

8 LAND USE

The analysis and consideration of land use issues is among the most critical components of the Town of Onalaska Plan. Combined with the entire body of public input, this background information will help the Town guide the update of the land use plan and supporting policies.

The Land Use Element was prepared pursuant to Section 66.1001 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Section 66.1001 requires this element to include a compilation of objectives, policies, goals and maps to guide the future development of public and private property. Further, the element shall contain a listing of the amount, type, intensity and net density of existing uses of land in the local governmental unit.



The element shall analyze trends in the supply, demand and price of land, opportunities for redevelopment and existing and potential land use conflicts. The element shall also contain projections, based on background information, for 20 years, including five-year increments, of future residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial land uses including the assumptions of net densities or other spatial assumptions upon which the projections are based. The element shall also include a series of maps that show current land uses and future land uses that indicate productive agricultural soils, natural limitations for building site development, floodplains, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive lands, the boundaries of areas to which services of public utilities and community facilities will be provided in the future and the general location of future land uses by net density or other classifications.

The required goals, objectives and policies are contained in the Plan report document.

8.1 EXISTING LAND USE

This section outlines the existing land uses in the Town of Onalaska.

Table 8.1 Generalized Land Use Inventory

	Acres	Percent of Land Use
Residential	2,138	7%
Commercial	182	1%
Manufacturing	108	0%
Agriculture	9,542	33%
Swamp and Waste	305	1%
Forest	6,149	21%
Other	192	1%
Private Forests Enrolled in Government Program	762	3%
Federal Lands	3,093	11%
State Lands	146	1%
County Lands	39	0%
Town Parks	26	0%
Other Public- Semi Public Uses	367	1%
Open Water	5,110	18%
Federal Right of Way	0	0%
State Right of Way	227	1%
County Right of Way	282	1%
Local Right of Way	307	1%
Total Land Use Inventory Acres	28,975	100%

Source: La Crosse County Development Plan 2020, 2000

Agricultural

Agricultural uses account for over 9,500 acres in the Town. At 33 percent of the Town's total area, agricultural uses remain the most prevalent use of the Town's nearly 29,000 acres. Several types of agricultural uses, including pasturing, grazing, livestock and related activities are spread throughout the town. This includes significant areas east of USH 53 as well as land in the coulees. The acreages depicted do not include lands used specifically for barns, farm residences or other buildings.

Forest

Forested lands account for over 6,100 acres in the Town, comprising 21 percent of the Town's land area. This is the second most prevalent land use within the Town of Onalaska.

Residential

Residential land in the Town is primarily single family with some mobile home and duplex properties. Most concentrated residential growth is found in the neighborhoods and developments east of USH 53 and along Lake Onalaska. Farm and non-farm residences are also situated throughout the Town. In total, approximately 2,138 acres of residential land currently exists in the Town, equaling 7 percent of the Town's area.

Manufacturing

A significant amount of land is zoned industrial, however, only a fraction of that land is currently in an industrial use. It is estimated that 108 acres are used for manufacturing, with much of it scattered in relatively small parcels east of USH 53.

Other Land Uses

In addition to the land uses mentioned above, two other categories constitute the majority of the Town's land use. Those categories are open water (which makes up 5,110 acres and 18 percent of the Town's area) and federal lands (which total 3,093 acres and 11 percent of the Town's area). The federal lands are predominantly owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

8.1.1 Net Residential Density

According to the 2000 Census, the net residential density in the Town is 140.8 people per square mile and 49.6 housing units per square mile. Density obviously varies over the Town's different environments, and is significantly higher east of USH 53.

Table 8.2 Town of Onalaska Residential Density, 2000

	Population		Area in Square Miles			Density (Units per Sq. Mi)	
		Housing Units	Total Area	Water Area	Land Area	Population	Housing Units
V. Holmen	6,200	2,377	3.19	0.00	3.19	1,944.9	745.7
T. Onalaska	5,210	1,834	44.90	7.90	37.00	140.8	49.6
C. Onalaska	14,839	6,070	9.68	0.58	9.09	1,631.6	667.4

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000

8.1.2 Nonresidential Intensity

The La Crosse County zoning ordinance regulates the intensity of nonresidential development in the community. Three commercial and industrial districts are currently located in the Town: Commercial B (CB), Commercial C (CC), and Industrial (I).

Commercial B (CB)

This is the most restrictive district of the three non-agriculture / non-residential zoning districts in the Town. A wide range of uses are allowed by right including feed mills, hotels, newsstands, and animal hospitals. A maximum height limit of three stories or 45 feet is allowed.

Commercial C (CC)

This zoning district permits uses allowed in the Commercial B and more intensive uses including:

- a) Wholesale warehouses, truck terminals, and freight houses
- b) Storage plants (not including junk yards)
- c) Bakeries, printing plants, laboratories
- d) Woodworking and sheet metal fabrication plants

The maximum height allowed is three stories or 45 feet.

Industrial (I)

The industrial district allows a wide variety of industrial, warehousing, commercial and related uses. However, residential, educational, and institutional uses are generally prohibited. In addition, the ordinance specifically states that the following uses are allowable only after investigation and public hearing:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a) Abattoirs (except slaughter of poultry) | h) Garbage, rubbish, other dumping |
| b) Acid manufacture | i) Glue manufacturing |
| c) Cement, lime, manufacture | j) Junk yard |
| d) Distillation of bones | k) Petroleum refining |
| e) Explosives manufacture or storage | l) Smelting |
| f) Fat Rendering | m) Stockyards |
| g) Fertilizer manufacturing | |

The maximum height for this district is 60' or 5 stories.

8.2 LAND USE TRENDS

There are a number of notable trends related to the supply, demand, and sale of land within the Town of Onalaska. At the center of these trends is the fact that the Town of Onalaska is located in a highly desirable, growing region. As residential, commercial, office, tourism, and industrial growth pressures increase, the Town of Onalaska must define its role in the region and its policies to address local and regional growth.

8.2.1 Land Supply

An abundant amount of agricultural and open space land remains throughout the Town of Onalaska. Much of this land could potentially be available for development purposes. While many portions of the Town offer lands physically suited for development, the land use plan, and related land use regulations remain important considerations in determining the ultimate availability of land for different types of uses.

8.2.2 Land Demand

The demand for residential land in the Town and region continues to grow. Based on new home building permit data gathered for 1993-2003, the median number of new homes in the Town is 34 per year. New housing starts ranged from 23 (2002) to 53 (1998) during that period. Currently the Town's 1,834 housing units are spread over 2,138 acres.

An account of land use demand must also factor in lands susceptible to municipal annexations. Data available between 1990 and 1997 show that housing growth on Town lands was 260, but after annexations were considered, the Town's net growth in housing was 67 units.

Table 8.3 Housing Growth and Annexation, 1990-1997

	Number of Housing Units		New units built (net)	Units annexed (in or out)			New housing units per square mile 1990-1997
	1990	1997			Total net change	% change	
T. Holland	734	993	262	-3	259	35.3%	6.1
T. Onalaska	2,001	2,068	260	-193	67	3.3%	6.7
All towns in La Crosse County	9,903	10,782	1,267	-388	879	8.9%	3.0

Source: Wisconsin Town Land Use Data Project: Program on Agricultural Technology Studies, UW-Madison

Aside from residential demand, there has been increasing growth of lodging, eating, and drinking establishments. Many of these developments are tied to tourism growth related to the natural resources in the area. These resources include the Rivers, Lakes, Bluffs, and the Great River State Trail.

8.2.3 Land Prices

One method to analyze comparative land prices is to look at the cost of farmland for Towns in the area. Table 8.4 shows average farmland sales for the Towns of Holland and Onalaska and the average of all towns in La Crosse County from 1990-1997. In Holland, more acres were converted out of agriculture than remained in agriculture after sales. The opposite is true in the Town of Onalaska, where more than twice as many acres of land remained in agriculture than were converted out of agriculture. Land converted out of agriculture in the Town of Holland sold for a significantly higher value than land sold that remained in agriculture (approximately three times higher). However, in the Town of Onalaska, land converted out of agriculture sold for nearly the same amount as land that remained in agriculture. The rate of conversion is likely impacted because of both Town's central position in the metropolitan area.

Table 8.4 Average Farmland Sales for Selected Towns in La Crosse County, 1990-1997

	Number of parcels sold	Total acres	Acres continuing in agriculture	Acres converted out of agriculture	\$/acre of land continuing in agriculture	\$/acre of land converted out of agriculture	1990 acres of farmland	% sold and converted 1990- 1997
T. Holland	36	1,494	733	761	\$1,378	\$3,959	9,820	7.8%
T. Onalaska	47	2,404	1,635	769	\$1,082	\$1,204	11,294	6.8%
All towns in La Crosse County	404	21,421	17,508	3,913	\$885	\$1,609	128,529	3.0%

Source: Wisconsin Town Land Use Data Project: Program on Agricultural Technology Studies, UW-Madison

8.2.4 Opportunities for Redevelopment

Opportunities for redevelopment primarily occur on lands near or adjacent to the U.S. Highway 53 and the State Trunk Highway 35, identified in the Land Use Plan as the Great River Road District.

8.2.5 Existing/Potential Land Use Conflicts

The following land use conflicts should be considered in the planning process:

- Future use for the industrial zoned property in Brice Prairie
- Considering the role of PDR and TDR programs in the Town
- Ongoing conflicts between the desire to protect scenic areas, rural character, and agricultural lands with increased development pressure and private property owner's interests

8.3 LAND USE PROJECTIONS

The following generalized land use projections are based on the housing and population growth statistics presented in the issues and opportunities section. Multiple growth scenarios have been prepared, and the selected projections are based upon a “middle” projection. Both higher and lower estimates were created. These projections are intended to serve as a guide and are based on the assumptions noted below.

The projections show that land absorption for residential use is estimated near 300 acres per decade. This figure will likely vary and is dependent upon the land use patterns, design, and intensity ultimately allowed in the Plan. The growth of additional commercial and industrial lands is estimated to grow as housing growth continues.

Table 8.5 Generalized Land Use Forecast¹

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	Net Change
Residential (1.17 acres/home)	2,138	2,294	2,449	2,589	2,729	3,033	895
<i>Residential (2 acres/home)</i>	-	<i>3,936</i>	<i>4,202</i>	<i>4,442</i>	<i>4,682</i>	<i>5,204</i>	<i>3,066</i>
<i>Residential (5 acres/home)</i>	-	<i>9,840</i>	<i>10,505</i>	<i>11,105</i>	<i>11,705</i>	<i>13,010</i>	<i>10,872</i>
Commercial (1.17 acres/home)	182	195	208	220	232	258	76
<i>Commercial (2 acres/home)</i>	-	<i>335</i>	<i>358</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>399</i>	<i>443</i>	<i>261</i>
<i>Commercial (5 acres/home)</i>	-	<i>837</i>	<i>894</i>	<i>945</i>	<i>996</i>	<i>1,107</i>	<i>925</i>
Industrial (1.17 acres/home)	108	116	124	131	138	153	45
<i>Industrial (2 acres/home)</i>	-	<i>198</i>	<i>212</i>	<i>224</i>	<i>237</i>	<i>263</i>	<i>155</i>
<i>Industrial (5 acres/home)</i>	-	<i>497</i>	<i>531</i>	<i>561</i>	<i>591</i>	<i>657</i>	<i>549</i>
Agriculture (1.17 acres/home)	9,542	9,365	9,189	9,030	8,871	8,525	-1,017
<i>Agriculture (2 acres/home)</i>	-	<i>7,500</i>	<i>7,198</i>	<i>6,925</i>	<i>6,653</i>	<i>6,060</i>	<i>-3,482</i>
<i>Agriculture (5 acres/home)</i>	-	<i>795</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>-641</i>	<i>-1,323</i>	<i>-2,805</i>	<i>-12,347</i>

Source: SAA 2004

- ¹ a. Acreage needs are based on housing and population growth figures. For this table, projection DOA projection B was used. This was used as the housing projections were the median figures among the six alternative growth scenarios.
- b. Residential Acreage needs applied a factor of 1.17 acres per home. This figure was derived by dividing the total 2000 residential acreage (2,138) by the total number of households 1834. Recreational Acreage was also determined based on 2 and 5 acres per home. The numbers in italics below each land use category show projections based on the different residential acreage numbers.
- c. Commercial need was based on a straight line projection of the 2000 ratio of commercial to residential acreage. That factor of .085 was multiplied by the projected residential acres.
- d. Industrial land use was based on a straight line projection of the 2000 ratio of industrial to residential acreage. That factor of .05 was multiplied by the projected residential acres.
- e. Losses in agriculture are based on gains in other categories.

