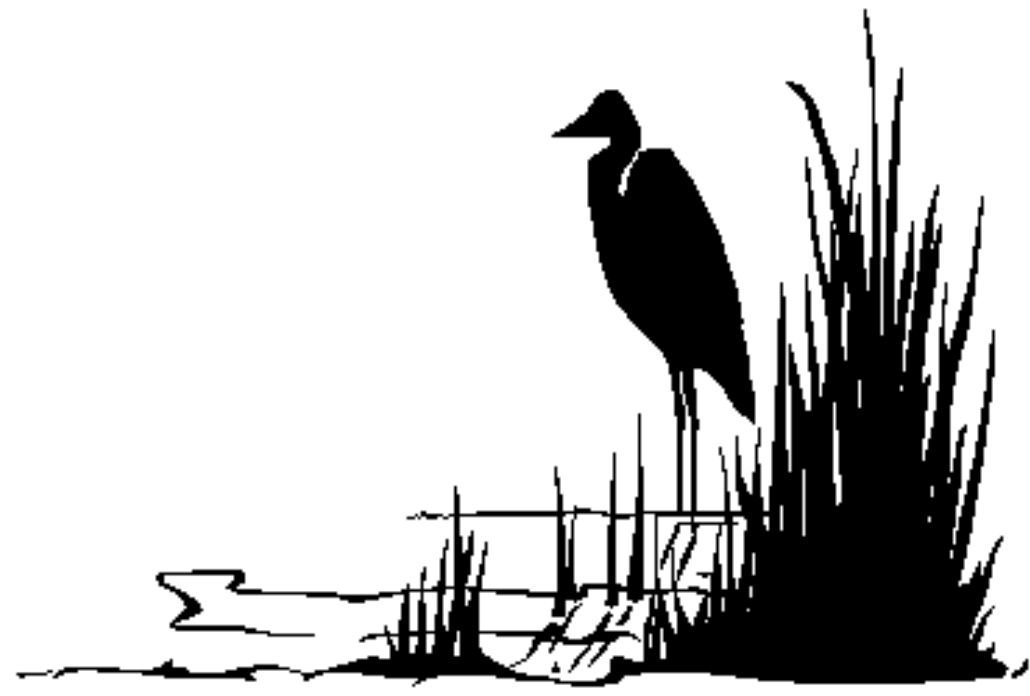


# TOWN OF CLEARFIELD

## LAND USE PLAN



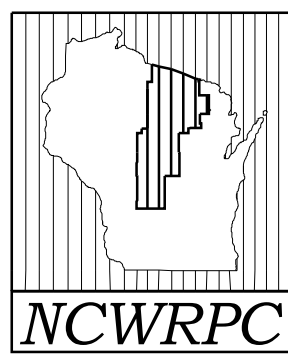
North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

## INTRODUCTION

The Town of Clearfield is at a critical junction in its development. Over the last decade, Clearfield has experienced slow but steady growth. However, concern over increasing land sales and subdivision platting in the Town coupled with growing trepidation about possible State land use mandates have spurred the Town to take a closer look at land use issues. Now, a significant increase in building permit applications has confirmed some of these concerns. Town officials and residents have recognized the need to plan ahead for the future of the Town of Clearfield to avert a crisis situation and be prepared in advance of controversial and disruptive developments.

The process of developing this plan was carried out by a seven member Town of Clearfield Long Range Planning Committee with the technical assistance of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC). All Town property owners were surveyed on their opinions regarding future development and an inventory of existing land-uses was conducted. A community vision and set of goals and objectives were established to guide future development in ways that will not sacrifice the qualities and character of the community. Proposed future land uses for all areas of the Town were then mapped out. All meetings were posted and open to the public, and special informational meetings/hearings were held to keep the public informed and provide everyone opportunity for input.

A land use plan does not directly regulate land use. It provides a statement of basic principles to guide Town and County officials when making decisions regarding growth and development in the Town of Clearfield, and it creates a basis for such regulatory decisions. The plan's general philosophy is to encourage growth in a fashion that protects and preserves the natural beauty and integrity of the Town's environment which is the foundation of its quality of life.



Prepared October 1998 By:

## North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

210 McClellan St., Suite 210 Wausau, Wisconsin 54403  
(715) 849-5510 Fax (715) 849-5110

## VISION/GOALS/POLICIES FOR THE TOWN OF CLEARFIELD

The land-use plan for the Town of Clearfield should be a guide that local officials, residents, and business interests can use and rely upon for managing growth and development. The vision/goals and subsequent policies are intended to be the foundation for a variety of specific programs and actions to be implemented by both the public and private sectors.

Based on the results of a community-wide survey, the Town of Clearfield Planning Committee developed the following vision statement for Clearfield as a basis for guiding present and future land-use policies, plans, and programs.

Following the visioning process, goals were established to reflect the values and opinions of Town residents as expressed by the town-wide survey, as well as upon issues of concern raised over the years about Town development...generally and specifically. Likewise, the policies incorporated into the Town plan reflect the legal obligations outlined in state statute for preparing and adopting what is referred to as a "master plan". Statutes stipulate that,

"...the master plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality (town) which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity or the general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development..."

Thus, four over-riding principles become apparent that formulate a vision for the Town of Clearfield:

- 1.) HUMANITY - suggests that planning activities should be primarily directed to the prevention of community problems, rather than to problem solving. It focuses activities upon the direct improvement of the human environment and the creation and expansion of devices and institutions which will provide more effectively for human growth and cultural advances;
- 2.) CONSERVATION - of natural resources;
- 3.) AESTHETICS - the accepted perception of the appearance of things; and
- 4.) QUALITY OF LIFE - through 1-3, above, the plan should improve, not diminish, the quality and condition of life for all residents of the community.

More specifically, in order to provide an over-all frame of policy against which individual land development proposals can be evaluated by the Town Board, the following land use issues are identified with goals and policies to address each are arrayed for the Town of Clearfield, in no rank order:

1. ISSUE: The Town has experienced a moderate growth rate trend in recent years, which is now expected to increase substantially. Community survey results indicate public concern regarding growth and a desire to maintain a growth rate at or near the previous moderate trend level. Further, the survey indicates that the public feels that the Town should have some control over new development.

- 1.1 GOAL: To maintain orderly, planned growth which maintains the rural status of the Town while promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of Town residents and making efficient use of public facilities and services, and tax dollars.

### 1.2 POLICIES:

- 1.2a - The Town will maintain a long-range development plan which will serve as a guide for future land use and zoning decisions. New development will be permitted based on consideration of the plan, as well as, other Town, County, Regional and State plans and ordinances.

- 1.2b - The Town will provide would-be developers/builders, realtors, County zoning staff and committee members, and County Board members with a copy of the Town development plan.

- 1.2c - The Town should support the marketing efforts of the County Economic Development Corporation to attract needed businesses but not become involved with actively recruiting, itself.

2. ISSUE: The location and placement of new development has an impact on community character. Development can enhance the community's image and character, but it can also be detrimental, for example, by destroying elements of character like open space. Survey results indicate a preference for single family residential housing types.

- 2.1 GOAL: To regulate development/housing density in order to minimize groundwater impacts from on-site septic systems and to preserve the rural character of the Town.

### 2.2 POLICIES:

- 2.2a - Require a per unit minimum lot size of 10 acres for commercial/industrial, and 5 acres for new single-family residential development in order to protect groundwater resources from the impacts of higher density development and to provide the spacing necessary to maintain the rural character and density.

- 2.2b - Consider multiple family development only where "public" sanitary service is available or planned and where a need for such development can be shown.

- 2.2c - Full scale commercial operations should be kept out of residential areas and encouraged in more high traffic areas less suitable for residential use.

- 2.2d - Allow home based businesses which are compatible with the neighborhood.

3. ISSUE: Preservation of farmlands and woodlands which are key elements of the Town's rural character...development is squandering farmland, and the end result of the managed forest law (past: forest crop or woodland tax) is often the unsightly clear cutting of woodlands with a long regeneration period while having a negative impact on the Town tax base.

- 3.1 GOAL: To preserve the productive farmland in the Town for long-term farm use and maintain agriculture as an important economic activity and way-of-life; and To encourage use of sound forestry management practices without reliance on the managed forest law.

### 3.2 POLICIES:

- 3.2a - The unnecessary conversion of good agricultural lands will be avoided. Nonfarm development will be directed to those areas specifically designated for said use.

- 3.2b - Nonfarm development, particularly subdivisions, will be encouraged in areas away from intensive agricultural activities, in order to minimize farm - nonfarm conflicts due to noise, odors, nitrates in well water, pesticides, farm/vehicle conflicts on roadways, late night plowing, etc.

- 3.2c - The Town will set guidelines for proposals involving the keeping or raising of livestock or other animals, fish, and fowl in relation to the potential impact on water quality and neighboring land uses. Large scale corporate type farming will be discouraged.

4. ISSUE: Scenic beauty is important to residents of the Town of Clearfield as evidenced by community survey responses, while at the same time being threatened by timber harvest, increasing development, garbage and junk accumulating on some properties.

- 4.1 GOAL: To preserve and protect key elements of the Town's scenic beauty and instill some sense of pride in ownership such that people will be encouraged to clean up and maintain their own properties for the betterment of the community as a whole.

### 4.2 POLICIES:

- 4.2a - The Town of Clearfield will place a particularly high priority on preservation of scenic beauty and the aesthetic features which give the community its unique, rural character.

- 4.2b - The Town will encourage the protection of wildlife habitat, including wetlands and older growth forests.

5. ISSUE: Land use planning and regulation such as zoning, land division and other codes and ordinances should promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the Town residents while allowing and maintaining free use of individual property.

- 5.1 GOAL: To develop a land use and zoning program which protects the Town's rural character without placing an unnecessary burden on property owners.

### 5.2 POLICES:

- 5.2a - The Town Board will present all land use and zoning plans to the people for input and acceptance prior to implementing such plans.

- 5.2b - Ordinances enacted to implement the Town land use plan will address specific areas of concern such as highlighted by the community survey including junk automobiles, unsightly trash, garbage, and junk rather than simply imposing traditional block zoning schemes.

- 5.2c - The Town should develop standards for architectural and landscape design for appearance in commercial areas.

- 5.2d - Public nuisance will be regulated to provide Town residents with a method of recourse and to mitigate adverse impacts.

- 5.2e - Uses of land and buildings should not have adverse impacts on surrounding properties including visual blight, odor, or noise.

- 5.2f - Animal regulation will be incorporated into zoning plans with expanded citation capacity.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### TOPOGRAPHY

The Town of Clearfield lies within the physiographic province known as the Central Plain. It was once part of a broad glacial lake basin and generally has flat or gently undulating topography except for an occasional sandstone butte. Capped by resistant rock, these buttes rise above the basin to a height of 100 to 300 feet and are the remnant outliers of the retreating uplands to the southwest of the county. Generally, the lake basin slopes gradually to the southeast. The surface drainage is toward the Wisconsin River.

The Town (and the lake basin as a whole) has extensive areas of wetlands which result from relatively flat topography, a high water table and slowly permeable layers of silt or clay within the lake deposits. The underlying bedrock material is primarily Cambrian Sandstone. The water table can be found 20 to 30 feet below the surface with typical well depths of 30 to 50 feet. Deeper wells are reported in areas of dense rock.

### SURFACE WATER

The Little Yellow River, Juneau County Ditch, and the Lemonweir River drain the Town. There are a few small ponds, but no lakes located within the Township. The Lemonweir River has a modified dendritic drainage pattern. The Little Yellow has a more linear pattern. There are no trout waters classified within the Town. Floodplains generally follow the basins of the Lemonweir and Little Yellow rivers while the nature of the Juneau County Ditch minimizes its flooding potential. The County has floodplain regulations in place through its Shoreland Zoning Ordinance which applies to the Town of Clearfield. Surface waters cover about 0.83% (189 acres) of the Town with floodplains that expand to cover about 2,250 acres.

### GROUNDWATER

In Juneau County, the major source of water supply is from groundwater aquifers and is available in adequate quantities for most domestic, agricultural, and industrial needs. The quality of the groundwater throughout Juneau County is generally good for most uses, but treatment may be needed for specific purposes. The water is relatively soft, but local differences in quality are caused by a variety of factors. Calcium, magnesium, and bicarbonate ions derived from dolomite are present. Minor water use problems occur locally by high concentrations of iron produced mainly by reducing conditions in marshes and swamps, although some iron does come from the bedrock.

### WETLANDS

Wetlands serve several important environmental functions including flood control, water quality improvement, and groundwater recharge as well as providing habitat for fish and wildlife. Wetlands shown reflect wetlands mapped by the DNR on its digital Wisconsin Wetland Inventory Maps and may not reflect all areas considered wetlands by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

A complex set of local, state, and federal regulations place limitations on the development and use of wetlands. The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance adopted by Juneau County regulates shoreland use and development within 300 feet of navigable streams and 1,000 feet of lakes. The Department of Natural Resources regulates the placement of structures and other alterations below the ordinary high water mark of navigable streams and lakes. The Corps of Engineers has authority over the placement of fill materials in virtually all wetlands. The USDA incorporates wetland preservation criteria into its crop price support programs. Prior to placing fill or altering wetland resources, the appropriate agencies should be contacted to receive authorization.

Wetlands are scattered throughout the Town with some of significant size. There are approximately 4,122 acres of wetland comprising 18% of the land area of the Town. These wetlands exhibit great diversity in hydrologic and vegetative characteristics. The majority of the wetlands are forested areas with wet soils. These lowland areas support mixed hardwood and needle-leaved coniferous/deciduous plant communities. Wetter areas support scrub/shrub and emergent vegetation types.

### WOODLANDS

Woodland and forest cover is significant within the Town of Clearfield. Over 80 percent of the Town is forested (approx. 18,667 of 22,914 acres). The majority of this land is in private ownership however, significant holdings include Juneau County forest land (1,751 acres) as well as commercial forest lands (2,242 acres).

### POPULATION

The official 1997 population estimate for the Town of Clearfield is 549, an increase of 9.36 percent since 1990. This rate out paces the statewide average growth of 6.14 percent, but is moderate when compared to many other Juneau County municipalities. Clearfield's neighbors: Germantown, Necedah, Lisbon, and Orange have grown 23.09, 16.49, 6.03 and -0.52 percent respectively over this period. The Village of Necedah has grown 11.17 percent and the City of New Lisbon by 0.60. Clearfield's population actually shrank by 6.69 percent between 1980 and 1990, after increasing by over 72 percent between 1970 and 1980.

### HOUSING

According to the 1990 Census of Population and Housing, there were 377 housing units in the Town of Clearfield. Of these, 196 were occupied, while 154 (41%) were seasonal, recreational, or occasional use housing units. The homeowner vacancy rate was 2.7 in 1990.

Since 1990, new dwelling unit additions have averaged 8.88 per year. Based on the above estimated population, approximately 19 of these units are year-round occupied, indicating that 50 new seasonal units have been added to the Town. Thus, the percentage of seasonal units has increased to 46 percent of total dwelling units. Mobile homes totaled 162. New mobile homes have averaged 3.75 per year since 1990.

### GENERALIZED LAND USE

The table below shows a breakdown by acres of the different land use types in the Town of Clearfield based on calculations from the GIS database of the land use inventory.

Town of Clearfield Generalized Land Use 1997-1998

Use Type	Acres	Percent
Forest/Woodlands	18,666.94	81.46
Agricultural	3,035.78	13.25
Recreational	187.87	0.82
Surface Waters	189.41	0.83
Public (not County forest)	9.08	0.04
Residential	706.55	3.08
Commercial	49.86	0.22
Vacant/Other	68.91	0.30
Total	22,914.40	100.00

The largest portion of land in Clearfield is in forest/woodlands with 18,667 acres comprising over 81% of the land mass. Agricultural is the next largest category with 13.25%. Only 3.08% of the land area is currently being used for residential purposes. Other land uses are relatively insignificant in comparison with each less than 1% individually, such as commercial with 49.86 acres or 0.22% of total land area.

## COMMUNITY PLANNING SURVEY

By conducting a community survey, consensus on the issues facing the Town and a shared vision for its future can be developed. Of the approximately 600 surveys that were mailed to property owners in Clearfield, 164 were returned for a response rate of 27%. Forty-three percent of those returning surveys described themselves as being a permanent resident of Clearfield, while 34% indicated that they were seasonal residents. About 28% of respondents owned undeveloped land in the Town, and 2% owned commercial or industrial land. Sixty percent of survey respondents were male. Over one-third (38.4%) of all respondents were retired.

A review of the key survey results are summarized below:

Roughly one-half (57%) of survey respondents favor the existing population growth rate, while the remainder are split between an increased or decreased population rate. In addition, over 70% of those surveyed feel that the Town should have a say in where new growth does occur.

The greatest number of respondents felt that single family housing should be encouraged, followed by business, seasonal/recreation homes, and elderly housing. The lowest number of responses were for apartments and duplexes and mobile home parks.

Almost 50% said that further growth of businesses within the Town is essential to the stability/improvement of the Town.

Over 50% said that they do not approve of rezoning agricultural land to residential land.

With regard to minimum lot size, 39.6% think that it should be 5 acres or more, while 39.0% feel that it should be 3 acres (current minimum). Another 12.2% think that 1 acre should be the minimum lot size.

Over 71% of respondents think that scenic beauty is important, while only 5% said that it was not important or did not know. Features that are felt to be beautiful in the Town of Clearfield include trees, forests, deer, wildlife, streams, and related themes.

Municipal services within the Town of Clearfield including police, fire and EMS protection, recycling and waste disposal, schools, and roads are generally rated slightly above average by respondents.

The question regarding what types of businesses or services are needed in the Town drew a wide variety of responses with restaurant, grocery store, discount retail, small business that doesn't destroy land or trees, small industrial or farm related, and tourist/craft/specialty shops receiving the most entries.

Things people like the most about Clearfield include country living (i.e. open spaces, fishing, woods, natural scenery, wildlife, etc.), peaceful and quiet, and friendly people/good neighbors.

Things people like the least about Clearfield include crime/no enforcement of regulations/animal control, junk/trash/junked cars, road conditions (icy, unplowed, potholes), and distance to/lack of shopping and services.

Respondents have chosen to live in the Town for a variety of reasons with country living and related themes, family and friends, quiet/low noise, and nice place receiving the most entries.

When asked why people will want to move to Clearfield in the future, respondents felt that the rural community/natural setting is the most significant factor with recreation, quiet/well maintained community, and inexpensive (low taxes/land costs) also receiving a number of entries.

Respondents feel that Clearfield will be noted or recognized in the future for the following things: quiet, rural, natural area and related themes, safe place to live with good, friendly people, and recreation area.

Those responding to the survey indicate that their vision for the future of the Town includes not to much growth and staying as is and maintaining natural, rural setting of peace and quiet. A few indicated more businesses are needed.

The most important issue facing the Town of Clearfield according to survey respondents includes keeping taxes down, growth and development related themes, maintaining the rural/natural environment, zoning, and junk/aesthetics.

Over 49% of respondents are in favor of the Town being zoned in the future, while 14.6% are not in favor of town zoning. About 25% are not sure or have no opinion on zoning for the Town.

Junk automobiles/unsightly trash and garbage was checked most often (121) by respondents as needing regulation under zoning followed by junk yards (91), public nuisances (71), animal control (69), and aesthetic requirements for homes and businesses (45).

