

## **CHAPTER 8 Land Use Element**

66.1001 (2)(h) Wis. Stat:

**Land Use element.** A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property. The element shall contain a listing of the amount, type, intensity and net density of existing uses of land in the local governmental unit, such as agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial and other public and private uses. 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 contain projections, based on the background information specified in par. (a), for 20 years, in 5-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 natural limitations for building site development, floodplains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands, the boundaries of areas to which service of public utilities and community facilities, as those terms are used in par. (d), will be provided in the future, consistent with the timetable described in par. (d), and the general location of future land uses by net density or other classifications.

### **Section 8.1 Existing Land Use**

Land use within Portage County Towns was identified by each municipality as a part of their individual Town's Comprehensive Planning process. The totals listed in Table 8.1 represent a generalized summary of data from the Town plans. Please see individual Town Comprehensive Plans for the most complete data.

**Table 8.1: Portage County Existing Rural Land Use Acreage, 2005**

Existing Land Use, Unincorporated Area	Acres	% of Total Acreage
Residential	19,642	3.7%
Agricultural	206,783	39.2%
Commercial	1,330	0.3%
Industrial	530	0.1%
Governmental/Institutional	1,057	0.2%
Parks/Recreation/Natural Areas*	44,539	8.4%
Non-Metallic Mineral Extraction	1,169	0.2%
Right-of-Way (road and rail)	15,531	2.9%
Vacant / Undeveloped	213,144	40.4%
<b>Rural Town Acreage</b>	<b>503,725</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Rural Village Acreage</b>	<b>4,591</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>Urban Area Acreage</b>	<b>18,948</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
<b>Total County Acreage (Approximate)</b>	<b>527,264</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Portage County Planning and Zoning Department

\* Includes Water (streams, rivers, impoundments, etc.)

Rural Villages = Almond, Amherst, Amherst Jct., Junction City, Nelsonville, Rosholt

Urban Area = Villages of Park Ridge, Plover, Whiting, City of Stevens Point

Specific information was used from new plans for the Towns of Almond, Amherst, Belmont, Buena Vista, Carson, Eau Pleine, Grant, Hull, Lanark, New Hope, Pine Grove, Plover and Stockton. Four Towns dropped out of the County-wide comprehensive planning project; the

most recent land use information has been included (Dewey 1999, Linwood 1989, Sharon 2005). Alban has never adopted a land use plan; existing land use acreage was compiled through aerial photo interpretation combined with existing Portage County GIS Department electronic data for natural resources. Map 8.1 depicts the distribution of different land uses across the County.

#### A. Residential Land Use

Residential land use in the unincorporated area includes single-family and seasonal residences, mobile homes, duplexes, and farm residences or farmsteads. Larger established patterns of residential use can generally be found along the Wisconsin River and within the several unincorporated nodes such as Kellner, Bancroft, Custer, Arnott, Polonia, etc. Larger concentrations of rural residential subdivisions also have occurred in areas adjacent to Villages and the City of Stevens Point. The majority of residential activity is scattered throughout Portage County on individual parcels, generally located along the established road network. For the purposes of land use calculation, rural residences and farmsteads were estimated to occupy approximately 2 acres of area within the larger parcel, while calculations for acreage in concentrations of residential use are based on actual parcel size. As of December 2005, 19,642 acres, or nearly 4% of the County's land area, were devoted to unincorporated residential uses.

#### B. Agricultural Land Use

Agricultural use of land represents the second largest land use category in Portage County, just behind vacant/undeveloped. Lands in this category include irrigated and non-irrigated crop lands, cranberry bogs, dairy farms, livestock operations, permanent pasture, and lands that have structures used to store agricultural equipment or products. At 206,783 acres, agricultural uses occupy approximately 39% of the total County acreage.

#### C. Commercial and Industrial Land Uses

Unincorporated commercial development (1,330 acres, 0.3%) and industrial development (530 acres, 0.1%) accounts for a small percentage of overall land use in the County. These uses are generally located along County Roads or State Highways. See the Economic Development Element of this Comprehensive Plan for details on business types.

#### D. Governmental/Institutional Land Use

These lands in the unincorporated area include existing municipal and government owned structures, public schools, educational research lands, churches, cemeteries and fire stations. At 1,057 acres, these uses occupy less than 1% of the total County acreage.

#### E. Parks / Recreation / Natural Areas

The Parks and Recreation lands could be publicly or privately owned. Public lands may include State, County, or Town parks, nature preserves, boat landings, or athletic fields. Private lands may include golf courses, campgrounds, etc. The majority of these lands are owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for use as wildlife habitat and resource protection. The Natural Areas subset of this category includes shore lands, wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, etc., as well as all water features within Portage County. The information regarding these different Natural Areas components was taken from individual Town Comprehensive Plan documents, and due the varied nature of their description techniques, it was necessary to aggregate the information into a more general category. See the Town Plans for more details.

**Map 8.1 Existing Land Use**

#### F. Non-Metallic Mineral Extraction

These include lands that are currently being used to extract sub-surface materials such as sand, gravel, clay, or other aggregates. There are currently twenty-seven active non-metallic mineral operations located across Portage County.

#### G. Right-of-Way

This land use category includes the railroad and road right-of-way in the unincorporated County. Table 8.1 shows a combined acreage for these two modes of transportation of 15,531 acres. Pavement and lands within the road right-of-way account for 14,828 acres of the total, with the railroad right-of-way totaling approximately 703 acres.

#### H. Undeveloped

Lands in this category include privately owned wooded and non-wooded areas, and fallow fields. As of December 2005, approximately 213,144 acres (40%) of the unincorporated land in Portage County was considered undeveloped. As described here, the combination of unincorporated agricultural and undeveloped lands accounts for nearly 80% of total County acreage.

### **Section 8.2 Trend Analysis: Land Use and Value**

The original Portage County Development Guide, adopted in 1981, contained a summary of general land use categories from the year 1973. Using this data as a starting point, changes in urban uses over a 33-year period can be illustrated. Table 8.2 below shows the comparison of “developed lands”. The data from 2005 has been combined where necessary to approximate the categories from 1973. Differences in data sources and methods of calculation preclude a one-to-one comparison of categories, but this generalized comparison can be of use for understanding how Portage County has arrived at where it is today.

**Table 8.2: Portage County Land Use Trends 1973 to 2005**

Land Use Category	1973 County Total		2005 County Total	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
<b>Developed Lands</b>	<b>22,643</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>49,226</b>	<b>9.3%</b>
Residential	5,478	1.0%	24,790	4.7%
Commercial	469	0.1%	2,667	0.5%
Industrial	1,522	0.3%	3,029	0.6%
Transportation	15,174	2.9%	18,740	3.6%
<b>Undeveloped Lands</b>	<b>501,145</b>	<b>95.7%</b>	<b>478,038</b>	<b>90.7%</b>
Agricultural/Idle/Wetlands	457,792	87.4%	426,262	80.8%
Lakes & Streams	12,475	2.4%	13,690	2.6%
Other (Institutional, Parks, etc.)	30,879	5.9%	38,086	7.2%
<b>Total County Acreage*</b>	<b>523,789</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>527,264</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Portage County Planning & Zoning Department

\* Generalized land use acreage; different County totals reflect different calculation methodologies and rounding.

“Developed” land uses within Portage County increased by over 117 percent in the last 33 years. Land consumed by residential uses in particular has exploded, increasing by 350%. Commercial acreage, while considerable smaller than residential, has still increased by over 450% since 1973. Land devoted to industrial uses has double over the same period.

In order to help reach a better understanding of the relationship between the rural and urban portions of Portage County, Table 8.3 breaks the County-wide data into rural and urban components. The “urban” category included all nine of the County’s Villages and the City of Stevens Point in 1973, but was split out into urban core and rural villages for 2005.

**Table 8.3: Rural and Urban “Developed” Land Use Trends 1973 to 2005**

Land Use Category	1973 Acres		2005 Acres		
	Urban*	Rural	Urban Area	Rural Villages	Rural
Residential	2,470	3,009	4,453	695	19,642
Commercial	306	164	1,220	117	1,330
Industrial	299	1,223	1,207	123	1,699
Transportation	1,861	13,313	2,674	535	15,531
<b>Total Developed Acres</b>	<b>4,934</b>	<b>17,709</b>	<b>9,554</b>	<b>1,470</b>	<b>38,202</b>
<b>Total Urban and Rural</b>	<b>22,643 acres</b>		<b>49,226 acres</b>		

Source: Portage County Planning & Zoning Department

\* In the 2005 data, the “Urban” category is broken into Urban Area and Rural Villages

Urban Area = Villages of Park Ridge, Plover, Whiting, City of Stevens Point

Rural Villages = Almond, Amherst, Amherst Jct., Junction City, Nelsonville, Rosholt

Please keep in mind that the information described in Table 8.3 (like other tables throughout the Land Use Element) is derived from a variety of data sources and is generalized to permit comparisons. As such, the information is useful for general discussion purposes only. Specific information is available in the individual municipal Comprehensive Plan documents.

According to Table 8.3, urban residential land use has doubled between 1973 and 2005, and there has been substantial growth in commercial and industrial uses as well. A great deal of subdivision activity took place in the 1980’s, particularly within the Urban Area Village of Plover; the Rural Village of Amherst recorded strong growth during this period as well. Several new business/industrial parks, along with commercial shopping centers, have opened between 1973 and 2005, often with annexation into an urban community as a result. Also note the increase in urban transportation infrastructure that coincides with the expansion of developed uses. All of this activity represents a pattern of urban expansion into the rural towns of Portage County.

At the same time that urban uses cut into the “rural atmosphere” of the Towns, Table 8.3 illustrates that there has been a rural housing boom as well. Between 1973 and 2005, the number of acres attributable to residential uses ballooned from 3,009 to 19,642, a more than five-fold increase. When combined with the apparent seven-fold increase in commercial uses, “rural character” has been under siege from without and within.

Tables 8.4 to 8.6 describe the increase in the equalized values for different property types, as compiled by the State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue. The implementation of agricultural use value assessment in the mid 1990’s redistributed valuations from the Agricultural category to the Residential, Forest, and Other categories. The Other category (created between 1990 and 2000) includes, “buildings and improvements; including any residence for the farm operator's spouse, children, parents, or grandparents; and the land necessary for the location and convenience of those building and improvements (WI Statutes 70.32).” The critical factor defining “Other” property is its actual use supporting a farm enterprise. If an assessor obtains verifiable evidence that buildings on a farm are used for agricultural purposes, they qualify as “Other.” (WI DOR *Agricultural Assessment Guide for Wisconsin Property Owners 12/03*)

**Table 8.4: Equalized Assessed Property Values, Portage County Overall**

Type of Property	1980		1990		2000	
	Value (000's)	% of Total	Value (000's)	% of Total	Value (000's)	% of Total
Residential	\$592,223	57%	\$859,516	62%	\$1,932,320	69%
Commercial	\$205,576	14%	\$320,013	19%	\$653,530	18%
Manufacturing	\$59,415	4%	\$84,977	4%	\$145,412	3%
Agricultural	\$267,796	16%	\$235,087	9%	\$81,647	2%
Swamp & Waste	\$1,651	0%	\$2,473	0%	\$15,828	0%
Forest	\$66,170	2%	\$66,039	1%	\$138,104	2%
Other	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$91,742	3%
Personal Property	\$94,618	7%	\$101,713	5%	\$119,738	3%
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>\$1,287,449</b>		<b>\$1,669,818</b>		<b>\$3,178,321</b>	

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue Statistical Report of Property Valuations, 1980, 1990, 2000

**Table 8.5: Equalized Assessed Property Values, Portage County Towns**

Type of Property	1980		1990		2000	
	Value (000's)	% of Total	Value (000's)	% of Total	Value (000's)	% of Total
Residential	\$228,332	37%	\$367,043	49%	\$940,995	68%
Commercial	\$24,609	4%	\$37,497	5%	\$54,465	4%
Manufacturing	\$15,235	2%	\$21,505	3%	\$28,271	2%
Agricultural	\$259,400	42%	\$229,825	31%	\$80,887	6%
Swamp & Waste	\$1,652	0%	\$2,471	0%	\$15,804	1%
Forest	\$66,171	11%	\$66,039	9%	\$137,181	10%
Other	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$89,735	7%
Personal Property	\$25,063	4%	\$20,392	3%	\$26,873	2%
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>\$620,462</b>		<b>\$744,772</b>		<b>\$1,374,211</b>	

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue Statistical Report of Property Valuations, 1980, 1990, 2000

**Table 8.6: Equalized Assessed Property Values, Portage County Rural Villages**

Type of Property	1980		1990		2000	
	Value (000's)	% of Total	Value (000's)	% of Total	Value (000's)	% of Total
Residential	\$25,061	67%	\$30,490	63%	\$68,245	73%
Commercial	\$5,748	15%	\$9,803	20%	\$16,168	17%
Manufacturing	\$280	1%	\$1,453	3%	\$3,002	3%
Agricultural	\$3,829	10%	\$3,280	7%	\$621	1%
Swamp & Waste	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$21	0%
Forest	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$425	0%
Other	\$0	0%	\$0	0%	\$2,007	2%
Personal Property	\$2,575	7%	\$3,131	7%	\$3,179	3%
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>\$37,493</b>		<b>\$48,157</b>		<b>\$93,668</b>	

Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue Statistical Report of Property Valuations, 1980, 1990, 2000

In the year 2000, Portage County's Towns and rural Villages accounted for 46% of total County equalized property value; nearly 54% of total value (\$1,710,442,000) was attributed to the four incorporated communities within the County's urban core. The Town/Village percentage of value had been eroding slightly over the 20 year period 1980 to 2000 (from 51% to 46%). Of

particular interest in the Town data was the large increase (150%+) in residential values reported between 1990 and 2000, with the subsequent increase in residential property's percentage in overall value (49% to 68%). This is further evidence of increasing residential pressure on rural living systems.

### **Section 8.3 Potential Land Use Conflicts, Needs, and Solutions**

The following subsections detail, in general terms, conflicts regarding different uses of land within the County as well as how they might be addressed. It concludes with a discussion of areas where future planning would be beneficial.

#### **A. Potential Land Use Conflicts**

1. Conflicts between non-farm housing and agricultural uses.
  - Inconveniences, such as aerial spraying, dust, noise, odors, etc. that come from agricultural operations and aren't a threat to public health or safety, shall not be considered a nuisance.
2. Contaminated groundwater from certain kinds of land uses.
  - Due to permeable, sandy soils over shallow water table.
  - Condition lies mostly east of Wisconsin River.
  - Some drinking water is already polluted and unusable.
  - New residents in some rural areas may not know they are exposing themselves to drinking water that already is or may become contaminated.
3. Increasing trend of private sewage disposal systems in sandy soils.
4. Development pressures on natural resources.
  - Loss of wildlife habitat in special environmental corridors.
5. Poor surface drainage presents problems to some land uses.
6. Stream flooding presents only limited problems to development
  - Greatest problems are along Rocky Run Creek and parts of Mill Creek.
  - Paper company spillway on west bank of Wisconsin River can induce flooding of large areas of the Town of Linwood.
7. Extensive land use conflicts in the Buena Vista Marsh.
  - Conflicts between prairie chicken management, wetlands, agricultural operations, drainage ditch systems, drainage district, and other environmental concerns.
8. Development and land use practices adjacent to all Portage County water bodies.
9. Gravel pits:
  - Consume good farmland
  - Conflict with adjacent neighbors
  - Often have issues with reclamation plans
  - Create transportation conflicts with truck traffic on local roads (high volume and truck size/weight)
10. Increasing amount of State lands.
  - Adequate long term compensation to local government is needed.

11. Development problems at freeway interchange areas.
12. Strip development along highways.
13. Extension of urban services into unincorporated.
14. Annexation issues between City/Villages and Towns.
15. Potential inconsistency in zoning between Towns.
16. Increasing costs for governmental services due to scattered growth in countryside.
17. Non-point pollution of water resources.

#### B. Land Use Planning Needs

There is a need for the County to address the land use planning conflicts or problems represented by the issues reported in Section 8.3(A) above.

The most critical categories of needs as of 2006 include:

1. Assuring groundwater quality and quantity through the appropriate planning and management of land uses.
2. Protecting environmental resource areas.
  - Protect and enhance the Plover River environmental corridor because of its strategic location in the urban area and because it is the aquifer supplying drinking water to urban area municipalities.
3. Protect important farmland and farming activity.
  - Shelterbelt trees and other vegetation should be maintained and enhanced, and potential for wind erosion minimized. Use of Best Management Practices is encouraged.
4. Direct economic development through land use planning.
5. Work to resolve land use conflicts in the Buena Vista Marsh area.
6. Protect and enhance the capacity and safety of transportation facilities.
7. Some rural communities are entering a period of time when some basic urban services or improvements may be developing.
  - Some existing waste disposal and drinking water problems in Bancroft.

#### C. Land Use Planning Opportunities

In addition to dealing with problem areas that have already developed, a good land use planning program should also be identifying opportunity areas where new benefits of good planning can be realized. The various “potentials” listed below can be tapped in part by the recognition by County and local government that the potential exists. The full development of such potentials will also require private sector involvement.

1. Further enhancing and developing opportunities for outdoor recreation (natural resources and tourism).
2. Utilizing disciplined land use planning to maintain and/or restore groundwater quality and quantity.
3. Preservation and strengthening of existing communities and neighborhoods.
4. Development of good land use patterns at highway interchange areas.
5. Development of land use patterns compatible with highway functions.
6. Providing for neighborhoods with safe and satisfying living environments.

7. Protection of important natural resource lands such as farmland, fish/wildlife habitat, sand and gravel resources, timber, water bodies, and scenic open spaces.
8. Identification and preservation of good sites conducive to agri-processing industries as one means of helping realize the economic potential of the County's significant vegetable growing resources.

### **Section 8.4 Vision for Portage County Land Use**

In 2025, people in Portage County have learned to manage growth in ways that maintain their high quality of life. Growth is contained and well-planned. Portage County's thriving, people-oriented urban area includes livable neighborhoods, attractive business development and protected open spaces. Ample parks and open spaces within the urbanized area complement the natural beauty surrounding the community. The County's rural area is also thriving, with a robust agricultural industry that produces a variety of commodities for direct sale in local markets and for marketing worldwide. Agricultural practices are environmentally sensitive, and are protective of soil, air, and water resources. Development is directed in the rural area of the County in an effort to preserve rural character and the high quality natural resources found there and minimize land use conflicts.

#### **Key Vision Ideas for Land Use:**

- Land use policies are locally developed, focus on the long-term, are compatible across municipal boundaries, protect landowner rights, and promote planned development within rural Portage County.
- Growth boundaries are established in settled areas to regulate outward growth.
- Rural areas have planned residential developments that are buffered from agricultural uses, preserve open space, and are in areas less suitable for farming or forestry.
- Development takes into consideration the protection of: groundwater recharge areas, air quality, agricultural land, forested lands, wetlands, surface water, and fragile habitats/ecosystems.
- Uniform regulations and definitions, including design standards, exist on a countywide basis to protect rural character.
- Communication tower development is planned and the use of existing structures and co-location is promoted.

### **Section 8.5 Portage County "Overall Development" Goals**

#### **A. Overall Development Goals**

In 1973 the Portage County Areawide Planning Committee developed a series of goals for guiding the general nature of development within the County. The Overall Development goals listed below, much like the County-wide Visioning process conducted in 2002, were subject to broad input and review by local officials and citizens. They remain valid in 2006.

1. Guidance and regulation of urban and rural growth in the public interest according to sound development principles and standards, and planning programs.
2. To work for good balance between the built environment and the natural environment, particularly a harmonious relationship between urban and rural development based upon strong intergovernmental planning and coordination.
3. An aesthetic, healthy, and energy efficient environment.
4. Pleasant, safe living and working conditions and convenient transportation in the communities and rural areas of the County.

5. Cooperation among local governments for the more economical provision of essential public services on a unified areawide basis where possible.
6. Enforcement of the necessary “growth management” ordinances (zoning, subdivision, etc.) and programs in the County and its various municipalities to achieve effective implementation of goals, policies, and plans.
7. The greatest local control possible in dealing with Federal, State and regional programs.
8. Active citizen participation opportunities in development programs and decisions.

## B. Overall Policies for Development Issues of Countywide Importance

Within Portage County there are certain land resource zones and categories of development which are of Countywide significance.

These critical areas constitute the framework of a “system” having environmental, economic, and social components within which development is shaped. The County Comprehensive Plan cannot effectively address specific development policies and issues without knowing how they actually do fit or should fit into this framework of environmental, economic, and social components. This subsection presents general policies which identify and define the framework within which the more specific development policies and recommendations can be formulated.

1. Economic Development. Overall this Comprehensive Plan is based upon the idea that continued job development is necessary to provide employment for a growing population and to provide economic opportunity rather than stagnation. Increased economic and job development will be key to avoid excessive tax loads for the existing residential base in the face of diminished tax base and/or increased service costs.
2. Growth Centers. The central urban core of Portage County is identified as a major regional growth center. This urban area would be intended to be a full convenience center with the full range of retail and service establishments with a significant wholesaling activity.

The Villages of Almond, Amherst, Amherst Junction, Junction City Nelsonville, and Rosholt, as well as the unincorporated communities of Bancroft, Kellner, Arnott, and Custer are recommended to continue developing as rural growth centers which are intended to be secondary locations of population and employment growth. These centers could be expected to require increasing levels of public service infrastructure, such as sewer and water facilities. It would be a goal of County development decisions, when possible, to enhance rather than detract from the economic and social vitality, environmental quality, and growth plans of all urban and rural growth centers consistent with other goals and policies of the County Comprehensive Plan. The boundaries of such growth centers and their respective development plans would be determined by way of specific Comprehensive Plans produced through local planning programs. Planning programs for some of these growth centers have already been completed.

3. Urban Service Areas. Limits are recommended for the extent of urban development geared to a 20-year planning period. Public sewer and water service areas are major components of service area boundaries. The urban service area will also be defined by the combination of elements such as: extent of police and fire protection, transit services, storm drainage, extent of sanitary sewer and water services, location of corporate boundaries, and perhaps other services determined to be important in the future. The location of urban service area boundaries should also be based, in part, upon population projections. Within the urban service area, there may be large variations in population

density depending upon land usage and environmental conditions. The primary determinant of the boundary of specific urban services will be the municipality providing the service.

4. Rural Service Areas. These areas include the more localized service centers of Polonia, Ellis, and Meehan, and possibly the Lake DuBay area. These centers would be intended to primarily provide basic services to the areas agricultural community and nearby residents, including some concentration of housing for those working in such centers or in the agricultural area. These centers would not be expected to require public service infrastructure such as sewer and water during the current planning period. These centers could be expected to have minimum convenience retail and service facilities such as grocery stores, restaurants, taverns, gas stations, repair shops, branch banks, post offices, churches, implement dealers, small professional offices, small rural-oriented industrial enterprises, and other similar service uses. These centers would also have housing in the area, but it would not be expected or intended that the above service centers would become locations for significant housing development during the current planning period. If future needs require development beyond the scope of a “service center”, then this Comprehensive Plan should be amended to reflect the area’s new status which would be a “Rural Growth Center” as described in paragraph 2 above.
5. Development Sectors. These are locations, generally separated from a community growth area, which are conducive to specialized development. This category of development site is characterized by good access combined with other specialized or unique site characteristics, with development potential being limited to specialized industrial, recreational, institutional, or service uses which have a particular need for good accessibility and the location of which is not essential or desirable within a conventional “urban or rural growth center”. It is intended that development sector uses would typically be those having unique locational, site, or functional characteristics and needs which cannot be accommodated at other planned development locations. Such uses would typically be those which would not be conventional uses now in the County, and which would not be reasonably possible to anticipate. Not all such locations are equally conducive to development, and the absence of essential services needs may depress actual development. Some interchange areas and other major highway intersections are among the areas that may prove to be conducive as specialized “development sectors”. The specific determination that a site is acceptable as a free standing “development sector” should be made only after detailed analysis of development proposals, and a determination that such proposals will not have significant long term adverse impacts on the growth of nearby communities or upon the general public interest, and would be consistent with other goals and policies of the County Comprehensive Plan.
6. Important Farmlands. Good farmland is an irreplaceable natural resource having long-term value locally, nationally, and internationally. Economic and political factors combined with weather patterns and increasing population can be expected to increase the need for good farmland on a long-term basis. It is, therefore, a policy of this Comprehensive Plan to support the preservation of the County’s important farmland, and the protection of these lands capable of conversion to good farmland, all consistent with other land use policies and plans, and other growth needs identified in this Plan. It is acknowledged that some existing and potentially good farmland lies in the path of needed and logical non-agricultural growth, but the loss of such land should be kept to a minimum.

7. Water Resources. Good water is one of the most essential elements for life and culture. The future welfare of Portage County requires that good water be available for domestic, mercantile, agricultural, and recreational uses including its necessity for a high quality natural environment. Protecting the integrity of all the County's surface and groundwater is, therefore, a principal element of the County's approach toward development. The principal surface water resource is the Wisconsin River. Other important surface waters include the Plover, Little Plover and Tomorrow Rivers, Mill Creek, and the County's lakes and wetland zones. Principal groundwater resources include the Plover and Tomorrow River aquifers which supply most of the County's population, and the central sand plain aquifer which underpins much of the County's agricultural economy. Alleviating chemical degradation of the sand plain aquifer and avoiding pollution from urban sources, are major policy elements of this Comprehensive Plan.
8. Major Retail Centers. The Stevens Point/Plover area will be the County's principal retail center and also an increasingly important regional retail center. The Stevens Point Central Business District (CBD) is recommended to be revitalized and enhanced as the diversified retail core of the County's trade area. During this planning period, it should be expected that the Village of Plover will pick up major regional retail strength. To maximize the potential and convenience of both centers, local government should avoid the undue proliferation of retail centers and strip commercial zones throughout their jurisdiction.
9. Portage County Drainage District/Buena Vista Marsh. This is the largest drainage district in the State (55,440 acres), and the district itself is an important quasi-governmental body having jurisdiction over a large area having sensitive environmental and agricultural issues. This drainage district was originally established for agricultural purposes, and this Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the continued legitimacy of this purpose and the necessary functions to this end as provided by State law. This position assumes the incorporation of a new sensitivity to environmental concerns that have emerged as contemporary public values. Controversy has, nevertheless, resulted from conflicting goals regarding drainage, land use, water quality, prairie chicken management, fishery habitat, and ownership patterns. This Comprehensive Plan supports the resolution of these conflicts for the best possible benefit of each concern and advocates a cooperative and disciplined intergovernmental process for dealing with these issues. This can be expected to be an on-going process.
10. Major Environmental Corridors. There are major and/or unique environmental resource areas in which environmental protection considerations would be paramount among all factors to be considered if and when such areas would be subject to or affected by development. Such environmental corridors include, but are not limited to: all natural stream corridors and flowages and their fisheries, the County's lakes and shorelands, major wetlands, all aquifer recharge zones, public outdoor recreation and wildlife areas, prairie chicken management lands, major County and municipal parks, UWSP Schmeckle Reserve and adjacent Sentry conservancy lands, and the County's wildlife habitat in general. As a general policy, health and aesthetic air quality should be maintained Countywide within established standards.
11. Major Transportation Services. This Comprehensive Plan supports the continued viability of the major transportation facilities in the County and region as an essential underpinning factor to the area's economy, safety, and energy efficiency. Major transportation facilities directly serving the County include: State highways, all arterial

and collector roads throughout the urban and rural area of the County, all rail lines, the Stevens Point transit system, the Stevens Point municipal Airport, and the Central Wisconsin Airport six miles north of the County line. This Plan specifically endorses the development and maintenance of all these facilities to levels necessary to meet needs.

12. Major Recreation Resources and Services. This Comprehensive Plan endorses the continued viability and further development of major County and municipal parks and services necessary to serve a growing population and changing recreation needs. This includes a recognition of the value of existing State owned open space, wildlife, and fishery lands. Expansion of the recreation potential of the Wisconsin River is acknowledged, including additional marina facilities and other shoreland development functionally and environmentally compatible with water recreation. This Plan supports those public and private actions that would be consistent with sound environmental considerations in developing this potential. The maintenance and further development of the Plover River corridor for appropriate public use throughout the urban area is a unique recreational/open space potential.

The Schmeckle Reserve, the Wisconsin River, and the lower reaches of the Plover River are examples of major natural/wilderness environments within an urban area which would have long term recreational value. The ability to provide all the necessary public recreational facilities and services will be more assured if there is the advantage of intergovernmental cooperation and consolidation of appropriate functions for financial and administrative saving and convenience.

13. Major Educational Services. This Comprehensive Plan does not propose to be a lead document with regard to educational services or facilities. However, educational facilities do make up an important part of a community's public lands and associated public activities such as recreation. This Plan supports the continued viability of educational systems in the County, particularly the major physical facilities noted below, and their provision of appropriate public services to County residents and businesses as determined by the policy bodies of these systems. The major physical components of these systems include: the high schools and junior high schools of the eleven school districts serving Portage County; UWSP campus; and the Mid-State Technical Institute facilities in Stevens Point and Wood County. It is also advisable that as much use as possible be made of all school facilities for essential neighborhood and community services in the interest of alleviating or avoiding duplication of other public costs or to avoid denial of such services entirely.

## **Section 8.6 General County-Wide Land Use Goals**

The land use planning done by the Portage County government, under the jurisdiction of the County Board of Supervisors, is limited to a level of "policy planning" only. It consists of a partnership between the County government and all local units of government in the County. The County's role is limited to the development of goals and policies on land use matters of Countywide significance. The local unit role is the development of detailed land use policies and plans on a voluntary basis. This County component plus detailed local Comprehensive Plans make up the County's complete Land Use Element.

This section begins with land use goals that are general in nature, and then offers more focused goals and policies regarding residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural land uses.

## A. General County-Wide Land Use Goals

1. Unified Approach – Land use planning which looks at the total scope of land use problems and potentials to assure greater validity for recommendations and a greater chance for implementation.
  - a. Looking across local governmental boundaries to help insure that a common issue is not met with conflicting plans.
  - b. Approach common land use concerns in partnership with local governmental units.
  - c. Local governments and their land use plans will have an opportunity to influence County land use planning.
2. Protection of Groundwater – The planning, regulation, location, development, and management of land use activity for the purpose of avoiding the harmful contamination of groundwater which is the sole source of drinking water in the County.

Preventing the exposure of people to groundwater problems should be a major component of the County's groundwater strategy in addition to remedial programs once groundwater problems have occurred.

3. Well-Planned Urban Growth – The continuation of planning for the growth of the Stevens Point/Plover urban area in a cooperative fashion and with a view to this urban area as a single growth unit. The Countywide interest here would be limited to just the generalized nature and extent of urban growth rather than the internal detail of such growth. (This urban area contains the most significant concentration and diversity of changing land uses in the County and is, therefore, of major Countywide importance. Land use developments in one part of this urban area often affect land usage in other parts even if located within another governmental jurisdiction.)
  - a. Continuing planning assistance from the County to urban area units of government to help facilitate the fulfillment of this goal statement. (This is viewed as necessary if the County government is to continue to accurately portray, integrate, and plan for urban growth plans into County Comprehensive Plans.)
  - b. Consistency between the broad patterns of urban development and the specific County land use goals and policies reported in the balance of this section.
  - c. The location of urban type land uses mostly within urban service areas. The principal need and benefit of this goal is to get the most out of the public and private facility services already available and paid for. Also, this will help decrease the financial pressures on rural units of government to duplicate public services available in urban areas. An overall major benefit is the more efficient utilization of tax dollars across all units of government.
4. Provide Legal Measures to Implement Comprehensive Plans – County and local zoning, subdivision, and other growth management ordinances should provide the regulatory standards which will implement the goals and policies of local adopted comprehensive plans.

## B. Residential Land Use Goals and Policies

### 1. Goals for Residential Land Use

- a. Protection of residential uses and property values from health and safety problems and protection from conflicts with traffic and from conflicts with other land uses.
- b. An adequate supply of land planned for residential use so as to meet housing demands at any point in time.
- c. Flexible land use regulations such as zoning and platting codes which allow for diversity in residential development within the Countywide framework of comprehensive goals and policies.
- d. The location of urban-oriented residential development primarily within existing and planned community growth areas. This goal is intended to facilitate cost-effective public services, to promote balanced community growth, to limit urban sprawl patterns, and to promote energy efficient transportation and development patterns.
- e. To avoid the exposure of new residential development to contaminated groundwater sources through appropriate planning and regulatory measures.

### 2. Policies for Residential Land Use

These policies are only advisory. The application and implementation of these policies are subject to specific laws and ordinances which may take precedence. It is intended that these policies would be used primarily by County government in their required decision on specific development cases.

- a. Compliance With Development Standards – To review all subdivision plats, lot splits, and zoning proposals to assure that County and local residential development standards and Comprehensive Plans are met and to insure that each subdivision is planned to interrelate well with surrounding development, existing or future.
  - To avoid or minimize the direction of unnecessary traffic through residential areas, primarily in the interest of safety.
  - To require that individual residential developments are located and laid out so as to be interrelated by a well organized and contiguous street system for the purpose of convenience of access of emergency vehicles and school buses, to be understandable to the general public driving in the area, and for ease of installation of utilities in areas that may require them.
- b. Infilling and Avoidance of Sprawl – To plan for and advocate the development of lands within the existing or projected service area of existing communities as a means of bringing available lands on the market for residential expansion. As a general rule, these lands will be less costly to develop than the extension of services to fringe lands. This does not preclude support for nonfarm housing in the rural areas as allowed by law and as judged necessary on individual merits.
  - To develop incentives for the owners of such lands to initiate developments.
  - To provide reasonable incentive to developers to develop such parcels where there is a confirmed fiscal benefit to the community.

- To advise that nonfarm housing development be in urban service areas to get the most benefit out of established services and facilities which will serve to maximize the use of tax dollars.
  - To avoid residential sprawl along arterial highways and through use of available County powers including plat review and zoning.
- c. Environmental Quality – To advise against and seek changes in residential development proposals which otherwise would result in environmental problems such as groundwater or surface water pollution, erosion, destruction of scenic quality, adverse effects on shorelands or wetlands, creation of surface drainage problems, and loss of good farmland.
- d. Compliance With Local Plans – To review residential land use proposals and formulate recommendations which are consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plans of local units of government, and to coordinate these reviews with local officials where necessary.
- e. Reevaluate Zoning Regulations – To consider zoning regulations related to residential land use always subject to change as new conditions, trends, and technology warrant.
- f. Avoid Exposure to Unsafe Drinking Water – County agencies responsible for planning and regulating development should give priority attention to what the affects will be on groundwater from development proposals or the affect on development proposals from existing contaminated groundwater supplies.
- Use zoning and subdivision ordinances to restrict land development where new households or businesses would be at risk of exposure to unsafe drinking water.
  - The County Planning and Zoning Department, and County Planning and Zoning Committee should incorporate such groundwater concerns into their reviews and recommendations on zoning applications, proposed subdivision plats and lot splits, and on any other development cases where formal actions are required or requested by these agencies.
  - This County policy advises similar priority attention to be given to this issue by the policy bodies and staff of other governmental units within Portage County.
- g. Density-based Subdivision – To revise the applicable Portage County ordinances to facilitate density-based subdivision of land for residential purposes. Density based developments will be available to communities in Portage County as an “option” for administering their land use plans and policies. Density based developments can be defined as an ordinance that focuses on regulating the number of building lots on a given amount of land. The density based development option should be incorporated into the Portage County Subdivision Ordinance and not the Zoning Ordinance. Option 1: would be a simple density based development option and Option 2: would be the Open Space Design Option.
- h. Neighborhood Input – To meet with town officials and concerned citizens on development issues where unusually complex problems would make it unclear what the best zoning or platting decisions should be.

- i. Allowances for Manufactured Housing – To recognize the need for and provide adequate opportunities for mobile home developments and innovative housing styles which meet other safety and development standards.

## C. Commercial Goals and Policies

### 1. Goals for Commercial Land Use

- a. An adequate supply of lands planned for commercial use which will satisfy commercial development needs in all areas of the County.
- b. The location of commercial uses in such a fashion as to reinforce the established commercial functions of the communities when possible. This includes priority support for the location of appropriate commercial uses within the Central Business Districts of existing communities and support for other appropriate uses at non-central locations within communities and in the rural areas.
- c. The limitation of strip commercial development patterns along highways to only essential highway and agricultural oriented businesses.

### 2. Policies for Commercial Land Use

- a. Restrict Strip Commercial Development – To minimize and avoid, where possible, those developments which could be expected to lead to strip development patterns along roadways. (The principal purpose of the policy is to insure traffic safety, protection of the traffic-moving function of major roadways, to reduce public costs for road improvements, help support other land use goals which encourage concentrations of commercial uses in commercial centers, and to minimize the threat of piecemeal and blighted urban development in the rural landscape.)

This policy acknowledges that certain categories of land use and transportation planning standards are met. These uses fall into a very limited category usually referred to as “highway commercial” uses in zoning ordinances. Certain industrial and institutional uses may also be warranted outside planned community growth areas along major highways. These developments usually warrant case-by-case judgments. While locations for these uses cannot be accurately pinned-down in this County Land Use Element, local Comprehensive Plans are encouraged to locate such areas.

- This policy should be applied by County officials in their action on zoning and platting cases, by providing direct assistance to developers and landowners, and through general educational efforts. The governmental officials and staff of non-County units of local government are also encouraged to cooperate in fulfillment of this policy.
- County and local zoning ordinances should be reevaluated to insure that there is adequate provision for appropriate highway commercial uses, but that this be a fairly restricted category of uses and that good and reasonable performance standards are required of all such uses.
- The “general commercial” district or its equivalent in County and local zoning ordinances should not be applied along rural roads outside of existing or planned community growth areas.

- b. Positive Visual Appearance – To work with the business community for commercial development that provides a positive visual effect to the public and which serves to enhance the image and character of the County and local governmental unit. This includes good signage, good landscaping, the organization of development on a lot, the relationship of parts of one development to its neighbors and to public views, providing that the architecture of a development contributes rather than detracts from its setting, and generally to encourage commercial development to enhance the physical and cultural integrity of its community setting.
- c. Development at Highway Interchanges – To apply specialized land use planning and development standards customarily required at sensitive interchange lands.
- To avoid the development of general commercial uses, such as retail uses, which would tend to weaken established community retail “centers”.
  - To require a well planned and organized access road and driveway system in all interchange zones for the purpose of achieving the full economic potential from potential development parcels and to provide for traffic safety and circulation convenience.
- d. Reevaluate Existing Commercial Zoning Patterns – To determine if existing commercial zoning outside of planned community commercial areas should remain or be modified. Local land use and zoning studies are encouraged as a preferred means of adjusting existing zoning maps.
- e. Protect Good Commercial Development Sites – To use available planning and zoning regulatory means to insure that lands having special value for commercial usage be reserved for such use. County officials should work with local governments and landowners to develop a recognition of the special development potential of such lands and a cooperative approach for insuring its proper development. (Key purposes of such a policy is to tap the significant valuation of such special parcels to strengthen the local tax base to its true potential and to assure the availability of commercial services at convenient locations to future population growth areas.)
- f. Commercial Development Standards – To update the County Zoning Ordinance to incorporate site development standards appropriate to contemporary commercial development. Such standards would relate to other goals and policies of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. Also, local units of government are encouraged to update their development codes for this same purpose.
- g. Consultation on Business Locations – To advise that persons contemplating commercial development, particularly in the rural areas, seek professional business consultation before selecting development locations. This is to assure that such locations are feasible before County or other governmental officials are required to make planning and zoning judgments on such sites, particularly where such sites prove later to be unfeasible for specific businesses.
- In such cases, County and local officials should encourage the use of the Portage County Business Council, University Extension Business Agent, the University Extension Small Business Development Center, the Mid-State Technical Institute, and other appropriate business consultation sources.

- For unique and/or controversial commercial developments, County and local governments should require locational feasibility studies as a part of the background information necessary to make a good land use decision on such cases.
- h. Services Required for Commercial Use – To plan for and require, where appropriate, the provision of adequate services related to public health and safety, and necessary to the ultimate success of the business itself.
- The presence of adequate sewerage disposal in developing concentrations of commercial uses is of major importance. Within the 20-year planning period, some areas will likely require some form of centralized sewerage collection and disposal as a condition of developing alternate commercial potentials.
  - During the current planning period, a limit may be reached in some communities beyond which additional commercial development will be restricted by existing health codes and/or by public interest judgments related to health threats from sewerage disposal problems and drinking water contamination.
  - It may become prudent to limit the continued concentration of commercial uses in some areas in the absence of the following customary commercial services: water supply for fire fighting, ready access to fire fighting services, ready access to police protection, adequate roads and traffic control devices, and provision of surface water drainage.

#### D. Industrial Goals and Policies

##### 1. Goals for Industrial Land Use

- a. Provision of an adequate supply of good industrial land for future industrial development to satisfy employment and income needs.
- b. Industrial development which does not present incompatibility or safety problems with other development and which does not degrade the environment.
- c. The planning regulations and location of industrial land uses to tap the key industrial development and tax base potentials of the County. The pursuit of this goal is to be in harmony with other County development goals and values.
- d. The application of industrial performance standards through State and Local codes and other review procedures.
- e. Provision of assistance by the County to the private sector and local governments to help locate industrial uses and to help expedite regulatory review and permit approvals.

##### 2. Policies for Industrial Land Use

- a. Local Industrial Land Use Policies – The County Land Use Element incorporates by reference the industrial land use policies adopted by all local units of government in Portage County.
- b. Essential Services – To plan for and review industrial development proposals to insure that such developments have access to essential services such as sewer, water,

- good roads, and fire protection. Where such services are necessary, but not available, then certain forms of industrial development should be limited, deferred, or prohibited.
- c. Identify and Protect Good Industrial Sites – To identify good industrial sites throughout the County and reserve them for industrial usage through zoning and other available regulatory measures. Local Comprehensive Plans to be used for detailed locations.
  - d. Develop Industrial Parks – To encourage the location of industrial development in organized industrial parks.
  - e. Appropriate Industrial Performance Standards – To rely upon State and federal laws and regulations to provide the quality control and performance standards necessary to insure the public welfare related functions of new industries. These standards would constitute the basic level of locally-expected performance standards, with the understanding that the County could enact additional performance standards if judged necessary by the community to comply with other local goals and standards for health, safety, aesthetics, and environmental protection.
    - Disciplined reviews and recommendations on industrial zoning and platting requests by County agencies to insure compliance with performance standards and other land use goals and policies.
    - Updating the County land use codes as necessary to incorporate new standards. This could include the placement of certain industrial uses into zoning categories subjecting them to possible development conditions as warranted on a case-by-case basis in the public interest. (The purpose of this policy is not only in recognition that code standards may not always deal with new and unique uses, but also to protect against the arbitrary rejection of such uses just because of fears that if the use were allowed it would be without any local control or conditions.)
  - f. Groundwater Protection – To apply all available County authority to insure that industrial usage of land does not contaminate or deplete groundwater. This policy includes cooperation and assistance from County officials to help industry avoid groundwater contamination as a part of industrial development decisions. Non-County units of government are encouraged to endorse this approach as well.
  - g. Private Industrial Development Programs – To work in partnership with that industrial development programs of utility and railroad companies for the purpose of assuring that private industrial development planning is consistent with public comprehensive plans and development guidelines.

#### E. Agriculture Goals and Policies

GOAL 1: Preserve productive agricultural land in Portage County.

- a. Identify existing productive farmland and potentially productive farmland and encourage agricultural and related uses on these lands.
- b. Utilize land use planning to ensure preservation of valuable farmland.

- c. Discourage the division or conversion of valuable farmland for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes.
- d. Support large, contiguous blocks of farmland as a desirable land use pattern.
- e. Recognize for preservation, farmlands which have previously been identified for exclusive agricultural use through land use planning programs at the Town, Village, and County levels.

GOAL 2: Maintain a viable agricultural economy in the County.

- a. Support the continuation of a diversified agricultural base throughout the County.
- b. Encourage agri-business and agri-industry which support area farming and provide local jobs.
- c. Allow for the expansion of the agricultural sector and related growth of agri-business and agri-industry.

GOAL 3: Avoid conflicts between agricultural land uses and nonagricultural uses such as nonfarm housing.

- a. Discourage the location of non-farm land uses directly adjacent to agricultural lands.
- b. Protect farm operations from the encroachment of incompatible land uses such as housing, which may hamper agricultural production due to nuisance and health related problems, or resulting legal actions.
- c. Utilize appropriate planning procedures within areas of urban expansion to anticipate future development and reduce conflicts arising from adjacent land uses.

GOAL 4: Encourage sound soil conservation practices.

- a. Encourage the use of Best Management Practices, and support the Resources Conservation Program recommended in the “Land and Water Resources management Plan” of the Portage County Land Conservation Department.
- b. Encourage conservation practices in agriculture and forestry which minimize soil loss and help assure the long term productivity of those soils.
- c. Encourage the retention and development of windbreaks in the sand plain.

GOAL 5: Better utilize the opportunities afforded by rural villages to accommodate certain commercial, industrial, and residential developments.

- a. Recognize the advantages of the orderly growth of high density residential developments within a rural village.
- b. Support the efficient extension of appropriate infrastructure into area identified for planned growth and development.
- c. Identify institutional, recreational, and cultural facilities that are supported primarily by rural villages while being utilized by the community at large.

GOAL 6: Protect the quality and quantity of the surface and groundwater resources of Portage County.

- a. Support efforts to identify point and non-point source pollution of surface and groundwater associated with agricultural activities.
- b. Recognize the potential for groundwater contamination due to agricultural practices, particularly irrigated agriculture, as well as nonfarm activities, and stress the need for continuing education and study of this problem.
- c. Maintain the County's natural surface and groundwater supplies at levels consistent with agricultural needs.

GOAL 7: Conserve significant environmental, cultural, and historic areas and resources, consistent with agricultural needs.

- a. Identify unique or valuable environmental areas for preservation, including wildlife habitat, wetlands and shoreland areas.
- b. Favor the preservation of adequate open spaces for recreational purposes.

GOAL 8: Encourage orderly, planned urban growth which is consistent with the efficient use of tax dollars.

- a. Encourage infill and expansion of existing urban population centers and lands identified as "transition areas" in this Plan, to avoid "leapfrog" type development into surrounding agricultural areas.
- b. Allow for public facilities and services in a cost and energy efficient manner, consistent with federal, State, and Local public facility plans.
- c. Maintain an adequate supply of land for residential, commercial, industrial, and infrastructural needs.

GOAL 9: Encourage public participation and citizen input in the development of this Plan.

- a. Initiate public participation in the planning process amongst farmers, local officials, and other citizens.
- b. Utilize public input in the development of this Plan.
- c. Inform and educate the public throughout the planning process using available resources including the news media, local committees, and interest groups.

## **Section 8.7 Growth Assumptions and Land Capability**

In a democratic society, planning is most important not as a device to control change, but to adapt to it. Furthermore, growth in the County is determined more by private sector economics than by local governmental actions.

Planning programs cannot project the scale of such growth over the long run, and must therefore stand ready to respond to possible dramatic changes, especially for areas that have extraordinary growth potential; and there are such areas in Portage County.

The County's planning program and its Comprehensive Plan are not an end in themselves – they do not exist for their own purposes. They are tools to facilitate the statutory planning and development decisions required of elected officials who are the ultimate planners in the County by virtue of their decision-making powers.

Future levels of population and land use flow from the economic growth of an area – generally, job growth. Projection for population and employment are listed in Chapter 1 of this Comprehensive Plan. Population and land use impacts from economic development within a planning jurisdiction typically occur over an area extending far beyond that jurisdiction. And given that economic growth and industry's expansion and location plans can be unknown and uncertain factors, estimation of future land use needs must be based on certain assumptions.

#### A. Growth Assumptions

1. Increased growth and housing due to the County's central location in the state combined with important crossroads of all major transportation modes.
2. Greatly expanded agriculture, agri-business, and agri-processing elements of the County and regional economy, thereby expanding the local job base and population base.
3. The prevalence of ample water supplies, readily available, in the central sand plain aquifer will remain a very important asset which can be expected to induce growth. This further assumes that the quality of this resource will not be degraded to significant problem levels.
4. The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point will remain a very strong base for County growth and student populations.
5. Local government in the County will be receptive to growth conditioned upon reasonable standards, regulations, and financial feasibility.
6. The environmental setting of Portage County lands will continue to increase as an attractive factor in the location of population and businesses.
7. The municipalities in the central Urban Area will continue to provide a satisfactory level of public services and cultural and environmental amenities.
8. The County population will grow at an annual average rate of approximately 1% per year over the period 2005 – 2025.
9. The lands within the County's central urban area boundary will maintain about 60% of the total County population.
10. The functional urban area will expand geographically over the planning period.

After acknowledging that economic factors are primary in determining future growth levels, but that such economic projections are also not possible with reliable accuracy, then it becomes necessary to use population as the basis for growth projections. Population can be projected on the basis of actual or assumed rates of increase, and land use can then be projected on the basis of the actual (or adjusted) ratio of land use per unit of population.

#### B. Land Capability

Any analysis of land use needs should include a discussion of different aspects of land development. The County's "development capability" is favored by generous areas of sandy

Map 8.2a

Map 8.2b

soils and handicapped by extensive areas of high water table. The hilly eastern areas and central zone have the greatest freedom from normal development limitations. See Maps 8.2A and 8.2B above for a depiction of various development limitations.

High groundwater is present in the flatter southern reaches of the County's sand plain and in the north central and western parts of the County where bedrock and clay soil create conditions for wet soils. These natural conditions affect development mainly through the limitations imposed upon septic system suitability and potential for wet basements. A broad zone of soils having the potential for occasional high groundwater extends northeast to southwest through the Village of Plover.

The sandy soils of much of the developable lands carries with it a secondary potential for problems, namely because of its high porosity or permeability. Pollutants can be carried through these sands quickly with little attenuation of contaminants by the soil. Extensive concentration of high-density residential or mercantile development serviced by septic systems contain potential for groundwater pollution. The large tracts of field crops in the sand plain are also believed to contribute significant quantities of nitrates (from fertilizers) to the groundwater. The NRCS Soil Survey of Portage County reaffirms the pollution potential of these sand soils.

There is relatively little floodplain to inhibit development in the County. The Towns of Linwood and Carson have the greatest such areas. The most significant flood prone area is the Rocky Run Creek corridor in Linwood.

There is little development limitation posed by steep slopes or severe topography – most land is flat or gently rolling.

Surface drainage problems pose a threat to land development in the northern and eastern parts of the urban area in the Moses Creek corridor and from drainage off the Jordan Swamp. The Village and Town of Plover in the southern part of the urban area have occasional surface water drainage from the moraine hills and because of the absence of well defined natural drainage courses and flat topography. The Town of Grant has had similar drainage problems resulting in extensive road, bridge, and field drainage problems.

The southern sand plain in the County has had to be drained by ditches to enable productive agriculture. The same area – the Buena Vista Marsh area – has the special agricultural limitations of frost occurrence almost every month of the year. A further agricultural limitation is the possibility of windblown soil loss. The problem is becoming more significant with the removal of wind breaks and removal of timbered and grassland areas for conversion to cultivated fields.

### **Section 8.8 Future Land Use Recommendations**

The Portage County Comprehensive Plan in general, and Land Use Element in particular, is based upon a partnership with local units of government. The County's philosophy is that local land use issues are best dealt with at the most local unit of government available. Therefore, the County's approach is to incorporate the specific Comprehensive Plans of local units of government, including the Land Use Elements, after adoption by the municipality. Those adopted documents are hereby incorporated into the Portage County Comprehensive Plan by reference.

It is the policy of the County Planning and Zoning Committee to rely upon individual towns to voluntarily initiate their own land use planning program. When completed, the Town Plan is ultimately adopted by the County Board and becomes a part of the County Comprehensive Plan.

For discussion purposes, future land use needs can be estimated in a number of ways. As discussed in Section 8.7(A) above, one simple technique is to create an “acres-per-resident” ratio for individual land use types using population totals and existing land use acreage calculations. Table 8.7 describes such a calculation using 2005 acreage data for the four land use categories with the highest impact on vacant/idle/agriculture land or natural resources. Acreage data was divided by the 2005 Portage County population estimate provided by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA), with that number then applied to the 2025 DOA population projection for Portage County to reveal potential acreage needed for development within the land use categories. This future development could take place within any of the County’s twenty-seven municipalities (see growth assumptions in Section 8.7).

**Table 8.7: Portage County Future Land Use Projection, 2025**

Land Use Category	2005 acreage	2005 population estimate	Acreage per Resident Ratio	2025 population projection	2025 acreage	Acres Needed by 2025	Acres Needed each 5 years
Residential	24,790	69,365	0.3574	78,952	28,216	3,426	857
Commercial	2,667	69,365	0.0384	78,952	3,036	369	92
Industrial	3,029	69,365	0.0437	78,952	3,448	419	105
Right-of-way	18,740	69,365	0.2702	78,952	21,330	2,590	648
Total	49,226				56,030	6,804	1,701

Source: Portage County Planning & Zoning Department, Wisconsin Department of Administration Population Estimates and Projections.

This “quick-and-dirty” calculation assumes that future development will take place at a pace and intensity similar to past development. Given recent commercial activity (Parkdale development in Stevens Point, and Crossroads Commons and Village Park developments in Village of Plover) and the rapid development of the Portage County Business Park and planned expansion of a new Business/Research Park in Stevens Point, this assumption seems unlikely.

The Comprehensive Plans of individual local units of government should be consulted for more specific information on future land use needs. Where specific numerical projections of future land usage for a municipality are not available, then the Future Land Use Maps for those units of government will give a good idea of the locations and general amounts of land available for certain types of land uses. Map 8.3 below was created by assembling the information from the local Comprehensive Plans, and provides a general illustration of anticipated future land uses.

The County’s Land Use Plan does contain recommended policies on land use and development issues of Countywide significance. It is the County’s intention that local land use plans be consistent with these County land use policies, which address issues that generally have an intergovernmental impact and which require area-wide cooperation.

**Section 8.9 Future Land Use Categories**

Categorizing the many acres of land in Portage County into different land use categories is a formidable task. In order to advocate accuracy and consistency throughout the mapping process, the Portage County Planning and Zoning Department developed specific mapping criteria for different land use types. Most individual Town plans utilized this mapping scheme, with tweaks here and there to accommodate specific, local circumstances. The following are the County-recommended categories:

**Map 8.3: Future Land Use Compilation**

## **Residential Mapping Criteria**

As used here, the term “residential” is intended to identify existing concentrations of lots, which are distinguished by platting or nonagricultural zoning, where it is the original intent of the developer/residents to maintain a residential/neighborhood character and where nonresidential uses would be incompatible. Examples of areas to be mapped as residential include;

1. Existing developed residential zoning.
2. Subdivisions or clusters of lots, strongly residential in character, that have developed under agricultural zoning. It is recommended that such areas be identified as residential in this Plan, but considered for rezoning to an appropriate residential district, only where the majority of residents are in agreement as to the need for residential zoning restrictions.
3. Areas for expansion of residential development based on goals and policies in this Plan. Current non-residential uses would be allowed until future residential development occurs.

### ***Land Use Categories:***

**Low Density Residential:** Equal to, or greater than 2 acres per residence.

**Medium Density Residential:** Less than 2 acres per residence. May include residential uses such as single family, duplex, mobile home parks and multi-family dwellings where appropriate. These uses may be treated as special exceptions through the Portage County Zoning Ordinance.

## **Commercial and Industrial Mapping Criteria**

Areas of existing, developed or future commercial or industrial land uses. For most rural communities, it is difficult to determine an appropriate location for the growth of commercial activity. Most of the businesses that develop are home or farm based and do not have the option of relocating. Some communities have a clear vision of a commercial or industrial development area while other may not. Proposals for new industrial and commercial development should be considered only on a case-by-case basis, based on the goals, objectives, and policies of the comprehensive plan. Approval for such use may require a change to the land use map.

### ***Land Use Categories:***

**Commercial:** Includes uses as allowed in Commercial zoning districts.

**Industrial:** Include uses where the manufacturing of a product from a raw material is the primary purpose of the business.

## **Agricultural Mapping Criteria**

Lands recommended predominantly for the continuation of agricultural pursuits, the protection of productive agricultural lands, and the retention of the rural nature of the community. In recognition of the differentiation of soil characteristics throughout the County, changing agricultural economy, and development pressures, three categories of agriculture will be used based on the intensity of the agricultural operations in that area:

### ***Land Use Categories:***

**L-1 Enterprise Agriculture:** The Enterprise Agriculture Category is intended to include lands that can support a full range of intensive agricultural uses, including large dairies, large confined livestock feeding operations, cranberry production, and concentrations of irrigated vegetable crop production. The category's uses are designed to implement Comprehensive Plan goals by encouraging livestock and other agricultural uses in areas where conditions are best suited to these agricultural pursuits, and discouraging residential development to avoid potential land use conflict. Due to the more intensive nature of uses allowed, the L-1 category is not intended to be applied near moderately - to densely-populated areas, and it is not intended to accommodate residential uses as principle uses.

**L-2 Intermediate Agriculture:** The Intermediate Agriculture Category is intended to preserve and enhance land for agricultural uses. Large confined livestock operations should be limited to ensure compatible land use and minimize conflicts with adjacent uses. The intensity of agricultural uses allowed in this category is less than that of the L-1 Enterprise Agriculture category but more than the L-3 Limited Agriculture category. This category's uses and regulations are designed to encourage agricultural uses in areas where soil and other conditions are best suited to these agricultural pursuits, and control residential development to avoid potential conflict with agriculture uses.

**L-3 Limited Agriculture/Mixed Use** The Limited Agriculture Category is intended to provide for the continuation of low intensity agricultural uses, recommend against new and expanding livestock operations, provide for careful siting of single family residences, and support other uses that maintain the rural characteristics of the area. It may serve as a buffer for more intensive agricultural uses in adjacent categories, and prevent premature conversion of rural lands to urban uses. This category's uses and development regulations are designed to implement the Comprehensive Plan goals by discouraging urban and suburban development in areas that are suited to agricultural use and that are not well served by public facilities and services.

### **Natural Areas Mapping Criteria**

Lands recommended to remain in their natural state or for non-intensive uses such as recreation, wildlife habitat, or forest management. This category was applied to lands which are environmentally important or sensitive, including shore lands, wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, substantial wildlife habitat and public resource areas. Limited residential development could occur in a manner that does not negatively impact the ecological or aesthetic value of areas designated for preservation in their natural state. Criteria for identification may include the following:

1. Lands within 100 feet of navigable waters or to the landward side of adjoining wetlands, if greater than 100 feet. Including wetlands within 300 feet of navigable waters, and excluding preexisting structures or cropland that would be nonconforming uses under Conservancy Zoning.
2. Other wetlands (not adjoining navigable waters).
3. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100 year floodplains.
4. Publicly owned lands used for recreation or wildlife/resource management.
5. Large tracts of unbroken native landscapes such as natural forests, grasslands, and wetlands.
6. Other natural features of the landscape deemed important by the local community

### ***Land Use Categories:***

**NA – Protected:** Lands recommended to remain in their natural state or for non-intensive, non-developed uses such as passive recreation, wildlife habitat, ground and/or surface water protection and forest management. Development of these lands is not recommended due to the potential of destroying or degrading important or unique natural resources or due to the excessive measures necessary to overcome development barriers presented by the environmental conditions.

**NA – Limited Development:** Identifies lands that are environmentally important to the community; however limited residential development could occur without negatively impacting the ecological value of the area.

### **Institutional Land Mapping Criteria**

Lands where public facilities exist or are to be located. Facilities include, but aren't limited to: government services and institutions, educational, religious, cemeteries, medical and health care, military, power plants, solid waste disposal sites, and sewage treatment plants.

***Land Use Category:*** **Institutional**

### **Resource Extraction Mapping Criteria**

These areas are considered economically viable resources and are identified within specific boundaries to minimize or avoid conflict with other adjacent land uses. Resource extraction uses include clay, sand, gravel, and other aggregate extraction.

***Land Use Category:*** **Non Metallic Mineral Extraction**

## **Section 8.10 Relationship of Land Use Elements and Comprehensive Plans To Zoning And Other Factors**

The County's zoning program will have a proper legal foundation when based upon good Comprehensive Plans at the County and Town level since they can help avoid charges of arbitrary and capricious public decisions, particularly zoning decisions. It is important for the County zoning maps, and particularly their periodic amendments, to be consistent with County and Town Comprehensive Plans.

The Implementation Chapter of the Portage County Town contains a description of the advisable relationship between the Comprehensive Plan, the Land Use Map, and the zoning map.

The County Comprehensive Plan can also provide benefits in a variety of other development programs such as: a supporting element in grant applications, economic development programs, public works planning, highway locations; as an aid to the business community in locating commercial or industrial uses; and as a aid to federal, state, and regional agencies in applying their plans, programs, or regulations within the County.

In addition, the Comprehensive Plan can be used as a legal basis for approving or rejecting subdivision plats according to s 263.13.