

The Town of Excelsior, located in north central Sauk County, is characterized by its small town atmosphere and a strong sense of community pride. The Town is rich in natural and recreational resources including prime farmland, forested bluffs, the Baraboo River, Narrow's Creek and Dell Creek. The natural setting, rural atmosphere and proximity to urban amenities in the nearby cities of Reedsburg and Baraboo encourages continued growth in the Town of Excelsior. Planning for the Town's future is critical to retaining characteristics valued by the community and to ensure the Town's continued success.

1.0 Purpose Of This Plan

The purpose of the Town of Excelsior Comprehensive Plan is to help guide local decision-making by:

- Recognizing and documenting the Town's most important attributes;
- Acknowledging issues of concern to residents;
- Identifying areas appropriate for development and preservation;
- Establishing and assigning future land use districts based on desired land uses;
- Identifying needed transportation and utility provisions to serve existing and new development;
- Focusing attention on critical economic opportunities for local business and recreational development;
- Providing opportunities to preserve open space land for ecological and recreational purposes, and for community aesthetics.

The Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in accordance with Wis Stat § 66.1001 and is the culmination of 26 months of work on the part of a 21-member Comprehensive Planning Committee. Input from numerous other citizens of the Town and from knowledgeable people from throughout Sauk County has been incorporated into the final Comprehensive Plan. The Plan itself is comprised of nine primary elements, as noted below, however this Plan has rearranged some elements or portions thereof to allow for a greater level of analysis based on some of the more important issues in the Town. For example, Natural Resources and Agriculture have been separated into two individual sections, while Cultural Resources has been included with Utilities and Community Facilities. Additionally, the 'Issues and Opportunities' element has been expanded to include an in-depth analysis of a Community Survey, Vision Session, and Focus Group make-up.

For each of these redefined elements, broken into chapters, minimum requirements of the comprehensive planning legislation are met and in many cases exceeded. In this Plan, a description of each element is provided under the purpose statement of each chapter, along with a primary goal, objectives and identified policies. Each chapter is accompanied by a series of charts, tables and maps to illustrate both background information and the intent of the identified goals, objectives and policies.

In addition to the nine required elements, the comprehensive planning legislation also set forth 14 goals for communities to reach both throughout and at the completion of their planning processes. Although these goals are not required, this Plan and planning process has accomplished them.

The nine elements and 14 goals of the comprehensive plan are noted below:

Nine Elements

1. Issues and Opportunities
2. Housing
3. Transportation

4. Utilities and Community Facilities
5. Agriculture, Natural and Cultural resources
6. Economic Development
7. Intergovernmental Cooperation
8. Land Use
9. Implementation

Thirteen Goals

1. Promoting redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing structures
2. Encouraging neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices
3. Protecting natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes and woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources
4. Protecting economically productive areas, including farmland and forests
5. Encouraging land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state government and utility costs
6. Preserving cultural, historic and archeological sites
7. Encouraging coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government
8. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for all income levels throughout each community
9. Providing adequate infrastructure, public services and a supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential and agricultural uses
10. Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities
11. Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals
12. Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied unique urban and rural communities
13. Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

To guide the development of goals, objectives and policies, planning participants developed an overall Vision of how the Town should look and feel in the future. The input for the development of the Town's Vision was gathered through a 'Visioning Session', as well as through feedback from the Comprehensive Planning Committee. In addition to aiding with the development of the Plan's goals, objectives, and policies, the Vision is meant to assist the Town with the actual implementation of the Plan through the years. The Vision is primarily meant to serve as a grounding point for future decisions. It broadly and effectively addresses the needs, desires, and thoughts of residents and landowners in Excelsior.

The highlight of the planning process was its reliance on extensive public participation and input, far exceeding the requirements of the comprehensive planning legislation. The legislation requires, at a minimum, one town-sponsored public hearing when the draft plan is ready for adoption. In contrast, this planning process focused heavily on public input to formulate a plan that best represents all interests in the Town. The process began with the appointment of a representative Comprehensive Planning Committee and continued with the administration of focus groups, a community-wide survey and vision session, an open house and numerous public meetings.

1.1 Statement of Vision, Goals, Objectives and Policies

Each Chapter in this Comprehensive Plan includes a primary goal followed by objectives and policies, which will provide future direction to the Town. Visions, goals, objectives and policies are defined as follows:

- A **Vision** is the expression of a community's overall desired future direction. The vision statement serves as the foundation for setting goals, objectives and policies.

- Goals** are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the Town should approach preservation and development issues. These goals are based on key issues, opportunities and problems that affect the Town and are derived from the future Vision of a Town.
- Objectives** suggest future directions in a way that is more specific than goals. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of the goal. While achievement of an objective is not always easily measured, objectives are usually attainable through policies and specific implementation activities.
- Policies** are rules, courses of action, or programs used to ensure Plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives of a Plan. Town decision-makers should use policies, including any housing density policy, on a regular basis. Success in achieving policies is usually measurable.

1.2 Planning History

Town of Excelsior Development Plan (1999)

The Town of Excelsior adopted its first Development Plan in April 1999, which assisted the town in guiding the location of growth and future land uses. This document represented the primarily residential development areas around Lake Virginia and adjacent to the City of Reedsburg. Medium density development, with a five-acre lot-size minimum, was deemed acceptable in the rural areas. Development on Class I and II farmland was discouraged. In general, new development should conform to policies set by the Town Development Plan.

1.3 Comprehensive Planning Process Sauk County

As part of the State of Wisconsin's 1999-2000 biennial budget, Governor Thompson signed into law one of the State's most comprehensive pieces of land-use legislation. This legislation is intended to provide local governmental units with the tools to create comprehensive plans, to promote more informed land-use decisions and to encourage state agencies to create more balanced land-use rules and policies. This legislation also includes a substantive definition of a comprehensive plan and provides an essential framework for local land-use decision-making. It also helps local officials determine the likely impacts of their decisions by ensuring that they consider all aspects of community life.

In the summer of 2002, the Sauk County Department of Planning & Zoning announced that it would apply for a 2003 Comprehensive Planning grant from the State of Wisconsin to facilitate planning processes for municipalities, enabling them to develop and adopt local Comprehensive Plans. As a result of this effort, 21 Sauk County municipalities passed resolutions indicating their desire to be co-applicants to the grant. Excelsior was one of these municipalities.

In the spring of 2003, Sauk County announced that the 21 municipalities were awarded a 2003 Comprehensive Planning grant in the amount of \$288,000. Of the total award, Excelsior's share was \$10,000. The provisions of the grant required the Town to match the grant award of \$10,000. In an effort to reduce this local match amount, Sauk County agreed to provide \$5,000 of in-kind mapping assistance, bringing the total Town match to not more than \$5,000.

Once the overall grant was awarded, towns in Sauk County could choose to contract with a private consultant or to use Sauk County as a consultant to aid them with the development of their Comprehensive Plans. Six Towns and three villages chose to contract with Sauk County, including the Town of Excelsior. Excelsior began its comprehensive planning process in the summer of 2006.

1.4 Regional Context

Map 1-1 Regional Context shows the relationship of the Town of Excelsior to neighboring communities. The Town is located in north central Sauk County, approximately one-half mile east of the City of Reedsburg. It is also about 5 miles west of the City of Baraboo. The Town also includes the incorporated Village of Rock Springs and is contiguous with the Village of North Freedom.

1.5 Jurisdictional Boundaries

A result of the 2000 Federal Census population data required Sauk County to redistrict the county supervisory district boundaries to achieve new districts of equal population. As a result of this effort, the Town of Excelsior was assigned two supervisory districts. Supervisory District 11 and Supervisory District 21. **Map 1-2 Jurisdictional Map** depicts the exact boundaries of Supervisory Districts 11 and 21.

The Town of Excelsior is split into two school districts: Reedsburg and Baraboo. **Map 1-2 Jurisdictional Map** also depicts the locations of these boundaries.

In terms of land use-related issues, the Town of Excelsior is regulated by the following Chapters of the Sauk County Code of Ordinances:

Administered by Sauk County Clerk

- Chapter 1 Supervisory District Plan

Administered by the Sauk County Department of Planning & Zoning

- Chapter 7 Zoning Ordinance
- Chapter 8 Shoreland Protection Ordinance
- Chapter 10 Floodplain Zoning Ordinance
- Chapter 18 Rural Identification System
- Chapter 22 Land Division and Subdivision Regulations Ordinance
- Chapter 23 Tower Siting Ordinance
- Chapter 24 Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance
- Chapter 25 Private Sewage System Ordinance

Administered by the Sauk County Department of Land Conservation

- Chapter 26 Animal Waste Management Ordinance

Administered by the Sauk County Sheriff

- Chapter 27 Animal Control Ordinance

1.6 Planning Area

The Planning area covers all lands within the Town of Excelsior. As a point of reference, **Map 1-3 Aerial Photography/Parcel Boundaries** shows an overlay of tax parcels on an air photo.