methods Town of Big Bend residents use to heat their homes. Most homes are heated with bottled, tank, or liquid propane gas. No homes were heated with solar energy.

Home Heating Fuel	
Type of Fuel	Number
Utility Gas	14
Bottles, tank, or LP gas	147
Electricity	21
Fuel Oil, kerosene, etc.	15
Wood	30
Solar Energy	0
No Fuel Used	0

Source: American Community Survey 2017

Value Characteristics

Long form census data is one type of statistical data represented in this chapter. Specified owner – occupied housing units is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as the following: Total number of owner-occupied housing units described as either a one-family home detached from any other house or a one-family house attached to one or more houses on less than 10 acres with no business on the property.

A breakdown of existing housing values in Town of Big Bend reflect that of the 208 specified owner-occupied housing units, the category with the most houses are homes valued between \$300,000 and \$499,999 at 25.5%. Right behind that category is home valuation of \$50,000 to \$99,999 at 16.3%. Affordability of owner-and-renter-occupied units is critical to sustaining population and employment levels for local businesses.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), affordable housing costs, including taxes, mortgage or rent payments, utilities, and insurance should not be greater than 30 percent of the total household income. If it would be greater than that, households may have a more difficult time making ends meet. The table below shows the monthly owner costs as a percent of household income, as reported by the 2017 American Community Survey.

Monthly Owner Costs as a % of Household Income		
% of Household Income	Units	% of Specified Units
Less Than 20 percent	64	58.20%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	11	10.0%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	4	3.6%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	5	4.5%
35.0 percent or more	26	23.6%

Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Rental costs vary based on many factors, including the quality of housing, overall size of the housing unit, and the number of bedrooms. In 2015, there were 24 renter-occupied units identified within Town of Big Bend. Below, gives the number of renter-occupied units by amount of gross rent. The median gross was \$833.00.

Renter - Occupied Housing by Gross Rent		
Gross Rent	Units	% of Specified Units
Less than \$500	9	37.5%
\$500 to \$999	14	58.3%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	1	4.2%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	0	0.0%

Source: 2017 American Community Survey

Rentals costs can significantly impact affordability of the percent of costs associated with housing. Following the recommended guidelines from HUD, affordable rental costs (utilities and rent) should not be greater than 30 percent of the total household income. Based on the data from the American Community Survey, 33.3 percent of rental units have rental costs exceeding 30 percent of household income.

Gross Rent as a % of Household Income		
% of Household Income	Units	% of Specified Units
Less than 15%	5	20.8%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	8	33.3%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	3	12.5%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	0	0.0%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	2	8.3%
35.0 percent or more	6	25.0%

Source: 2017 American Community Survey

2.2 Survey Data Summary

Based on the 2019 Town of Big Bend Property Owner Survey, future growth should come from the following:

- Residential Single-Family Homes
 - 5 acres or more
 - 1 – 2 acre subdivision lots
- Senior/Assisted Living Units

Goal:

Promote a diversified, affordable, and safe housing stock that meets the needs of current and future residents.

Objectives:

1. Support the development of housing units that meet the needs of current and future residents.
2. Promote the development/maintaining of housing to meet the needs of an aging population.
3. Promote the development/maintaining of properties that are suitable for first time home buyers and new residents to the Town of Big Bend.

Actions:

- A. Identify suitable sites for housing.
- B. Identify housing stock needs.
- C. Monitor effect of housing/development on the Town of Big Bend.

3. TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Town of Big Bend transportation network is a vital element of the community. Efficient growth depends on a transportation system capable of moving people, goods and services to, from and within the Town. The coordination of transportation improvements and land use can result in a more pleasant community functioning with greater efficiency, at less expense. The following elements will inventory the existing transportation network in the Town of Big Bend.

Road Network

The Town of Big Bend's transportation system consists of State Highway (STH 40) two County Highways (CTH D and CTH F) and local town roads. The table below represents the functional road classification for the Town of Big Bend with approximate mileage for each classification.

Functional Road Class	
Classification	Miles
Principal arterials	0.00
Minor arterials (STH 40)	6.00
Collectors (CTH D and CTH F)	9.85
Local (town roads - 21 miles paved/ 22.28 miles gravel)	43.28

Source: Town of Big Bend and WISDOT

Local Roads

The Town of Big Bend is responsible for the maintenance of 43.28 miles of town roads. Wisconsin DOT requires that all local units of government submit road condition rating data every two years as part of the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR). The town utilizes the Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating (PASER) program to manage pavement to aid them in meeting these requirements. During a recent town survey of homeowners, in the spring of 2019, the following facts were discovered:

- 90.9% of the residents of the Town of Big Bend work outside of the town.

- 82.1% of the residents found the overall condition of our local roads were adequate.
- 90.5% of the residents found the snow removal adequate.

Traffic Counts

In terms of traffic volumes, the Wisconsin DOT uses Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts. 2017 was the most recent traffic count taken in the Town of Big Bend at two locations. Table below details them.

2017 AADT - Town of Big Bend	
STH 40 (2 Miles North of CTH D)	730
CTH D (1 Mile West of STH 40)	310
Source: Wisconsin DOT	

Transportation Modes of Transportation

Transportation options in the Town of Big Bend are very limited due to the rural nature of the Town. Table below displays the current status of the modes of transportation in the Town of Big Bend. County, State VA Medical and handicap accessible transportation is available to Big Bend residents through the Rusk County Transit Commission located in City of Ladysmith. The closest passenger rail service is located in Tomah and the closest commercial railroad is Canadian National. The closest airport is Rusk County Airport located in Tony.

Modes and Status of Transportation - Town of Big Bend	
Transit	Public transportation is available through the Rusk County Transit Commission
Trucking	Supported by the local road network.
Rail	No rail transportation is available.
Air	No airports/airfields in Big Bend. Town has an emergency services helipad
Water	Water transportation is recreation-based
Walking/Bicycles	Supported by the local road network.
Recreation ATV, UTV and snowmobile	Supported by Rusk County Snowmobile trails. Most town roads are open to ATV and UTV traffic.
Source: Indianhead Community Action Agency (ICAA)	

State, Regional and Other Transportation Plans

The Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Legislation requires that the Town of Big Bend incorporate any applicable state, regional and other transportation plans including:

State, Regional and Other Transportation Plans			
	State Plans	Regional Plans	Other Plans
Transportation corridor plans	Corridors 2020 Connections 2030 TRANSLINKS 21		
County highway functional and jurisdictional studies	n/a		
Urban area transportation plans	n/a		
Rural area transportation plans	WI Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020 WI Pedestrian Policy Plan 2020 WI State Highway Plan 2020	Rusk County Highway Department Budget	
Airport master plans	WI Airport System Plan 2020		
Rail plans	WI Rail Issues and Opportunities Report		

After comparing plans, there have been no problems identified between the plans listed above and transportation goals, objectives and policies in the Town of Big Bend Comprehensive Plan.

4. UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Introduction

This element contains an inventory with background information on utilities and community facilities in the Town of Big Bend as well as an assessment of future needs for the same utilities and community facilities.

Existing Utilities and Community Facilities

Many of the existing utilities and community facilities in the Town of Big Bend are provided by private companies or government agencies. The table below goes through each utility and community facility and provides a brief description of each.

Town of Big Bend Utilities and Community Assessment	
Utility/Community Service	Description
Sanitary Sewer Service	Town of Big Bend does not have sanitary sewer service.
Storm Water Management	Storm water is managed through a series of ditches and culverts.
Water Supply	Potable water is obtained through individual private wells.
Solid Waste Disposal	Residents can bring waste to garbage disposal facility located at the Town Hall and pay per bag or contract with a waste hauler for these services. Waste Management, Republic Services and Swift Sanitation provide garbage collection services. The nearest commercial waste disposal is Timberline Trail located at N4581 N Hutchinson Road, Weyerhaeuser, WI 54895
Recycling Facilities	Residents can bring recyclables to the same place as garbage disposal, Town Hall. Recycling is provided by the Rusk County Recycling Program and the Town of Big Bend. Recycling services can be contracted through the vendors listed under solid waste disposal.
Telecommunications Facilities	Citizens Connected (New Auburn), Bruce Telephone Co (Bruce) and Bevcomm (Weyerhaeuser) provide local landline and Internet service to the Town. Cell phone service is obtained through numerous retailers
Electricity	Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative and Xcel Energy provide electrical needs.
Cemeteries	Island Lake Cemetery located on STH 40 and Indian Mission Cemetery
Health Care Facilities	Marshfield Medical Center Campus and Prevea in Ladysmith providing emergency and hospital services.

Town of Big Bend Utilities and Community Assessment (Continued)	
Utility/Community Service	Description
Law Enforcement	Law enforcement is provided to Big Bend by the Rusk County Sheriff's Department, Ladysmith.
Fire Protection	Fire protection is provided by Bruce Fire Department and Weyerhaeuser Fire Department.
EMS	Provided by Rusk County Ambulance Service.
Public Schools	Bruce, Holcombe and Chetek/Weyerhaeuser provide public school services to the Town of Big Bend.
Public Boat Landing	Fireside Lake, Island Lake, McCann Lake, Potato Lake, Sand Lake and Hatch Landing.
Recreational Trails	Most Town and County roads are open to ATV, UTV and limited snowmobile access.
Town Hall/Garage	Located at N1195 Hwy 40 used for government and storage of town equipment.

The table below depicts an approximate forecast of the need to expand, rehabilitate existing or create new utilities and facilities. The assessment considers whether each of the listed utilities and community facilities will be adequate throughout the next twenty-year planning period. Most changes regarding community facilities will be maintenance related, such as the new plow truck in 2020. Other publicly owned facilities like schools, roads and emergency services are likely to change due wear, population shifts or an aging population. Privately owned utilities or facilities will change due to technology or market driven influences. No specific future needs were identified given the lack of population growth in the Town of Big Bend.

Town of Big Bend Utilities and Community Facilities Assessment	
Utility/Facility	Condition, Plans and Needs
Sanitary/Sewer Service	Landowners must comply with State and County regulations. No special needs were identified.
Storm Water Management	Culverts will be replaced as required. New developments must comply with Town Ordinances.
Water Supply	Wells must be in compliance with State and County regulations. No special needs were identified.
Solid Waste Disposal	Currently there are no plans to change the current public/private approach to services.
Recycling	Changes will certainly occur due to decreased demand for some recyclable products.

Telecommunication Facilities	Private providers will continue to expand broadband with State and Federal funding programs. No specific needs were identified.
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Town of Big Bend Utilities and Community Facilities Assessment	
Utility/Facility	Condition, Plans and Needs
Electricity	Renewable energy will continue to increase. No specific needs were identified.
Cemeteries	Island Lake Cemetery is maintained by an association. Indian Mission Cemetery is a historical site and maintained by the Town of Big Bend.
Health Care Facilities	Health care needs will continue to increase with the aging of our population.
Law Enforcement	No specific concerns were identified.
Fire Protection	Costs continue to increase as volunteer fire departments face problems with recruiting and retaining members.
EMS	First responders are facing the same problems as the volunteer fire departments.
Public Schools	The public schools will continue to provide a disproportionate amount of tax revenue per student to the township.
Public Boat Landings	The township has recognized a concern of maintenance of County owned boat landings.
Recreational Trails	The Town survey found a need to increase recreational opportunities in the future.
Town Hall/Garage	The Town Hall is very adequate and up to date. The garage and salt shed are also adequate, however maintenance could use additional storage area for seasonal equipment.

Our goal is to maintain the town's natural resources and rural character while providing adequate facilities, infrastructure and public services in a safe and cost-effective manner. During a survey of township property owners conducted in the Spring of 2019 the following strengths, weaknesses and opportunities were noted:

Why do you own property?

1. Hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation
2. Rural Environment
3. Proximity to Lakes and Rivers

What is missing in town?

1. Restaurants
2. Shopping
3. Trails

Biggest issues facing the Town of Big Bend

1. Keeping taxes low
2. Maintenance of Roads
3. Protecting environment

Using the survey results as a framework, the following goals, objectives and policies were adopted:

Town of Big Bend Utilities and Community Facilities Assessment	
Goal	
Providing adequate infrastructure, public services, and developable land to meet existing and future market demands	
Objectives	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make more information available to residents on proper maintenance of septic systems2. Consider potential impacts of development proposals on groundwater quality and quantity	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Explore opportunities to develop integrated multi-use trail systems and recreational facilities with State, County and private Landowners in the Town.4. Continue to provide ambulance, volunteer fire and first responder services to residents.5. Encourage recycling by residents.6. Encourage retail goods and services compatible with the towns rural recreational character.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Work with Lake Associations, Wildlife Restoration Association (WRA) and WI DNR to improve fishing and hunting habitat in the Town.	
Policies	
Research grants, subsidies or endowments relating to town facilities or public works whenever a project is proposed.	
Work with adjoining Towns, County, individual landowners, and the State to address known water quality issues.	
Maintain a Capital Improvements Plan for major equipment purchases.	
Share equipment and services across Town boundaries where possible.	

5. AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

OVERVIEW/ INTRODUCTION

Agricultural, natural and cultural resources section is based on the principle of achieving sound long range planning that protects prime agricultural resources of the Township while treating landowners in a fair and equitable manner. The historic sites, unique and scenic features along with natural resources are the elements which form a community's identity, establish it's uniqueness but retains its identity. Character and "Sense of Place" good planning helps rural communities promote agriculture and its contribution to rural economics, support appropriate development of land, manage renewable resources, avoid unnecessary conflicts among neighboring land uses, protect community features of special value, and encourage appropriate community development.

NATURAL RESOURCES

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The Town of Big Bend is in southern Rusk County and part of the Blue Diamond recreation area and was named for the big bend in the Chippewa River. Originally it was part of the Chippewa County. We have 35.3 total square miles, 43.28 miles of roads, 32.6 square miles of land and 2.7 miles of water including the Chippewa River, ten named lakes and many streams. There are two cemeteries, one owned by the Island Lake Cemetery Association and an Indian Mission Cemetery owned by the Town. The unincorporated Village of Island Lake lies within the town's boundaries.

SURFACE WATER

2.7 miles of water including the Chippewa River, 10 named lakes and many streams to include: Bog, Fireside, Clear, Goose, Island, McCann, Potato, Sand, School, Gilkey and other unnamed lakes.

OUTSTANDING AND EXCEPTIONAL WATERS

Outstanding and Exceptional Waters Wisconsin has classified many of the State's highest quality waters as Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs) or Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs). Waters designated as ORW or ERW are surface waters that provide outstanding recreational opportunities, support valuable fisheries, have unique hydrologic or geologic features, have unique environmental settings, and are not significantly impacted by human activities. The primary difference between the two is that ORW's typically do not have any direct point sources (e.g., industrial or municipal

sewage treatment plant, etc.) discharging pollutants directly to the water. Rusk County has four ERW's: Flambeau River, Jump River, Main Creek, and Soft Maple Creek (from CTH F to Chippewa River), and four ORW's: Chippewa River, Soft Maple Creek, Swift Creek, and Thornapple River. Parts of the Chippewa River occur in the Town of Big Bend.

GROUNDWATER

Groundwater is an important natural resource in Wisconsin and the Town of Big Bend. Homes receive their potable water through individual private wells. The depth to groundwater is the distance from the land surface to the water table. Depth to groundwater in Big Bend varies.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are areas in which water is at, near, or above the land surface and which are characterized by hydrophilic plants such as sedges, cattails, and other vegetation that grow in a very wet environment. Wetlands are critical natural resources that function in several ways that are beneficial to both people and wildlife.

AGRICULTURE

USDA Census of Agriculture for Rusk County shows that between 1997 and 2002 the county gained 19 farms but lost 2,851 acres of farmland.

What is a farm? Wisconsin farms can be diverse. There is no specific "right" definition of what a farm can be. The process to define what a farm is should begin with the inventory of agricultural operations in the community. Most government agencies that collect agricultural statistics define a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of the agricultural products were produced or sold in a normal year.

Farming trends - may lead planners into developing different approaches or policies for different parts of Rusk County.

Rusk County Farmland Trends:

1. Documenting the variability of town land use trends within county borders.
Understanding that counties can be diverse – both in terms of their natural resource base and land use trends, it may lead planners into developing different approaches or policies for different parts of Rusk County.
2. Helping local communities understand their own trends and to see how their situation compares to other townships.

3. Provide a statistical foundation for the development of new land use/comprehensive plans particularly the components of those designed to protect agriculture resources.

4. Encourage debate and dialogue at the town level (and across municipal boundaries) regarding land use trends and possible policy options. Having a common foundation of information can also facilitate inter-jurisdictional cooperation on regional land use plans with their neighboring communities

An overview of Natural Resources relate to most, if not all, of the comprehensive plan chapters. As a result, natural resource issues may arise relating to each specific chapter and implementation of actions, and objectives. Several key resources and supporting information will be reviewed outlining the importance or issues relating to natural resources, cultural resources, and agriculture.

Goals for natural resource use, protection, and restoration. Additionally, the information ties to the Land and Water Management Plan and Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan. Because the natural environment has fixed locations, communities have options regarding siting human development.

ARCHITECTURE, HISTORIC AND NATURAL RESOURCES GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**GOALS**

1. Protect natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, ponds, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.
2. Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.

Objectives

1. New development in the Town should not negatively impact natural resources.
2. Minimize impacts to natural resources in the Town from non-metallic mineral mining.
3. Encourage and support the preservation of natural open spaces that minimize flooding such as wetlands and floodplains.
4. Promote development that minimizes groundwater impacts from onsite septic systems and other sources.
5. Discourage the draining or filling of wetlands.

Policies

New development should be discouraged from areas shown to be unsafe or unsuitable for development due to flood hazard, potential groundwater contamination, loss of farmland, highway access problems, incompatibility with neighboring uses, etc.

Non-metallic mining operations or development of new sites should be allowed only on lands where the expansion will not conflict with preexisting development.

Reclamation of non-metallic mining sites should conform to the land use plan map in regard to the reclaimed use.

Agricultural Resources

Goals: Protect economically productive areas that are farmlands and commercial forests. Respect farms by allowing farming to continue without residential intrusion nearby.

Objectives

1. Support diversification of farming types and practices to maintain agriculture as a viable economic activity.
2. Existing agricultural uses and buildings should be taken into consideration when locating new development to avoid conflicts.
3. Preserve productive farmland for long-term agricultural uses

Policies

Non-farm development, particularly subdivisions, will be encouraged in areas away from intensive agricultural activities, in order to minimize farm and non-farm conflicts due to noise, odors, nitrates in well water, pesticides, farm/vehicle conflicts on roadways, late night plowing, etc.

Consider the use of such tools to protect sensitive areas, such transfer of development rights (TDR) or purchase of development rights (PDR).

Encourage landowners to develop best practice forest land management plans.

Identify and map all current farms operating in the Town.

Cultural Resources

Goal: Preserve cultural, historic and architectural sites

Objectives

Work with Rusk County Historical Society and others to provide guidance in the identification and protection of historic and cultural resources.

Policies

Development proposals should be reviewed relative to the potential impacts to the historical and cultural resources of the Town.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

A community can promote, assist and monitor economic growth to attain objectives set forth in their plan. By working together, we can enhance the community's overall well-being to maintain a strong economy that provides for a good standard of living for citizens and a strong tax base for the community.

Labor Force and Economic Base

Projections for population growth in Rusk County from 2010 to 2040 reflected growth until 2015 and then declining thereafter. According to the US Census data, population in 2010 of Rusk County was 14,755 and was projected to decline to 13,310 by 2040.

Big Bend population experienced good population growth from 2010 of 358 to 409 in 2017. However, in 2010 37.5% of the available work force was not employed. That number had increased to 46.2% by 2017 and the Town survey of 2019 reflected 52.6% of the property owners are retired.

The labor force is defined as those members of the population 16 years or older who are employed, or if unemployed, are looking for a job. Table below gives an overview of some of the characteristics of the population and labor force in the Town of Big Bend, per 2017 American Community Survey estimates. Data is also available for the class of workers in the Town of Big Bend.

Town of Big Bend Employment Status (2017)

	Count	Percent
Population 16 years and older	409	100.0%
In the Labor Force	220	53.8%
Civilian Labor Force	220	53.8%
Employed	212	51.8%
Unemployed	8	2.0%
Armed Forces	0	0.0%
Not in Labor Force	189	46.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates – year 2017

Details of Class of Workers (2017)

	Number	Percent
Civilian employed population, 16 years and older	212	100.00%
Private wage and salary workers	187	88.00%
Government workers	11	5.20%
Self-employed in own, not incorporated business	10	4.70%
Unpaid family workers	4	1.90%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates – year 2017

The economic base (the talent pool of workers) of Big Bend consists of a number of different occupations and industries. Table following breaks down the Town of Big Bend economic base into 13 groups in 2017. Note: the majority of these workers are employed outside the Town.

Industry

	Rusk	Big Bend	Citizens
Count Healthcare-1	19.1%	28.8%	61
Manufacturing	26.6%	25.4%	54
Entertainment – 2	4.0%	7.1%	15
Agriculture – 3	8.0%	6.1%	13
Retail	11.0%	6.1%	13
Construction	6.6%	5.7%	12
Finance and Insurance – 4	2.6%	5.7%	12
Transportation – 5	5.4%	5.7%	12
Other Services, Except Public			
Public Administration - Private	4.1%	4.2%	9
Public Administration - Public	4.5%	2.4%	5
Professional – 6	3.9%	1.8%	4
Information	1.4%	.5%	1
Wholesale Trade	2.4%	.5%	1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates – year 2017

Count – Number of people employed in a given industry who reside in Big Bend

- 1 Educational services, healthcare and social assistance
- 2 Art, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services
- 3 Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining
- 4 Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing
- 5 Transportation, warehousing and utilities
- 6 Professional, scientific, management, administrative and waste management services

Town of Big Bend Employers

Table following are employers in the Town of Big Bend as reported by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (WI DWD). Businesses without paid employees are not included in the report from the WI DWD.

Town of Big Bend Employers

Employer Name / Range	Type of Employment	Employment Size
Adventure Awaits	Hourly	1 - 4
Backwoods Resort, Bar and Grill	Hourly	1 - 4
Bay View Resort	Hourly	1 - 4
Fireside Bar and Grill	Hourly	1 - 4
Rose's Bay Resort and Campground	Hourly	1 - 4
Shep's Northside Bar and Campground	Hourly	1 - 4
Town of Big Bend	Hourly	1 - 4
Walter Huse Bulldozing	Hourly	1 - 4
Wildwood Resort	Hourly	1 - 4

Source: Rusk County and Town of Big Bend

Environmentally Contaminated Sites

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Environmental Remediation and Redevelopment Program maintains a list of contaminated sites, or “brownfields,” in the state. The DNR defines brownfields as “abandoned or under-utilized commercial or industrial properties where expansion or redevelopment is hindered by real or perceived contamination.” Examples of brownfields might include a large abandoned industrial site or a small corner gas station. Properties listed in the DNR database are oftentimes self-reported, and do not necessarily represent a comprehensive listing of possible brownfields in a community. Table below lists the remediation activities in the Town of Big Bend as of May 2014. Four remediation activities were listed and all had a status of ‘closed’.

Remediation Activities, Town of Big Bend

Status	Address	Type	Juris
Closed – 2006	N118 Sand Lake Rd	LUST	DCCOM
Closed – 2006	N802 St Hwy 40	LUST	DCCOM
Closed – 2007	N1033 St Hwy 40	LUST	DCCOM
Closed - 2014	N889 St Hwy 40	LUST	DCCOM

Source: DNR's Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Track System (BRRTS)

Attracting and Retaining Business and Industry

Business attraction activities are designed to encourage businesses and industries that are expanding or planning to relocate, to choose your community, new businesses enhance and diversify the economic base, and improve the quality of life. In order for Big Bend to attract new businesses or retain existing ones, it must provide a competitive and attractive environment. Like most Towns in Rusk County, Big Bend has both strengths and weaknesses for attracting and retaining business and industry. Below is a list of those strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths	Weaknesses
St Hwy 40 runs entire length of Town	Small workforce
CTH F and CTH D	Low lying ground
Several lakes, River and County land	

Source: Town of Big Bend Ordinance/Planning Committee

Desired Businesses and Industries

Types of businesses and industry were evaluated in preparation for this Comprehensive Plan. The Town of Big Bend would like to attract light industry and home-based businesses in the future. Survey results indicate that tourism oriented and service businesses are to be encouraged by the Town.

Desired Businesses

Campgrounds	41.60%
Industrial (light)	47.20%
Service Businesses	74.70%
Tourism Oriented	77.60%

Source: Town of Big Bend 2019 Citizen Survey

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Introduction

Cooperation with other levels of government and jurisdictions is a key factor to this plan. Many issues can be effectively addressed through cooperation and coordination with adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions. The following is a brief description and analysis of the relationship between the Town of Big Bend and other adjoining and overlapping jurisdictions.

Adjacent Towns

The Town of Big Bend shares municipal borders with three towns in Rusk County (Rusk, Stubbs & Washington) and one town in Chippewa County (Sampson). The extent of the relationship with these towns is limited to mainly road maintenance agreements.

Rusk County

Town of Big Bend has had a good working relationship with Rusk County. Rusk County provides several services to the Town of Big Bend including law enforcement, highway department, medical and library facilities and ATV trails.

State of Wisconsin

The Town of Big Bend has little direct contact with state agencies. However, state agencies regulate certain activities such as planning, development and maintenance of state roads/highways, natural resources protection planning and enforcement, State Patrol law enforcement and revenue sharing, as well as other programs at the state level of government. Relationships with state government are currently limited to DNR, a state truck loan and road grant monies.

Regional Agencies

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) is the only regional planning agency. NWRPC is a venture of 10 counties and 5 tribal nations in northwest Wisconsin. The Commission assists in improving and enhancing the economic conditions in the region to provide a positive economic impact and improve the economic prosperity of the area.

Federal

Although the Town of Big Bend has no direct relationships with the Federal government, many of the policies and procedures for various state agencies are handed down from Federal agencies.

School Districts

The boundaries of three public school districts are located within the Town of Big Bend. Holcombe, Bruce, Chetek-Weyerhaeuser School Districts operate bus routes in the town. The Town of Big Bend does not have any direct contact with any of the school districts as school facilities are located in other jurisdictions.

Existing Agreements

Intergovernmental agreements are the most common form of agreements used by communities. Communities have used these agreements for years, often informal and in the framework of sharing public services such as road maintenance, police and fire protection. Existing agreements (both informal and contracts) Big Bend is party to include:

1. Fire Protection – Bruce and Weyerhaeuser Fire Departments
2. Ambulance - Rusk County Ambulance Service and Big Bend Helicopter Landing Zone
3. Police – Rusk County Sheriff's Office
4. Pleasant Ridge Road, Right of Way Road, Brainerd Road, Town of Stubbs
5. River Road, Hatch Road, McDonald – Town of Washington

Existing / Potential Conflicts

Intergovernmental issues between municipalities sometimes surface over a number of different matters. The comprehensive planning process examined the existing and potential conflicts for the Town of Big Bend. No existing conflicts were identified.

Conflict Resolution

The Comprehensive Planning Law requires that the Town of Big Bend identify a process to resolve conflicts. What follows is a discussion of formal and informal techniques for resolving conflicts. Each dispute and/or conflict resolution technique has a purpose. When considering how to resolve a conflict, the town will need to determine whether the conflict can be settled out of court and which resolution process is the most appropriate for the type of conflict. Included in Appendix B is an outline of a Conflict Resolution Process.

Mediation is a cooperative process involving two or more parties and a mediator. The mediator, a neutral third party with special skills and training in dispute resolution, helps the parties voluntarily reach a mutually agreeable settlement of the issue in dispute.

Binding arbitration is a process where a neutral person is given the authority to make a legally binding decision and is used only with the consent of all of the parties. The parties present evidence and examine witnesses and the arbitrator makes a determination based on evidence.

Non-binding arbitration is a technique in which a neutral person is given the authority to render a non-binding decision as a basis for subsequent negotiations between the parties after the parties present evidence and examine the witnesses.

Early neutral evaluation is a process in which a neutral person evaluates brief written and oral presentations early in the litigation process. The neutral person provides an initial appraisal of the merits of the case with suggestions for conducting discovery and obtaining a legal ruling to resolve the case as efficiently as possible.

A focus group can be used to resolve disputes by using a panel of citizens selected in a manner agreed upon by all of the parties. The citizens hear presentations from the parties; and, after hearing the issues, the focus group deliberates and renders an advisory opinion.

A mini trial consists of presentations by the parties to a panel of selected and authorized by all the parties to negotiate a settlement of the dispute that, after the presentations, considers the legal and factual issues and attempts to negotiate a settlement.

A moderated settlement conference is a process in which a neutral person, who hears brief presentations from the parties, in order to facilitate negotiations, conducts conferences. The neutral person renders an advisory opinion in aid of negotiation.

A summary jury trial is a technique where attorneys make abbreviated presentations to a small jury selected from the regular jury list. The jury renders an advisory decision to help the parties assess their position to aid future negotiation.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Ideas & Programs

There are many ways communities can cooperate. These are some ideas and programs to consider. The following ideas were taken directly from the *Intergovernmental Cooperation Guide* published by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. The Town of Big Bend currently utilizes several of these.

Voluntary Assistance: Your community, or another, could voluntarily agree to provide a service to your neighbors because doing so makes economic sense and improves service levels.

Trading Services: Your community and another could agree to exchange services. You could exchange the use of different pieces of equipment, equipment for labor, or labor for labor.

Renting Equipment: Your community could rent equipment to, or from, neighboring communities and other governmental units.

Contracting: Your community could contract with another community or jurisdiction to provide a service.

Routing County Services: Some services are already paid for through taxes and fees. (An example would be police protection services). Your Intergovernmental Cooperation Element could identify areas where improvements are needed and could recommend ways to cooperatively address them.

Sharing Municipal Staff: Your community could share staff with neighboring communities and other jurisdictions. Both municipal employees and independently contracted professionals. You could share a building inspector, assessor, zoning administrator, clerk, etc.

Consolidating Services: Your community could agree with one or more other communities or governmental units to provide a service together.

Joint Use of a Facility: Your community could use a public facility along with other jurisdictions. The facility could be jointly owned or one jurisdiction could rent space from another.

Joint Purchase and Ownership of Equipment: Your community could agree to jointly purchase and own equipment such as pothole patching machines, mowers, rollers, snowplows, etc.

Cooperative Purchasing: Cooperative purchasing, or procurement, is where jurisdictions purchase supplies and equipment together to gain more favorable prices.

Goals, Objectives & Policies

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

GOAL: Encourage coordination & cooperation among nearby units of governments.

Objectives:

1. Promote communication with other units of government, including adjoining towns, the county, the state, and federal government.
2. Join together with other units of government to provide services in a more cost effective manner.

Policies

Regularly meet with adjoining units of government to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Periodically review existing shared service agreements and explore additional agreements.

8. LAND USE

Introduction

The land use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan contains the compilation of past growth patterns of land use in the Town of Big Bend and a guide to how future land development may play out over the 20-year planning period.

Existing Land Use

The town of Big Bend covers a 35.3 square mile area or about 22,592 acres in southern Rusk County. An accurate depiction of the towns existing land use map (see attached) was developed using aerial photography from a countywide flight in 2007 with consultations and updates by town residents. Town representatives had an opportunity to review and suggest corrections to the map before it was finalized. The table below was compiled from the 2019 Rusk County Real Estate Value Summary for the Town of Big Bend and depicts the acreage and percentage of existing land uses. Forest lands includes Managed Forest Land (MFL), Forest Cropland (FCL) Agricultural Forest and Productive Forest Land account for nearly half 49.2% of the landscape of the Town. Agriculture follows with 23.6%, undeveloped land at 15.6% and residential at 5.7% which is closely aligned with the Lakes, River and Towns road network.

2019 Town of Big Bend Existing Land Use

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	5,091	23.6%
Commercial	44	0.2%
Residential	1,201	5.7%
Undeveloped	3,321	15.6%
Agricultural Forest	1,224	5.7%
Productive Forest	6,357	29.8%
MFL/FCL	2,926	13.7%
Government/Institutional	1,186	5.6%
Total	21,350	100.00%

Source: Rusk County

Note: 35.3 square miles of area includes road surfaces and water. The chart above does not include that acreage.

A general description of each existing land use classification follows:

Future Land Use Management Areas

The following Preferred Future Land Use Management Areas (LUMAs) have been utilized on the Town's Preferred Future Land Use Map 3. These descriptions provide clarity and should be used by County/Governmental planners, residents, and developers to ensure compliance, (as applicable) with the purpose, primary goal, desired/undesired development density, desired/undesired uses and/or conditional uses, and discouraged uses and/or conditional uses for each management area. They may also include policy statements that are specific to areas of the community mapped under a particular LUMA. Any such policies carry the same weight and serve the same function as policies found elsewhere in this plan.

Agriculture (A)

- ◆ Purpose: To prevent the conversion of agricultural land to high density uses or conditional uses that do not encourage, improve, or optimize agricultural production areas. Agricultural based uses implement comprehensive plan goals by encouraging livestock and other agricultural uses in areas where soil and other conditions are best suited to these agricultural pursuits. Rural, low-density, agriculture areas provide consistency with the County designated farmland preservation goals and maintains the rural, farm, and "Northwoods" character of the Town of Big Bend.
- ◆ Primary Goal: To preserve and protect a full range of agricultural uses, while simultaneously maintaining the rural, "Northwoods" character of the Town by avoiding and where applicable, opposing high-density uses, conditional uses, or development. Agriculture areas are intended to:
 - ▶ Maintain a viable agricultural base to support the agricultural processing and service industries.
 - ▶ Protect agriculture soils to help preserve farms and farming based activities
 - ▶ Preserve and protect subsurface and groundwater resources
 - ▶ Preserve and protect the scenic beauty, rural character, and agricultural heritage of the Town of Big Bend.
- ◆ Desired Uses/Conditional Uses: All agricultural uses and production activities sized to compliment and reasonably consistent with the historical density of the farm. Specifically: livestock production, dairy, agriculturally-related residences, greenhouses, horse facilities, agriculture sales and service, agricultural storage, agricultural research and development, fish and wildlife management activities, timber harvest and milling, and aqua culture. Sand and gravel extraction and home-based businesses would be permitted in accordance with County regulations governing such activity. Agriculture Management Area may include a limited amount of low-density rural residential development, but the predominant land use should be agricultural in nature.

- ◆ Undesired Uses/Conditional Uses: high-density, high intensity uses, conditional uses, or development inconsistent with Comprehensive Plan's land use goals. Specifically:
 - ▶ Consolidated factory farm operations within 1,000' of shoreland districts (streams, rivers, or lakes) or, other factory-sized livestock operations inconsistent with the historical density of the farm or where soil conditions cannot support these activities.
 - ▶ New or expanded subdivisions.
 - ▶ New or expanded Manufactured Home Parks and Campgrounds.
 - ▶ New or expanded Private Roads not platted to applicable state geometric standard, per Wisconsin Statute 82.50
- ◆ Recommended Policies:
 - ▶ Ensure Big Bend Land Use Planning Committee reviews all proposed land use and conditional use requests/applications for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan's vision and goals for Agriculture LUMAs. The Planning Committee will forward recommendations to the Town Board for review. The Town Board will communicate a final land use recommendation to the Rusk County Land Use and Information Committee.
 - ▶ Encourage desired uses and conditional uses in the Agriculture Land Use Management Area designed to enhance or preserve the area's rural character, and which may be easily served by County, Town, and emergency services. Specifically, low-density, low-intensity rural-residential, shoreland residential, or compatible agricultural development plans or projects in Agricultural LUMAs should be formally reviewed and supported by the Town's Planning Committee.
 - ▶ Discourage undesired uses and conditional uses in the Agriculture Land Use Management Area that conflict with the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, high-density, high-intensity commercial, residential, or shoreland residential; or, factory farm development plans or projects in Agricultural LUMAs .
 - ▶ When applicable, support County-wide rezoning projects that enhance, preserve, and protect the Town's vision and goals for Agriculture LUMAs.
 - ▶ In areas identified by the Town with the (A) future land use management areas, new non-farm residential development should be placed on the landscape in a fashion that prevents conflicts between agricultural and residential land uses.
 - ▶ Promote clustering of homes and preservation of land for open space use within mapped agriculture areas.
 - ▶ Utilize lot size provisions to ensure the lots created are large enough to accommodate development, yet small enough not to consume the prime agricultural lands.

- Consider soil characteristics when siting new buildings to maintain as much of the prime soils in production as possible.

Forest/Open Lands

A. Forestry Residential and Recreation (FRR)

- ♦ Purpose: To maintain the character and viability of privately owned lands that are intended for resource management or residential recreation, while accommodating limited residential uses.
- ♦ Primary Goal: Maintain low density development to compliment and support many of the features and activities property owners enjoy in conjunction with reducing service costs to local taxpayers. Objectives of the FRR Management Area would include maintaining the rural character of the area, accommodating local conservation land and associated land management programs, accommodating private forestry efforts, reducing forest fragmentation, accommodating quality outdoor recreational experiences and limiting sporadic development that is inefficient for the Town to service.
- ♦ Desired Uses/Conditional Uses: Forestry, agricultural, outdoor, non-commercial recreation, and limited, rural residential development generally located along existing roadways, in clusters, and integrated with the natural landscape.
- ♦ Undesired Uses/Conditional Uses: high-density, high intensity uses, conditional uses, or development inconsistent with Comprehensive Plan's land use goals. Specifically:
 - Consolidated factory farm operations within 1,000' of shoreland districts (streams, rivers, or lakes) or, other factory-sized livestock operations inconsistent with the historical density of the FRR parcel; or, where soil conditions will not support these activities.
 - New or expanded subdivisions with less than 35 acres.
 - New or expanded Manufactured Home Parks and Campgrounds adjacent to shoreland district, (streams, rivers, lakes)
 - New or expanded Private Roads not platted to applicable state geometric standard, per Wisconsin Statute 82.50.
- ♦ Recommended Policies:
 - Ensure Big Bend Land Use Planning Committee reviews all proposed land use and conditional use requests/applications for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan's vision and goals for FRR/LUMAs. The Planning Committee will forward recommendations to the Town Board for review. The Town Board will communicate a final land use recommendation to the Rusk County Land Use and Information Committee.
 - Encourage desired uses and conditional uses in the FRR/LUMAs designed to enhance or preserve the Town's natural resources, especially wetlands, forest lands, and surface waters; and/or, provides for the continuance of forest uses. Specifically, forestry, agricultural,

- outdoor, non-commercial recreation, and limited, rural residential development plans or projects in FRR/LUMAs.
- ▶ Discourage undesired uses and conditional uses in the FRR/LUMAs that conflict with the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, high density commercial or residential development and/or factory farm development.
- ▶ When applicable, support County-wide rezoning projects that enhance, preserve, and protect the Town's vision and goals for FRR/LUMAs.
- ▶ New residential development shall be placed on the landscape in a fashion that prevents conflicts between forest management and outdoor recreation land uses and residential land uses.
- ▶ Promote clustering of homes and preservation of land for open space, natural resources, and recreational uses.
- ▶ New development shall be placed on the landscape in a fashion that minimizes the fragmentation of large forest tracts.
- ▶ New residential subdivisions with 5 lots or more shall not be allowed in areas planned for FRR unless site planning or conservation design can be effectively used to minimize negative impacts to forestry and outdoor recreation.

Residential

A. Rural Residential (RR)

- ◆ Purpose: To maintain the rural and open character of these areas while accommodating limited residential uses. Rural residential activity has been significant as the off lake property becomes more in demand for seasonal use. This area includes marginal or abandoned farmlands that have become attractive for rural residences.
- ◆ Primary Goal: Preserve agriculture, the rural landscape, open space, and natural features of the area, while accommodating limited residential development. Promote infill of areas which have already experienced development in order to increase overall density without sacrificing community character.
- ◆ Desired Uses/Conditional Uses: Agricultural. Limited, low-density residential development generally located along existing roadways, in clusters, and on larger lots than found in an urban area.
- ◆ Undesired Uses/Conditional Uses: All Commercial uses are discouraged except those of very low intensity such as golf courses or home-based business.
 - ▶ Consolidated factory farm operations within 1,000' of shoreland districts (streams, rivers, or lakes).
 - ▶ New or expanded subdivisions.
 - ▶ New or expanded Manufactured Home Parks or Campgrounds.

- ▶ New or expanded Private Roads not built to the applicable geometric standard, per Wisconsin Statute 82.50 (1) Town Road Standards.

B. Shoreland Residential (SR)

- ◆ Purpose: To recognize the shorelands adjacent to lakes, rivers, and streams in Rusk County are historically vulnerable to over-development pressures. Many of the shorelands are significantly developed with both full-time and seasonal residents. Further residential development is regulated by the lakes and rivers classification development standards and applicable shoreland ordinances.
- ◆ Primary Goal: Protect this sensitive environmental area by promoting low density residential parcels. Establishing appropriate strategies to protect and preserve the Town of Big Bend's natural resources - especially wetlands and surface waters - by directing non-SR development away from SR/LUMAs. Appropriate strategies for managing future SR/LUMA development will preserve and protect the water quality, scenic views and open space, while simultaneously maintaining the rural "Northwoods" character and minimizing recreational conflicts between user groups.
- ◆ Desired Uses and Conditional Uses: Low-density, residential uses that are compatible with the shoreland and their immediate surroundings. Limited commercial uses, (lodging, cabin resorts, and associated retail and services) may be compatible with immediate surroundings if located in areas of established commercial uses.
- ◆ Undesired Uses/Conditional Uses: All high-density, high intensity uses, conditional uses, or development. Specifically:
 - ▶ Consolidated factory farm operations within 1,000' of shoreland district (streams, rivers, or lakes).
 - ▶ New or expanded "2nd tier" or back-lot development within 1000' of the lakeshore district exceeding applicable shoreland requirements for density and lot size. For example: 2nd Tier or Back-lot developments providing a "key-hole" access point for multiple families or users exceeding the 100' lakeshore requirement for a single-family residence.
 - ▶ New or expanded Manufactured Home Parks or Campgrounds within 1,000' of shoreland district (streams, rivers, lakes).
 - ▶ New or expanded Private Roads not built to the applicable geometric standard, per Wisconsin Statute 82.50 (1) Town Road Standards.
- ◆ Recommended Policies:
 - ▶ Ensure Big Bend Land Use Planning Committee reviews all proposed land use and conditional use requests/applications for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan's vision and goals for RR/LUMAs. The Planning Committee will forward recommendations to the Town Board for review. The Town Board will communicate a final land use recommendation to the Rusk County Land Use and Information Committee.
 - ▶ Encourage desired uses and conditional uses in the SR/LUMAs that will

protect this sensitive area and maintain the rural, “Northwoods” character of the Town, particularly by avoiding high-density uses or development. Specifically, Agricultural and low-density, shoreland residential development.

- ▶ Discourage undesired uses and conditional uses in the SR/LUMAs that conflict with the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, high density commercial, seasonal, or residential development; or, factory farm development plans or projects.
- ▶ When applicable, support County-wide rezoning projects that enhance, preserve, and protect the Town’s vision and goals for SR/LUMAs.

Commercial (COM)

A. Rural Mixed Use/Hamlet (RMU)

- ◆ Purpose: To recognize Big Bend as a small growth area that has historically been a crossroad that provides a convenient access to farm and lake recreation areas.
- ◆ Primary Goal: To maintain and allow the limited growth of these areas in a fashion that strengthens the existing identity and character of the Town of Big Bend.
- ◆ Desired Uses/Conditional Uses: A mix of residential and commercial uses could be allowed at varying densities in accordance with the type of use. Specifically: Densities and lot sizes should be allowed to vary. The density, layout, and design of development shall be compatible with surrounding uses and character.
- ◆ Undesired Uses/Conditional Uses: where the density, layout, and design of development is incompatible with surrounding uses and character. Specifically:
 - ▶ Consolidated factory farm operations within 1,000’ of RMU/LUMA.
 - ▶ New or expanded Private Roads not built to the applicable geometric standard, per Wisconsin Statute 82.50 (1) Town Road Standards.
- ◆ Recommended Policies:
 - ▶ Ensure Big Bend Land Use Planning Committee reviews all proposed land use and conditional use requests/applications for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan’s vision and goals for RR/LUMAs. The Planning Committee will forward recommendations to the Town Board for review. The Town Board will communicate a final land use recommendation to the Rusk County Land Use and Information Committee.
 - ▶ Encourage desired uses and conditional uses in the RMU/LUMAs that will allow and maintain a variety of growth that strengthens the existing character and rural identity of the Town. Specifically: All projects or plans in RMU/LUMAs should be formally reviewed; and, if compatible, be supported by the Town’s Planning Committee.
 - ▶ Discourage undesired uses and conditional uses in the RMU/LUMAs that

conflict with the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, all projects or plans in RMU/LUMAs should be formally reviewed; and, if incompatible, be opposed by the Town's Planning Committee.

- When applicable, support County-wide rezoning projects that enhance, preserve, and protect the Town's vision and goals for RMU/LUMAs.

B. Industrial (I)

- ◆ Purpose: To represent existing light and heavy industrial type land uses and anticipate limited future industrial areas.
- ◆ Primary Goal: To accommodate light industrial uses in areas that can support such activities;
- ◆ Desired Uses/Conditional Uses: None. In most cases all Industrial uses should be guided to incorporated Villages in order to preserve the rural and "Northwoods" character of the Town.
- ◆ Undesired Uses/Conditional Uses: All. Without public sewer and water, most Industrial uses should be located within sanitary districts, or within adjacent cities and Villages. Specifically: manufacturing and production facilities, resource extraction and processing, warehousing, feed mills, wholesale establishments, and salvage and junk yards, and other industrial type uses.
- ◆ Recommended Policies:
 - These districts, due to actual physical and operational characteristics, need to be carefully established to ensure compatibility with surrounding areas. Compatibility would be determined by evaluating the surrounding area or the County as a whole by reason of noise, dust, smoke, odor, traffic, or physical appearance.
 - It should be a requirement that all proposed industrial or intensive commercial projects submit a detailed site plan showing the proposed location of the building, parking, outdoor storage, loading, signage, landscaping, and lighting prior to development approval and future restoration plans, if applicable.
 - New development should have associated design standards to adhere to high quality building design, generous landscaping, modest lighting, screened storage areas, and limited and attractive signage.
 - Require all new commercial development be accessed by roads built to the applicable geometric standard, per Wisconsin Statute 82.50 (1) Town Road Standards.

Government/Institutional (GI)

- ◆ Purpose: To accommodate existing and future locations of Government and institutional facilities.
- ◆ Primary Goal: To ensure that land is available for Government and

institutional uses in areas which best accommodate their use.

- ♦ Preferred Use: Public and private utility facilities as well as those uses which provide a service to the community, except parks. Land uses such as churches, cemeteries, post offices, libraries, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, airports, Town Hall, Police and Fire stations, museums, and schools are some examples.

Undeveloped (UND)

- ♦ Purpose: A Land Use Management Area to designate existing public lands and wetlands that are not planned for development.
- ♦ Primary Goal: To maintain natural features and areas as community assets and conserve these features for future generations. In addition, to prohibit development in areas which are not suited.
- ♦ Preferred Use: Allowable uses may include forestry, passive recreation, wildlife protection activities, community parks and fisheries as possible uses.

Land Use trends

It is a requirement of the land use element to analyze trends in the supply, demand, and price of land in the Town of Big Bend. Historical information regarding land use trends in Big Bend would involve time consuming searches in the State and County government records and archives. We have instead, used the Rusk County Estate Valuation Summary for the past 20 years to identify land use trends and land supply to assess changes over the years. Table (Below) provides that property tax assessment data from 2000 to 2019 for Town of Big Bend. Residential land shows 252 additional acres over the nineteen-year period. A 32% increase, this trend is understandable as most of the new parcels most likely developed as waterfront properties. Commercial parcels stayed steady, but Forestland lost 1044 acres, approximately 9%. Agriculture showed a mere 2% increase in nineteen years. However, Statewide the Agriculture industry is in decline.

Property Tax Assessment, Town of Big Bend 2000-2019										
	Residential		Commercial		Agricultural		Manufacturing		Forest	
	Parcels	Acres	Parcels	Acres	Parcels	Acres	Parcels	Acres	Parcels	Acres
2000	676	957	22	72	209	4968	-	-	460	11551
2005	724	1148	29	80	217	4986	-	-	464	11231
2010	770	1202	27	60	219	4962	-	-	452	11054
2015	779	1211	23	44	231	5056	-	-	460	10642
2019	784	1209	23	44	239	5091	-	-	468	10507

Land Prices

Land prices in recent years have remained stable without big swings, either up or down, in the township. Many factors determine market values for land, such as the economy, acreage availability, location, land quality and multiple uses. Current market prices for recreational and forest land ranges from \$1,500 to \$3,000 per acre. Agricultural land ranges from \$1,000 to \$2,500 per acre. Table (below) details assessed land values for 2019 in the Town of Big Bend.

2019 Assessed Land Values - Town of Big Bend						
Parcel Counts				Value		
Real Estate Classes	Land	Improvements	Acres	Land	Improvements	Total
Agricultural	239	21	5091	\$684,300	\$2,193,300	\$2,877,600
Commercial	23	20	44	\$1,374,100	\$1,766,300	\$3,140,400
Residential	784	560	1209	\$47,189,100	\$47,473,900	\$94,663,000
Agricultural Forest	70	0	1224	\$1,003,600	0	\$1,003,600
Productive Forest	305	0	6357	\$10,855,000	0	\$10,855,000
MFL/FCL	60	0	2926	\$2,658,500	0	\$2,658,500

Source: Rusk County

General Zoning

Currently the Town has no general zoning. The property owner survey in 2019 asked “Should the town take the following action regarding a Comprehensive Plan and zoning?” We received 593 responses to the following:

Do nothing, leave things the way they are?

Yes – 49 (8.3%) No-93 (15.7%)

Adopt Rusk County plan and zoning?

Yes-39 (6.6%) No-97 (16.4%)

Develop its own Comprehensive Plan and zoning?

Yes-150 (25.3%) No-27 (4.6%)

No opinion at this point?

Yes-103 (17.4%) No-35 (6.7%)

The results show highest interest (25.3%) in our own zoning but an also high percentage of respondents need more information (17.4%) The town board decided to draft a Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance and bring it to the Town’s property owners for public discussion prior to deciding which avenue to pursue. There are both advantages and disadvantages of both zoning plans which will be discussed at a public meeting prior to the town board’s decision on the matter.

Rusk County Zoning and Ordinances

Wisconsin State law mandates that counties adopt and administer zoning ordinances regulating shoreland zoning, flood plain zoning, airport height restrictions in addition to

Comprehensive Plan zoning. Rusk County ordinances include subdivision control, private sewage, non-metallic mining reclamation. These would supersede any Town ordinance unless the Town ordinance is more restrictive.

Land Use Conflicts

Land use conflicts will occur when certain use types infringe or abut on an opposing use type. Examples are commercial or manufacturing abutting residential or residential infringing on agricultural. It is certainly not always the case however, it is often desirable, if necessary, use a transition to a “buffer” zone when land use conflicts pose threats to health or safety. While all parties in any land use process may wish to avoid conflict, the best approach is to coordinate with the town government as soon as possible to resolve foreseeable problems.

Land Demand

Wisconsin comprehensive planning legislation requires that comprehensive plans contain projections, in 5-year increments, of future residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial land uses. The Town of Big Bend land use projections are based on the property tax assessment of the past twenty years as shown under the land use trends section.

As shown on the table below the loss of forestland will be more than adequate for the future land required for residential and agricultural use. Although no extraordinary or unusual future land use demands are anticipated, the projections below should be used with care.

**Town of Big Bend Forecast of Land Demand
Projected additional acres of land needed**

	2019	2025	2030	2035	2040	Total Acres
Residential	1209	1288	1354	1420	1486	277
Commercial	44	42	40	40	32	-12
Agricultural	5091	5125	5159	5194	5229	138
Forest	10507	10177	9902	9627	9352	-1155
Manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Rusk County

Land Use Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal:

The Town of Big Bend promotes growth and development which preserves and protects its rural character, important natural resources and agricultural practices while recognizing individual property rights.

Objectives:

1. Encourage communication between the town and its property owners on public concerns and sentiments.
2. Maintain growth which promotes the health, safety and general welfare of residents while making efficient use of public services, facilities and tax dollars.
3. Promote new land development that is consistent with this plan.
4. Protect natural resources and maintain the towns rural character.

Policies

1. New development will be permitted based on consideration of this plan as well as other Town, County and State plans and other regulations.
2. Utilize the existing road network to accommodate most future development.
3. Maintain the Comprehensive Plan so that it is consistent with new and existing ordinances and regulations.

9. IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

The purpose of this element is to explain how this plan will be implemented to achieve the desired outcomes (goals, objectives, etc.) as set forth by the Town of Big Bend. The Town of Big Bend Comprehensive Plan addresses many important components critical to sustaining a healthy community. As change is inevitable, the plan may need to be amended to appropriately reflect those changes. This element includes a table of all the goals, objectives, and actions for each element of the plan, with a timeframe for those actions.

How to Use the Plan

This plan is intended to help guide growth and development decisions within the town. The plan is an expression of the town's wishes and desires and provides a series of actions/policies for assisting the town in attaining its goals. The comprehensive plan is not an inflexible or static set of rules. The objectives and actions are intended to allow flexibility in light of new information or opportunities. The plan guides considerations regarding not only land use but also addresses community issues such as housing, transportation, and economic development.

The planning commission, town board, and citizens in reviewing all proposals pertaining to growth and development should utilize this document. Proposals should be examined to determine whether they are consistent with community wishes and desires as expressed in the plan. As part of the review, a thorough review of the plan is necessary with particular attention given to the goals and objectives. Where the impact of a proposed development is minimal, the evaluation may simply be a determination of whether or not the plan provides relevant direction and whether the requested action is in conformance with the plan. Development proposals with significant potential impacts will require a more detailed analysis in order to determine consistency.

Consistency

Within this Implementation Element, it is required to "describe how each of the elements of the comprehensive plan will be integrated and made consistent with the other elements of the comprehensive plan." As a result of the comprehensive plan being developed in a coordinated and simultaneous effort, the planning process has ensured that the development and review of each element is consistent with the others; and based on that analysis, there are no known inconsistencies between the planning elements.

In the future, as plan amendments occur, it is important that the Big Bend Plan Commission and town board both conduct consistency reviews. Those reviews will ensure the document continues to represent an integrated and forward approach to planning.

Measuring Plan Progress

As part of the comprehensive planning process, a number of goals, objectives, and actions were developed that when implemented are intended to build stronger relationships and give direction to the town board and its residents, including year-round and seasonal. Many of the objectives and actions can be accomplished in the short term, while some will take longer to accomplish.

It is required to include a mechanism to measure the local governmental unit's progress toward achieving all aspects of the comprehensive plan. The task of developing a measurement tool to gauge the outcome of this plan's objectives and actions will be accomplished by the development of a timeframe for the identified actions. These timeframes will provide guidance to the plan commission and town board on when specific actions should be initiated. Based on the timeframes, the plan commission can then measure the progress of achieving implementation of the comprehensive plan. Table below outlines the goals, objectives and actions/policies/recommendations for each element of the comprehensive plan as outlined by the plan commission.

Town of Big Bend Implementation Schedule		
HOUSING		
GOAL 1: Discourage residential development in farmland areas.		
GOAL 2: Allow adequate affordable housing for all individuals consistent with the rural character of the community.		
Objectives:		
1. Discourage residential development in farmland areas. 2. Ensure that local land use controls and permitting procedures do not discourage or prevent the provision of affordable housing opportunities. 3. The Town of Big Bend will direct residential development away from existing agricultural areas to avoid conflicts.		
Policies	Responsible Parties	Timeframe
Work with developers to provide a variety of housing types for all income and age groups.	Town Board	Ongoing
Support development of senior and special needs housing within the Town by planning for areas that would best be suited for this type of development.	Plan Commission	Ongoing

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL: Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that meets the needs of multiple users.

Objectives:

1. Support and maintain a safe and efficient Town road system.
2. Promote the development of multi-use trails, trail linkages, wide shoulders, or sidewalks as part of new development proposals, where appropriate.
3. Support the Rusk County Transit System.
4. Limit both town and private road development until existing infrastructure is brought up to a common level.

Policies	Responsible Parties	Timeframe
Continue to prepare and update a 5-year Road Improvement Plan.	Town Board	Ongoing
Utilize PASER to inventory and rate local town roads.	Town Board	Ongoing
Work with the county on any project that affects the Town.	Town Board	Ongoing
Land uses which generate heavy traffic volumes will be discouraged on local roads that have not been constructed or upgraded for such use.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Roadway access will be better spaced along the existing Town road network to increase safety and preserve capacity.	Town Board	Ongoing
Future road locations, extensions or connections will be considered when reviewing development plans and proposals.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
All Town roads must accommodate access requirements for emergency services (fire, EMS, ambulance, etc.) as well as school bus and snowplows.	Town Board	Ongoing
Develop standards for new roads.	Town Board	Ongoing
Establish a maximum number of miles of paved roads that can be maintained, based upon existing tax base and projected growth of the town.	Town Board	Ongoing
Widen and improve existing roads before constructing new roads.	Town Board	Ongoing
Attend county meetings when road projects that may affect the Town are discussed.	Town Board	Ongoing

UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

GOAL: Providing adequate infrastructure, public services, and developable land to meet existing and future market demand.

Objectives:

1. Make information available to residents on the proper maintenance of septic systems.
2. Consider the potential impacts of development proposals on groundwater quality and quantity.
3. Explore opportunities to develop integrated, multi-use trail systems and recreational facilities.
4. Continue to provide ambulance, volunteer fire and first responder services to residents.
5. Encourage recycling by residents.

Policies	Responsible Parties	Timeframe
Work with adjoining towns, the county, the state, and individual landowners to address known water quality issues.	Town Board	Ongoing
The feasibility of wastewater collection and treatment systems on water quality should be considered by major developments.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Develop and maintain a Capital Improvements Plan for major equipment purchases.	Town Board	Ongoing
Share equipment and services across Town boundaries, where possible.	Town Board	Ongoing

NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL 1: Protect natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, ponds, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.

GOAL 2: Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.

Objectives:

1. New development in the Town should not negatively impact natural resources.
2. Minimize impacts to the Town's natural resources from non-metallic mineral mining.
3. Encourage and support the preservation of natural open spaces that minimize flooding such as wetlands and floodplains.
4. Promote development that minimizes groundwater impacts from on-site septic systems and other sources.
5. Discourage the draining or filling of wetlands.

Policies	Responsible Parties	Timeframe
New development should be discouraged from areas shown to be unsafe or unsuitable for development due to flood hazard, potential groundwater contamination, loss of farmland, highway access problems, incompatibility with neighboring uses, etc.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Expansion of existing non-metallic mining operations or development of new sites should be allowed only on lands where the expansion will not conflict with preexisting development.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Reclamation of non-metallic mining sites should conform to the land use plan map in regard to the reclaimed use.	Town Board	Ongoing

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

GOAL 1: Protect economically productive areas that are farmlands and commercial forests.

GOAL 2: Respect farms by allowing farming to continue without residential intrusion nearby.

Objectives:

1. Support diversification of farming types and practices to maintain agriculture as a viable economic activity.
2. Existing agricultural uses and buildings should be taken into consideration when locating new development to avoid conflicts.
3. Preserve productive farmland for long-term agricultural uses.

Policies	Responsible Parties	Timeframe
Non-farm development, particularly subdivisions, will be encouraged in areas away from intensive agricultural activities, in order to minimize farm & non-farm conflicts due to noise, odors, nitrates in well water, pesticides, farm/vehicle conflicts on roadways, late night plowing, etc.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Consider the use of such tools to protect sensitive areas, such as transfer of development rights (TDR) or purchase of development rights (PDR).	Town Board	Ongoing
Encourage landowners to develop forest management plans and enroll in the managed forest law program.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Inconveniences, such as aerial spraying, irrigation, dust, noise, odors and vehicle traffic, etc. that result from agricultural operations that are not a major threat to public health, should not be considered a nuisance.	Town Board	Ongoing
Identify and map all current farms operating in the Town.	Plan Commission	Ongoing

CULTURAL RESOURCES		
GOAL: Preserve cultural, historic, and architectural sites.		
Objectives:		
1. Work with the Rusk County Historical Society and others to provide guidance in the identification and protection of historic and cultural resources.		
Policies	Responsible Parties	Timeframe
Development proposals should be reviewed relative to the potential impacts to the historical and cultural resources of the Town.	Plan Commission	Ongoing

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
GOAL 1: Build community identity by revitalizing community character and enforcing building standards.		
GOAL 2: Promote the stabilization of the current economic base.		
Objectives:		
1. Discourage retail commercial use that may create excessive traffic flow through the town.		
2. Encourage new retail, commercial & industrial development to locate in designated areas and adjacent to county highways.		
3. Encourage businesses that are compatible in a rural setting.		
4. Industrial development must not negatively impact environmental resources or adjoining property values.		
Policies	Responsible Parties	Timeframe
Encourage home-based businesses that do not significantly increase noise, traffic, odors, lighting, or would otherwise negatively impact the surrounding areas.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Review the costs and benefits of a proposed development project prior to approval.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Commercial and industrial development will be directed to designated areas consistent with the Future Land Use Map.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Steer intensive industrial uses to areas that have the service capability to support that development.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Develop new ordinances that establish minimum aesthetic standards to eliminate commercial, industrial, and agricultural property with excessive debris, blighted property, and dilapidated buildings.	Town Board / Plan Commission	Ongoing

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

GOAL: Encourage coordination & cooperation among nearby units of governments.

Objectives:

3. Promote communication with other units of government, including adjoining towns, the county, the state, and federal government.
4. Join together with other units of government to provide services in a more cost effective manner.

Policies	Responsible Parties	Timeframe
Regularly meet with adjoining units of government to discuss issues of mutual concern.	Town Board	Ongoing
Periodically review existing shared service agreements and explore additional agreements.	Town Board	Ongoing

LAND USE

GOAL 1: Promote the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial areas.

GOAL 2: Encourage land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.

GOAL 3: Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.

GOAL 4: Preserve the rural character of the Town of Big Bend by planning for future development through this comprehensive plan.

Objectives:

1. Maintain orderly, planned growth which promotes the health, safety and general welfare of residents and makes efficient use of land and efficient use of public services, facilities and tax dollars.
2. New development should not negatively impact the natural environment or existing property.
3. Provide for a mix of land uses within the Town.
4. Promote new land development that is consistent with this plan.

Land uses and building locations that minimize both the loss of productive farmland and the potential for conflicts between existing and proposed land uses will be encouraged.

Policies	Responsible Parties	Timeframe
The Town will maintain the comprehensive plan, which will serve as a guide for future land use decisions. New development will be permitted based on consideration of this Plan, as well as other Town, County, Regional, and state plans and other regulations.	Joint Towns / Plan Commission	Ongoing
Use conservancy zoning to protect natural resources in the Town.	Plan Commission	Ongoing
Encourage conservation easements and other tools to protect environmentally sensitive or unique resources.	Plan Commission	Ongoing

Source: Town of Big Bend

Plan Updates

The purposes of this land use plan are to balance individual private property rights with the town's need to protect property values community-wide, minimize the conflicts between land uses and keep the cost of local government as low as possible. An essential characteristic of any planning program is that it be ongoing and flexible. Periodic updates by the town plan commission to this plan are necessary to reflect current trends.

The Town of Big Bend Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a living document. Over time, social and economic conditions and values tend to change. The comprehensive plan should be updated periodically to reflect these changes. Systematic, periodic updates will ensure that not only the statistical data is current but also the plan's goals, objectives, and actions reflect the current situation and modern needs. Under current law, it is required that an update of the plan be undertaken every ten years. However, it is recommended the plan be reviewed for consistency at least once every ten years. This will ensure that any changes in the social and economic conditions or community values are reflected within the plan.

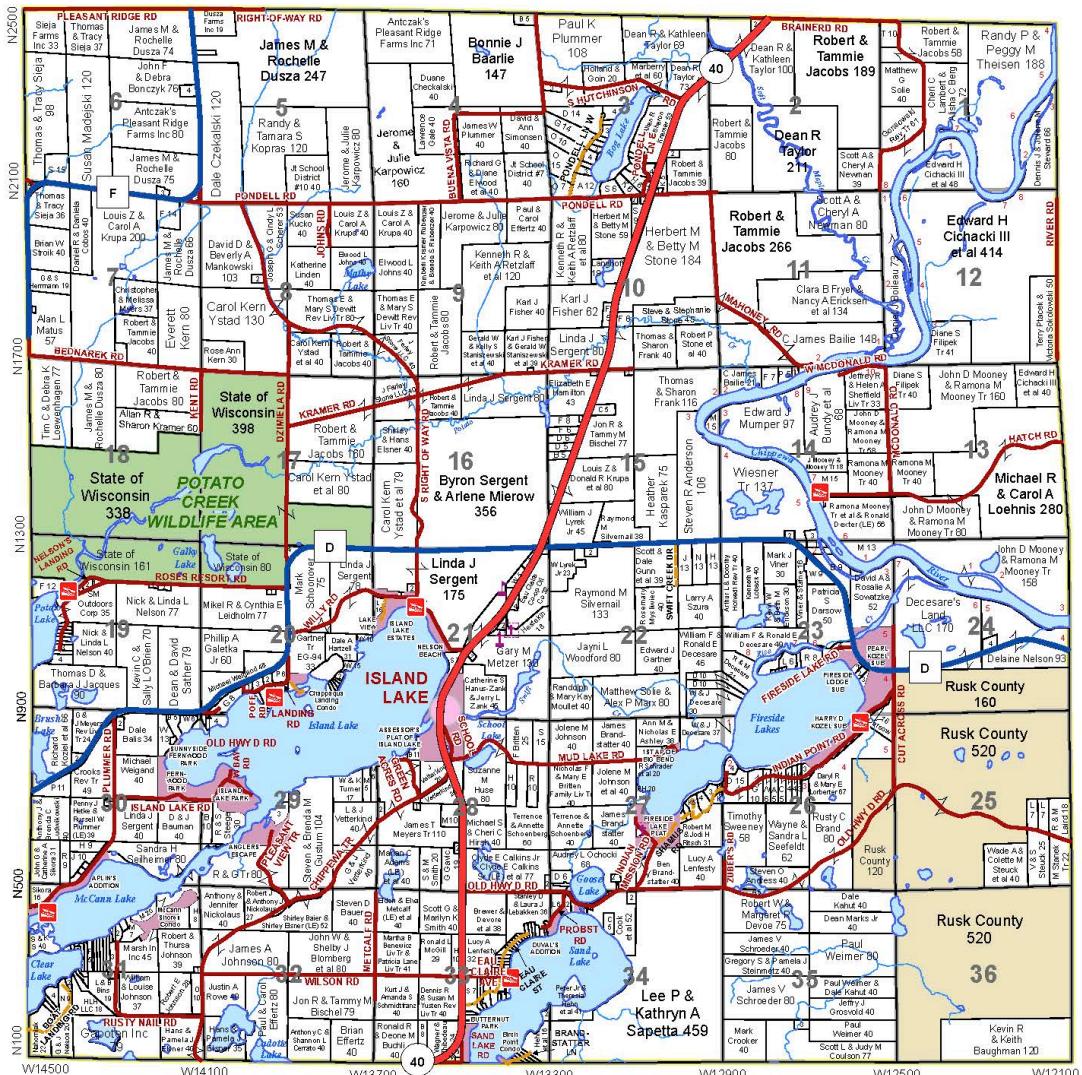
To ensure that both year-round and seasonal residents are involved in plan amendments, the following process and protocol should be followed to allow public involvement and comment. The Town of Big Bend Plan Commission shall undertake a review of the plan at five-year increments from the time of formal adoption by the town board and shall consider necessary amendment(s) to the plan resulting from property owner requests and changes to social and economic conditions. Upon Plan Commission review, recommended changes to the plan shall be forwarded to the town board. The Big Bend town board shall call a public hearing to afford property owners time to review and comment on recommended plan changes. The public hearing shall be advertised using a Class I notice. Based on public input, Plan Commission recommendations, and other facts, the town board will then formally act on the recommended amendment(s). During plan amendments, it is important that the Public Participation Plan be utilized to ensure public input.

Implementation Tools

The Town of Big Bend implementation tools available to them that could be used to implement some of the recommendations from the comprehensive plan. Those tools include such things as purchase of land or easements, subdivision ordinance, mobile/manufactured home restrictions, nuisance regulations, design review for commercial and industrial developments, infrastructure improvements, road construction and maintenance, and public services, among others.

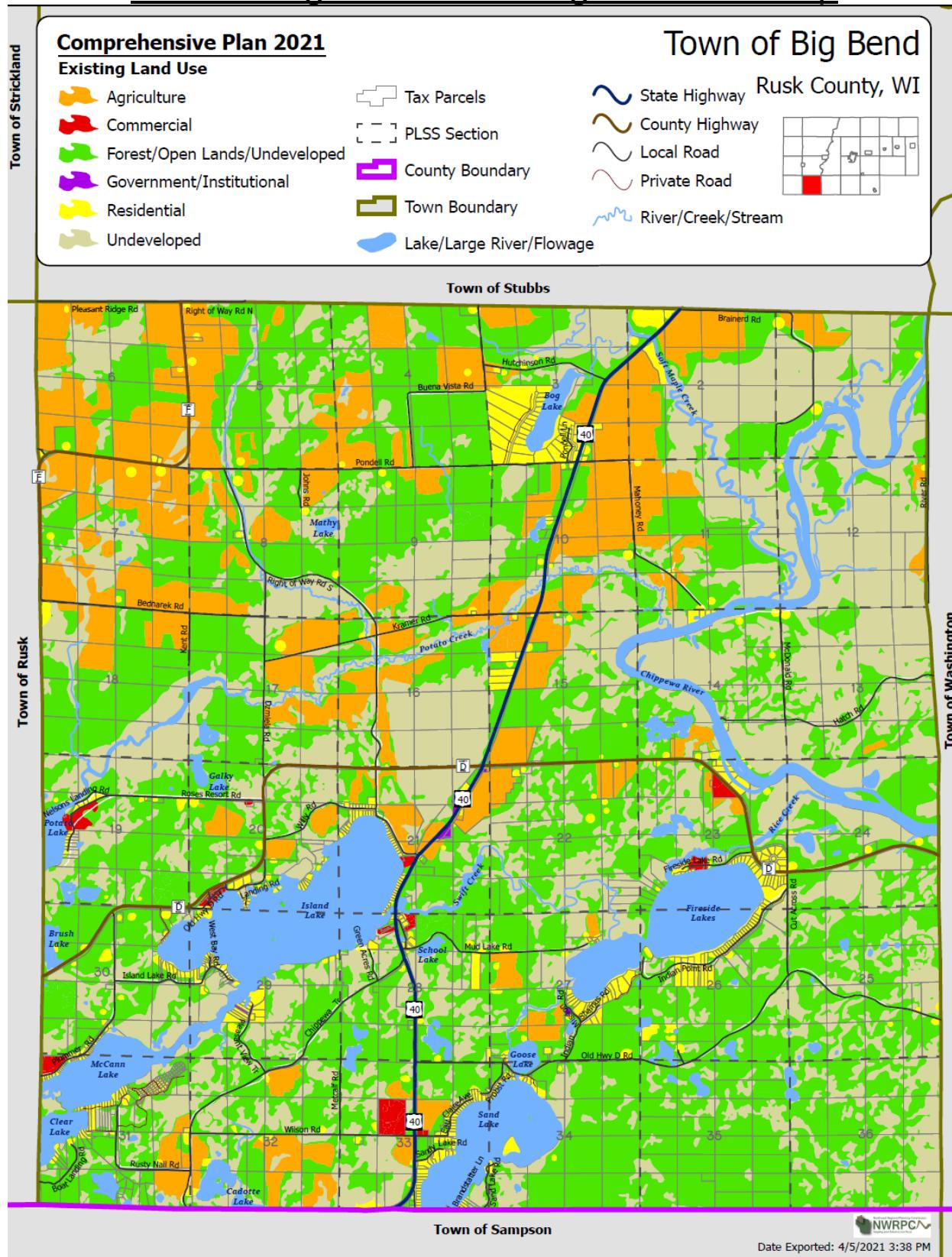
MAP 1

BIG BEND T33N, R8W



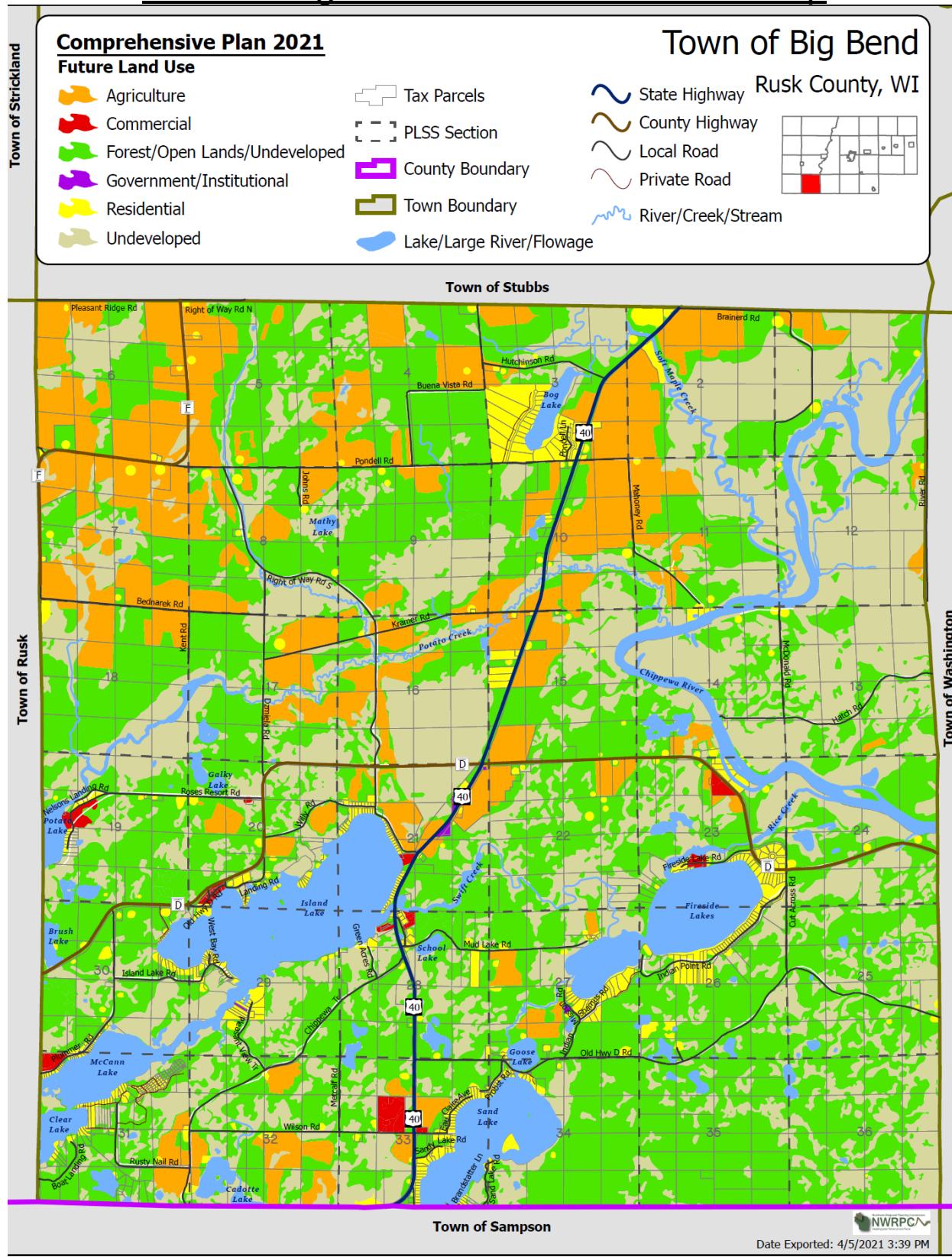
MAP 2

Town of Big Bend – Existing Land Use Map



MAP 3

Town of Big Bend – Future Land Use Map



APPENDIX A

Town of Big Bend, Rusk County, WI

Property Owner Survey

April/May 2019

The Town of Big Bend is currently non-zoned and is in the process of determining whether to maintain that status or become zoned. If zoning is selected the Town will then determine whether to accept Rusk County Zoning or do their own Comprehensive Plan and Zoning. 654 surveys were mailed to property owners in the Town in the month of April 2019. 294 surveys were returned, for a return rate of 45%, which is outstanding. Below are the results of this survey.

These results will follow the format of the survey. There were areas in the survey where opinions or comments were solicited. Those opinions and comments will follow the numeric tabulation. “Total” is the total number of responses for a question or of segments of a question.

1. Gender of person completing survey: Male – 215 Female – 84 (some surveys indicated that both male and female completed survey together)
2. Number of people in your household by age range: total citizens - 524

Under 18 – 38	7.3%
19-24 – 17	3.2%
25-34 – 12	2.3%
35-44 – 30	5.7%
45-54 – 80	15.3%
55-64 – 126	24.0%
65-74 – 156	29.8%
75-84 – 51	9.7%
85 + - 14	2.7%
3. Do you own your own home or rent a home or apartment? Total - 280
Own – 278 99.3%
Rent – 2 .7%

4. If you own your own home, what is the size of your lot? Total - 279
- | | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Less than 1 acre – 98 | 35.1% |
| 1-2 acres – 68 | 24.4% |
| 2-5 acres – 32 | 11.5% |
| 5-10 acres – 16 | 5.7% |
| 10 + acres – 65 | 23.3% |
5. How long have you lived/owned your present location? Total - 286
- | | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Less than one year – 7 | 2.5% |
| 1-3 years – 31 | 10.8% |
| 4-7 years – 41 | 14.3% |
| 8-12 years – 35 | 12.2% |
| 13-20 years – 50 | 17.5% |
| 20 + years – 122 | 42.7% |
6. If you live on a farm, is it a commercial farm? (not a hobby farm) Total - 34
- | | |
|---------|-------|
| Yes – 6 | 17.6% |
| No – 28 | 82.4% |
7. Are you: Total - 287
- | | |
|----------------|-------|
| Employed – 133 | 46.3% |
| Unemployed – 2 | .7% |
| Retired – 151 | 52.6% |
| In school – 1 | .4% |
8. If working, where do you work? Total - 132
- | | |
|------------------------|-------|
| In the Town – 12 | 9.1% |
| Outside the Town – 120 | 90.9% |
9. Are you: Total - 275
- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Seasonal/weekend resident – 169 | 61.5% |
| Permanent resident – 106 | 38.5% |

10. Why do you choose to own property in the Town of Big Bend? Total - 816	
Rural Environment – 137	16.8%
Close to employment – 7	.9%
Family and friends – 69	8.5%
Family roots – 44	5.4%
Good place to raise family – 19	2.3%
Type of housing – 20	2.5%
Reasonable tax rate – 44	5.4%
Proximity to rivers and lakes – 211	25.9%
Cost of living – 22	2.7%
Quality of schools – 4	.5%
Reduce regulations – 24	2.9%
Housing costs – 3	.2%
Hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation – 212	26.0%

11. Do you feel the quality of life in the town of Big Bend is: Total - 284

Excellent – 92	32.4%
Good – 180	63.4%
Fair or poor – 12	4.2%

12. Recreational activities in the Town are: Total - 274

Adequate – 258	94.2%
Inadequate – 16	5.8%

13. What do you think is missing in the Town of Big Bend? Total - 368

Trails – 67	18.2%
Parks and open space – 47	12.8%
Restaurants – 94	25.5%
Shopping – 69	18.8%
Services/activities for senior citizens – 29	7.9%
Jobs – 49	13.3%
Other – 13	3.5%

14. Do you find the overall condition of the Town of Big Bend roads (Town):

Total - 274

Adequate – 225 82.1%

Inadequate – 49 17.9%

15. Would you be willing to pay increased taxes to upgrade Town roads?

Total - 264

Yes – 85 32.2%

No – 179 67.8%

16. Do you feel the following services are adequate in the Town?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
County Sheriff – Yes – 232, No – 18, total – 250	92.8%	7.2%
Road Department – Yes – 213, No – 36, total – 239	89.1%	10.9%
Snow removal – Yes – 220, No – 23, total – 243	90.5%	9.5%
Open government – Yes – 194, No – 16, total – 210	92.4%	7.6%
Fire – Yes – 186, No – 38, total – 224	83.0%	17.0%
Ambulance – Yes – 184, No – 40, total – 224	82.1%	17.9%
First Responders – Yes – 203, No – 21, total – 224	90.6%	9.4%
Trash collection – Yes – 190, No – 30, total – 220	86.4%	13.6%

17. Do you feel the Town should continue to bear the cost of monthly garbage/recycling at the Town Hall? Total - 273

Yes – 157 57.5%

No – 38 13.9%

No opinion – 78 28.6%

18. Do you use the Town garbage/recycling at the Town Hall? Total - 282

Yes – 136 48.2%

No – 146 51.8%

19. The biggest issue facing the Town of Big Bend in the next 10-20 years is:

Total - 650

Managing growth – 61 9.4%

Promoting economic development – 35 5.4%

Protecting farmland from development – 90 13.8%

Maintaining/improving roads & infrastructure – 117 18.0%

Protecting the environment – 155 23.8%

Keeping taxes low – 159 24.5%

Providing more parks & recreation – 29 4.5%

Other – 4 .6%

20. Should land use policies and regulations emphasize preserving the rural character of the Town? Total - 272

Yes – 235 86.4%

No – 37 13.6%

21. Are you for or against the development of agricultural land for residential housing purposes and commercial/industrial purposes?

Residential housing, total – 288

For – 101 35.1%

Against – 96 33.3%

Not sure – 91 31.6%

Commercial/industrial, total – 251

For – 39 15.5%

Against – 139 55.4%

Not sure – 73 29.1%

22. How important is it to preserve farmland for open space and recreational purposes? Total - 278

Very important – 147	52.8%
Somewhat important – 75	27.0%
Somewhat not important – 35	12.6%
Not important – 7	2.6%
No opinion – 14	5.0%

23. Would you encourage or discourage the following land uses in the Town:

Residential single-family homes

Total – 265, encourage – 240, 90.6%, discourage – 25, 9.4%

Residential multi-family homes

Total – 261, encourage – 65, 24.9%, discourage – 196, 75.1%

Senior/assisted living unites

Total – 250, encourage – 166, 66.4%, discourage – 84, 33.6%

Agriculture/farming

Total – 263, encourage – 239, 90.9%, discourage – 24, 9.1%

Light industrial manufacturing

Total – 246, encourage – 116, 47.2%, discourage – 130, 52.8%

Convenience/gas station facilities

Total – 261, encourage – 195, 74.7%, discourage – 66, 25.3%

Tourism: B and B facilities, restaurants

Total – 259, encourage – 201, 77.6%, discourage – 58, 22.4%

Campgrounds – encourage

Total – 257 – encourage – 107, 41.6%, discourage – 150, 58.4%

24. What kind of housing development should be allowed in the Town?

Single family homes on 5 acres or more

Total – 255, Yes – 232, 91.0%, No – 23, 9.0%

Single family homes on 1-2 acre lots in subdivision

Total – 247, Yes – 178, 72.1%, No – 69, 27.9%

Duplexes and or Townhouses

Total – 243, Yes – 73, 30.0%, No – 170, 70.0%

Apartment housing

Total – 243, Yes – 45, 18.5%, No – 198, 81.5%

25. Do you feel the Town should increase taxes or borrow money to modernize its facilities and/or equipment? Total - 258

Yes – 82 31.8%

No – 176 68.2%

26. If the Town grows significantly, present Town services will not need to be increased. Total - 272

Strongly agree – 26 9.6%

Agree – 61 22.4%

No position – 63 23.2%

Disagree – 100 36.8%

Strongly disagree – 22 8.0%

27. As the Town grows, should additional land be set aside for recreational use? Total - 263

Yes – 175 66.5%

No – 88 33.5%

28. Groundwater contamination is a problem in the Town. Total - 222

Yes – 59 26.6%

No – 163 73.4%

29. Pollution of lakes and streams is a problem in the Town. Total - 229

Yes – 95 41.5%

No – 134 58.5%

30. More land should be set aside for wildlife preservation. Total - 242

Yes – 145 59.9%

No – 97 40.1%

Questions 31,32 and 33 requested comments so these will be addressed in the comment section.

34. The Town should take the following action regarding a Comprehensive Plan and Zoning. Total - 593

Do nothing, leave things the way they are

Yes – 49, 8.3%, No – 93, 15.7%

Adopt Rusk County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning

Yes – 39, 6.6%, No – 16.4%

Develop its own Comprehensive Plan and Zoning

Yes – 150, 25.3%, No – 27, 4.6%

No opinion at this point – need more information

Yes – 103, 17.4%, No – 35, 6.7%

Appendix B

Town of Big Bend Conflict Resolution Process (CRP)

Purpose

To provide the framework for resolving planning related conflicts. The CRP is intended to provide a low-cost, flexible approach to resolving planning disputes between governmental entities. This process should not supersede local processes established for conflict resolution and is not intended to be used by parties dissatisfied with the appropriate application of local rules and regulations within their jurisdiction.

1. Open Discussion and Debate - Communication and open discussion between parties involved in a dispute will be the first action taken to resolve conflicts by reaching consensus. Oftentimes, open dialog and debate between affected parties will be sufficient to resolve most conflicts. This action will be undertaken without outside assistance from a neutral third-party.

2. Negotiation Techniques - If parties cannot reach consensus through discussion and debate it may be necessary to utilize facilitation or mediation techniques involving the use of a neutral third-party.

a. Facilitation - A conflict resolution method which involves use of a neutral third party to act as a facilitator in discussions between disputants. The facilitator's role is normally limited to providing a forum for the parties to interact directly, including the enforcement of very basic rules of communication during discussions and negotiations.

b. Mediation - A form of a conflict resolution in which the parties bring their dispute to a neutral third party, who helps them agree on a settlement. Planning disputes should be mediated by a neutral third-party. A mutually acceptable mediator is to be selected from the Conflict Resolution Subcommittee.

3. Litigation - If discussion and negotiation techniques fail to achieve a resolution to the dispute, the process will move to litigation. This process involves the use of the court system to resolve disputes. While many cases are settled in pre-trial proceedings, this alternative can be very time-consuming and expensive for all parties involved.

Initiating the CRP

The process may be initiated by a local jurisdiction or Rusk County at any time during the planning process. Requests to initiate CRP should be submitted to the consultant and to affected jurisdictions and shall clearly and concisely identify the issue, the jurisdictions involved, and the affected jurisdiction's authorized representatives. Upon receipt of CRP notification, and unless otherwise requested by the jurisdictions involved, the consultant will schedule a meeting between the affected parties to discuss and debate the issue (see #1). If this step fails to resolve the dispute, the consultant will coordinate meeting to address the dispute using negotiation techniques (see #2). The consultant may, at the request of both parties, act as a facilitator and/or mediator, otherwise this party selected from the Conflict Resolution Subcommittee.

Town of Big Bend Conflict Resolution Process (CRP)

