

CHAPTER 2

Land Use

As presented in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter, the Town of Rockland desires to maintain its rural character, while accommodating residential development. This section of the plan identifies the Town's existing land uses, and based on Rockland's identified goals and objectives, it provides recommendations for the Town to implement in order to attain its desired future land uses and patterns.

Existing Land Use

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In order to plan for future land use and development in Rockland, it is necessary to consider existing land uses and development trends. A land use inventory, which classifies several types of land use activities, is an important means of identifying current conditions. In addition, by comparing land use inventories from previous years, various trends can be discerned that are helpful in establishing the plan for future land use. The Brown County Planning Commission conducts a countywide land use inventory every decade. Fieldwork for the most recent inventory was completed in 2019. Using this data, the various land use categories were broken down by acreage. Figure 2-1 compares the 2014 and 2025 land use composition of the Town, and Figure 2-2 identifies the location of the various 2025 land uses within the Town.

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Residential Land Uses

Residential land use in Rockland accounts for 2051.7 acres, or 15.0 percent of the Town. There are an additional 42.3 acres (0.3 percent) of lands that are platted for residential development. All residential development in Rockland has private septic systems and wells, necessitating larger lot sizes. The homes in Rockland are almost entirely single-family structures located in rural subdivisions or along existing roads. The homes and rural subdivisions are dispersed in nature without any true pattern or focal point in the Town. The largest residential developments include: the [Hickory Ridge Subdivision in the northwestern part of Town](#), Moonriver Subdivision in the southwestern part of the Town, [the Rockland Heights Condominiums](#), residential lots along the Fox River, and the River Oaks Subdivision, also in the southwestern part of the Town. Another smaller platted subdivision is Winding Wind Estates in the east-central portion of the Town.

Commercial Land Uses

Commercial land uses are those that can typically be divided into retail and service-oriented businesses. Retail businesses may include grocery stores, furniture stores, or other similar uses where the patron is actually purchasing goods. Service-oriented commercial enterprises, such as accounting offices and dry cleaners, provide a service to a patron in exchange for payment. Commercial uses in the Town occupy 24.7 acres of land, or 0.2 percent of the total area of Rockland. Commercial uses are scattered around the Town. Rockland residents typically travel to the neighboring City of De Pere, Villages of Greenleaf or Wrightstown, or Green Bay/Fox Cities metro areas for the majority of their commercial activities.

Figure 2-1: Town of Rockland 2014 and 2025 Land Use Acreage

| General Land Use | 2014 Total Acres | 2014 Percent of Total | 2025 Total Acres | 2025 Percent of Total |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Single-Family Residential | 1975.8 | 14.42% | 2051.7 | 14.97% |
| Land Under Development | 17.5 | 0.13% | 42.3 | 0.31% |
| Commercial | 16.4 | 0.12% | 24.7 | 0.18% |
| Industrial | 56.6 | 0.41% | 66.9 | 0.49% |
| Roads/Right of Way | 529.5 | 3.86% | 537.3 | 3.92% |
| Transportation Related | 1.8 | 0.01% | 3.5 | 0.03% |
| Communications / Utilities | 3.8 | 0.03% | 2.8 | 0.02% |
| Governmental / Institutional | 2.5 | 0.02% | 2.5 | 0.02% |
| Parks and Recreation | 81 | 0.59% | 81.0 | 0.59% |
| Agricultural | 8310.8 | 60.66% | 8002.7 | 58.41% |
| Agricultural Buildings | 294.9 | 2.15% | 313.7 | 2.29% |
| Water Features | 29 | 0.21% | 32.0 | 0.23% |
| Natural Areas, Woodlands, Undeveloped Open Space | 2381.5 | 17.38% | 2540.1 | 18.54% |
| Total | 13701.1 | 100.00% | 13701.1 | 100.00% |

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Industrial Land Uses

The large stone quarry in the far northeastern corner of the Town accounts for the vast majority of the industrial activity in Rockland, mining an estimated 67 acres of their total 79 acres. Additional small industrial uses are scattered around Rockland.

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Communication/Utilities

The only communication/utility use in Rockland is the electric power substation on Old Martin Road. In addition to the communication/utility structures on the ground, there are two high-voltage overhead power lines that traverse the Town. One runs in a general east to west orientation and the second runs in a general north to south orientation through the center of Town. Both run through the central part of the Town. An underground natural gas line runs east to west through the southern section of Rockland. Appendix B is a map of the portion of the gas line within the Town's borders. The underground lines have minimal impact on agricultural activities but would impact the siting of future development. Total communication/utility land uses account for 2.8 acres of land, or less than 0.1 percent of the total area of Rockland.

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Institutional/Governmental Land Uses

Institutional/governmental land uses total 2.5 acres, or less than 0.1 percent of land in Rockland. The only use within this category is the Rockland town hall located at the corner of STH 32/57 and Bob-Bea-Jan Road.

Outdoor Recreation Uses

The primary outdoor recreation use in Rockland is the Fox River State Trail, which traverses the Town in a north to south direction through the center of Rockland. The other outdoor recreation use in the Town is the De Pere Sportsmen’s Club located in the far northeastern part of Rockland. Recreational land uses account for 81.0 acres, or 0.6 percent of the total area of the Town. [ATV/UTV routes are permitted on town roads and are regulated.](#)

Agricultural Land Uses

Agriculture and agricultural-related activities constitute the majority of the land uses in Rockland, accounting for 8,316.4 acres, or 60.7 percent of the total area of the Town. This is a decrease of 289.3 acres, or 2.2 percent, since 2014. Agricultural land in Rockland is being lost through a combination of residential development and annexation. There are still large tracts of agricultural lands in Rockland; although, they are becoming increasingly fragmented due to residential development. The largest uninterrupted agricultural areas are in the far southeastern and south central part of the Town.

Natural Areas

Natural areas include woodlands, wetlands, stream corridors, and other areas that are not farmed and are largely in a natural state. Approximately 2,540 acres, or 18.5 percent of the total land area, can be classified as natural areas. The natural areas in Rockland are primarily associated with the East River, Fox River and their tributary streams. The natural areas along these streams are generally narrow in nature, with the exception of some larger wooded areas between the East River and the Niagara Escarpment. Additionally, the Niagara Escarpment is classified as a natural area due to its wooded nature. Even though natural areas account for only 18.5 percent of the Town, they are a critical element of the rural character desired by the Town’s residents. Therefore, maintaining or improving the natural areas in Rockland would help to keep the Town’s rural character intact.

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Land Use Trend Analysis

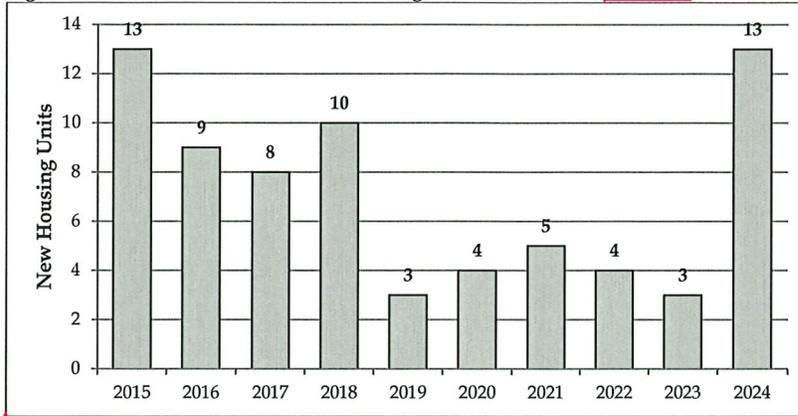
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Supply and Demand

According to the Town of Rockland building permit files, between 2015 and 2024, a total of 72 new home building permits were approved with a high of thirteen each in 2015 & 2024 and a low of three in both 2019 and 2023. All 72 new construction permits were for single-family homes. As is evident in Figure 2-3, the number of new residential building permits declined sharply from 2018 – 2023, but has more recently rebounded to thirteen in 2024.

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Figure 2-3: Town of Rockland New Housing Unit Construction, 2015-2024



Source: Town of Rockland Building Permits, 2015-2024.

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Land Prices

Land prices are subject to increases and decreases as the supply and demand for developable land fluctuates. This was demonstrated in the early 2020s as prices for vacant, developable land in Brown County soared, as did housing values reflecting a shortage of homes in the market.

Opportunities for Redevelopment

Within Rockland, over 33 percent of the homes were constructed prior to 1989 and could be in need of maintenance due to their age. Brown County administers the regional Community Development Block Grant - Housing program, which provides no-interest, deferred payment loans for low and moderate income homeowners. Should low and moderate income homeowners in Rockland need home repairs, they should contact the Brown County Planning Commission for additional information on the program.

Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts

Annexation

Since the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Rockland has experienced a few annexations from the Town into the City of De Pere along CIH PP and Ryan Roads. Without a boundary agreement in place, there will likely continue to be annexations as Town property owners petition the City of De Pere for annexation in order to develop their land with public sewer and water.

The University of Wisconsin–Extension Local Government Center Fact Sheet on annexations (https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/files/2021/02/Fact-Sheet-4_-_Annexation.pdf) identifies the five types of annexations in Wisconsin. The types are listed in this section in order of frequency of use.

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- Direct Annexation by Unanimous Approval.
- Direct Annexation by one-half approval.
- Annexation by Referendum.
- Annexation of Owned Territory.
- Annexation on City or Village Initiative by Referendum and Court Order.

Annexations typically lead to bad relations between an incorporated municipality and a town because there is usually a “winner” and “loser” as a result of the annexation. When annexations are approved, the incorporated community usually ends up being the “winner” in gaining additional developable land, while the town is typically the “loser” since it loses land that it deemed to be its own. Unfortunately, lawsuits and hard feelings on both sides oftentimes result from this process. Therefore, it is critical in the interest of intergovernmental cooperation that the Town of Rockland and the City of De Pere negotiate in good faith to reach a mutually agreeable boundary agreement to avoid this situation and to create a more rational, efficient growth pattern for the City’s boundaries. Regardless of whether or not the City of De Pere wants to enter into boundary negotiations with the Town of Rockland at this time, Rockland and De Pere should meet on at least an annual basis to facilitate communication between both communities.

Agricultural and Residential Uses

New residents to Rockland should recognize that they are moving into a rural community and will, therefore, need to deal with the sights, smells, and other activities that characterize active farming operations in the Town. As an increasing number of residents move into Rockland, the potential for conflicts regarding agricultural and residential land uses will certainly increase. It is critical for the Town to inform new residents that there are active farms in Rockland and they will have to deal with the potential inconveniences that they may cause.

Sand/Gravel Pits and Residential Uses

A third area of potential conflict is between the existing active sand/gravel pit operations and future residential development. Active pits with a large amount of heavy truck traffic, blasting and machinery operations are not typically compatible with residential development. Up to this point, conflicts have been kept to a minimum due to the distance between the active quarries and the homes in the Town. However, the Town should be aware of the existing quarries and ensure that new homes or home developments provide adequate buffers from existing quarry activity.

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General Land Use Compatibility

Throughout the 20-year vision for this plan, Rockland should review new development proposals and keep potential impacts on the Town’s rural character in mind. However, a mixture of uses (residential, commercial, recreational, etc.) within development proposals

could also be considered if the potential mixed uses are of a design, scale, and use that would blend in well with the overall development and character of the Town. However, those uses that are noxious in nature or may have safety or other concerns for residents living nearby should remain separated from residential developments.

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20-Year Projections in 5-Year Increments

Past Land Use Trends

The State of Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law requires communities to project their future land use needs for residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural lands for a 20-year period in 5-year increments. In order to determine how much land the Town of Rockland will need to continue to grow at its current rate, the land use inventories for 2014 and 2024 were compared. Figure 2-4 identifies the changes in land uses over this 10-year period. As is evident from the chart, residential uses have increased minimally (3.8 percent) over the past decade. Although commercial uses increased 108 percent, in terms of acreage, this only accounts for an additional thirteen acres of land, which is slightly more than the industrial land use increase. Following a long-term trend, agricultural land uses have continued to decrease in the Town of Rockland, although at a slower rate than was documented in 2014.

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Figure 2-4: Changes in Rockland Land Use, 2014-2025

| Land Use | 2014 | 2025 | Difference | Percent |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------|----------|
| | (Total Acres) | (Total Acres) | 2014-2025 | Change |
| Residential | 1,976 acres | 2052 acres | +76 acres | +3.8% |
| Commercial | 12 acres | 25 acres | +13 acres | +108.33% |
| Industrial | 57 acres | 67 acres | +10 acres | +15.7% |
| Agricultural | 8,606 acres | 8,316 acres | -290 acres | -3.4% |

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Source: Brown County Planning Commission, Town of Rockland Zoning.

Based on the results of the 2024 Community Survey and input from the community, it is evident that maintaining a rural character and protecting farmland is the primary goal of the community. In defining rural character, the community identified it as "space between homes, elbow room, etc."

Future Land Use Projections

It is important to note that the following land use projection is developed under normal conditions. The City of De Pere requiring a minimum 10-acre lot size within its 3-mile extraterritorial land division review area in Rockland is a unique circumstance that will hopefully be resolved through intergovernmental discussion and agreements within the

20-year time period of this plan. Therefore, this projection, and the comprehensive plan in general, look to the future when such an impediment to Rockland's growth is no longer in effect. In addition, with the newly formed Village of Greenleaf at the southern border of Town, Greenleaf will also be able to enforce a one and a half mile extra territorial land division review should it choose to do so.

The following acreage analysis and projection is not intended to be a strict determination of exactly how much land will be needed for development in Rockland over the next 20 years. Rather, it is an estimate based on past trends and population projections to give the residents, Planning Commission and Town Board an idea of what they are looking at in terms of future growth in Rockland. This information should be used by the Town Board to determine what kind of public services may be needed in Rockland over the next 20 years, as well as estimates of when additional public services will be needed.

Based on the population projections provided by the Wisconsin Department of Administration in the Issues and Opportunities chapter, the Town's population is expected to decrease by 95 people between 2020 and 2050, resulting in a 2050 population of 1,680 people. Therefore, Rockland will have an excess of 32 housing units in the Town by 2050 as a result of the anticipated population decrease. Many factors contribute to a reduction in population: retirement aged residents are often one or two person households. In addition, there is potential reduced land area with the annexation threat. The Wisconsin Department of Administration projects that the population of Wisconsin could decline by as much as 200,000 people by 2050. This information should not be taken in its entirety. Brown County is projected to have a population increase of 31,000 people between 2020 and 2050. In addition, consider that there is a housing shortage in Brown County. It is conceivable that growth will include Rockland.

A review of approved subdivision plats from 2014 through 2025, resulted in only one subdivision plat being approved, for a total of 28 lots. The most recent subdivision plat was approved and recorded in 2021 for the Rockland Heights Condo Association. It is likely that no more subdivision plats will be approved in Rockland due to the City of De Pere maintaining the 10-acre minimum lot size requirement within its extraterritorial land division jurisdiction. A review of certified survey maps for the Town of Rockland yielded similar results of a few 10-acre or larger parcels being created over this same time period.

The Town of Rockland Zoning Ordinance was reviewed in order to determine approximate lot sizes that could be developed in Rockland under normal circumstances. Typical residential lot sizes allowable in the ordinance vary from 40,000 square feet in the Rural Residential (RR-1) district, to two acres in the Estate Residential 2 (ER-2) district, and five acres in the Estate Residential 5 (ER-5) district. Residential parcels in the Town are scarce and it is increasingly important to keep inventory available as the communities around the Town of Rockland grow.

The previous projection assumes public sewer and water are not available to the Town of Rockland over the next 20 years. Should public sewer and water become available to the Town of Rockland, the Town's Residential Sewered District (RR-1) requires a minimum of 12,000 square feet per parcel. There are a few properties along the northern edges of the Town that could be supported by public sewer. However, it is inconsistent with the desires of the Rockland residents as reported via the 2024 Community Survey, as they wish to

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avoid water and sewer and limit development volume. That being said, it is conceivable that residential growth will occur as long as property owners are willing to divide their larger acreage.

When reviewing the projected 100 acres of land in the next 5 years, this will normally mean only 10 homes will be built. The southern end of the Town will have more flexibility for smaller lots and may yield more homes in that area. There will also be a need for additional acreage for commercial and industrial properties during the 20-year planning period. Actual new industrial activity will likely be along State 32/57 in the form of storage buildings. Therefore, based on the projections, Rockland would need an estimated total of 665 additional acres for residential, commercial, and industrial uses under normal circumstances.

Since new street rights-of-way will need to be included in most new developments, a review of the three most recently developed subdivision plats (Laddie Acres, Wynding Wind Estates, and River Oaks First Addition) was completed. Based on this review, an average of 14.0 percent of a subdivision plat area is typically dedicated to new streets. Therefore, after accounting for the new rights-of-way into the projection, the grand total of required land for Rockland is 732 acres.

Figure 2-5: 5-Year Growth Increments for the Town of Rockland

| Use | Year | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 | 2040 | 2045 |
| Residential | 2,051 acres | 2,150 | 2,307 | 2,463 | 2,620 |
| Commercial | 25 acres | 41 | 52 | 68 | 90 |
| Industrial | 67 acres | 72 | 82 | 85 | 98 |
| Agricultural | 8,317 acres | 8,197 | 8,019 | 7,844 | 7,652 |

Based on these projections, the estimated acreage requirements are broken down into 5-year increments, per the requirement of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law. Figure 2-5 identifies the tabular 5-year growth increment acreage projections for the Town of Rockland.

The projected development up to 2025 was sharply less than projected. Considering the sharp decrease in development activity in Rockland following De Pere's implementation of its extraterritorial review authority and requirement for a 10-acre minimum lot size, it can be reasonably expected that actual residential, commercial, and industrial development will be much lower until such time this constraint is removed. It is also true however that with the incorporation of the Village of Greenleaf, the areas along the southern border of the Town will be developed at a faster pace and in smaller parcels as the Village of Greenleaf has not imposed the 10-acre minimum on the Town.

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Future Land Use Recommendations

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Future development within the Town of Rockland is currently limited by the City of De Pere generally not permitting new land divisions less than 10 acres within its 3-mile extraterritorial land division review area. This chapter recognizes this fact; however, it is important for the Town to plan for future land uses. By planning now, the Town will be prepared should this limitation be removed at some point in the future. The following sections identify the various planned land uses in the Town and how they could develop over the next 20 years. The future land uses are identified in Figure 2-6.

Residential Development

A large part of the rural character that Rockland residents enjoy is not seeing acres upon acres of homes from the town roads. Therefore, it is important for developers to take advantage of the existing natural features, terrain, and vegetation when laying out and designing new subdivisions in the Town to help screen the development from views along the town roads. Additionally, streets should follow the contours of the land in order to create a more curvilinear street pattern, while still maintaining connections for existing and future streets.

The Housing Chapter provided the requisite background data and recommendations based upon this background data. As discussed, the range of housing in the Town of Rockland is currently rather limited with primarily single-family detached homes on lots generally ranging from two to five acres being the norm. To address a growing and aging population, additional variety in housing types should be encouraged. Specific recommendations include:

- Development of auxiliary or accessory dwelling units on existing residential parcels.
- Mixing of residential types, including the provision of duplexes to provide a rental option to residents.
- Mixing of uses in residential developments, such as appropriately designed commercial, institutional, or recreational uses to allow residents to walk or bicycle to these land uses.
- Encourage reinvestment in the existing housing stock through the regional Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - Housing rehabilitation program for low and moderate income homeowners, including the elderly.
- Work with residents and homebuilders to incorporate "visitable" concepts such as a no-step entrance, 36-inch minimum passageways, and a useable bathroom on the first floor in homes to allow elderly to age in place.
- Encourage master planned senior housing developments with a variety of housing types and amenities that capitalize on the rural setting and natural features of Rockland, provided adequate water and sewage disposal is available.

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- Work with developers to utilize conservation subdivision design to encourage new residential development while still protecting critical environmental, historical, or agricultural features. Conservation subdivision design is discussed in more detail in the following section.

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Conservation by Design Subdivisions

Conservation by design development is a land subdivision method that focuses on maintaining open space and conserving significant natural and/or cultural features. This is accomplished by preserving a significant portion of a development site as undivided open space with the remaining land uses for the house lots and roads. A conservation subdivision provides the landowner with the same number of lots, or possibly more, than could be accomplished through a conventional subdivision. The open space is permanently preserved through conservation easements. However, it could be used for a variety of purposes, such as farming, orchards, tree farm, nursery, etc. It is up to the local community to determine what uses will be permitted in the preserved portion of the subdivision.

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Figure 2-6: Future Land Use

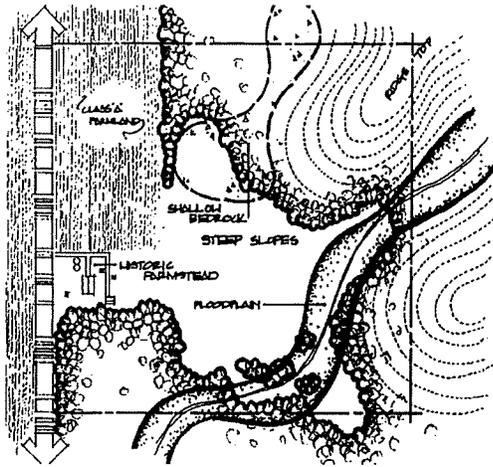
Backside Figure 2-6

The conservation example in this section uses the same number of house lots from the conventional layout but completely alters the design by simply reducing the lot size and being sensitive to the environmental features in order to preserve farmland. The following sketches are from "A Model Ordinance for a Conservation Subdivision," prepared by the University of Wisconsin Extension.

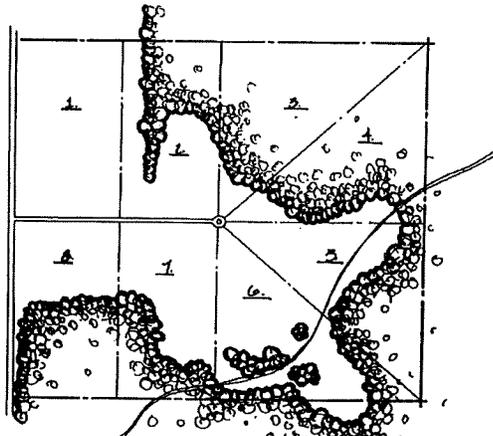
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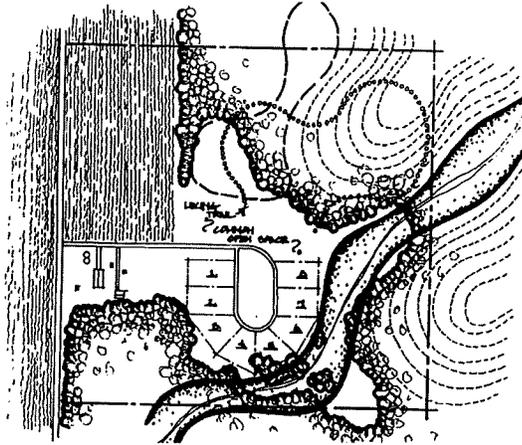
Step 1: Inventory and mapping of existing resources for a hypothetical 40-acre site.



Step 2: Development yield as permitted under existing ordinances (zoning, etc.) for the 40-acre site and assuming a 5-acre minimum lot size zoning standard. Eight lots would be permitted under this scenario.



Step 3: Concept map of the conservation subdivision showing the eight lots that would be permitted, plus the historic farmhouse that would be preserved, for a total of nine dwelling units.



The following are some observations from comparing the conventional subdivision to the conservation by design subdivision:

- Conventional layout – all parts of the tract are either house lots or roads.
- Conservation layout – close to half of the site is undivided open space or agricultural land that can be permanently preserved.
- Conventional layout – view from across the road to the trees and creek is disrupted, and houses can be seen in all parts of the development.
- Conservation layout – view from across the road to trees and creek is almost entirely preserved.
- Conventional layout – only four property owners have access to parts of the creek.
- Conservation layout – all property owners have access to the length of the creek.
- Conventional layout – no common space; each lot owner only has use of his own 5-acre parcel.
- Conservation layout – creates a number of common open space areas with a large area remaining for active agricultural use.
- Conventional layout – no pedestrianways unless sidewalks are included in the construction of the roads.
- Conservation layout – trail network can be completed and can link with neighboring subdivisions and/or regional trail or parkway network.
- Conventional layout – no area for neighborhood facilities.
- Conservation layout – central green area could include children’s play area, shelter, or other amenities.

To ensure that those farmers who wish to continue agricultural production in Rockland are able to do so for as long a time as they see fit, residential development should be designed in a way to minimize its impact on existing agricultural production. In order to decrease the fragmentation of farm fields by driveways, individual homes should (as much as possible) be located close to the road that provides frontage. Long driveways create divisions within a field and create a disincentive to continued farming of the land, in addition to creating difficulties for emergency vehicles. Additionally, when new individual residential lots are created, the parcel size should be as close to the minimum as possible to maintain larger blocks of agricultural land.

Future Public Sewer and Water Development

The large minimum size of the lots required by De Pere through its extraterritorial authority effectively currently precludes the development of a cost-effective Town sanitary or utility district. However, Rockland ~~should remain open to~~ providing this service in the future to create an alternative development option for Rockland property owners who desire to develop their lands, but do not wish to annex to the City of De Pere. As NEW Water begins its planning process for future interceptor sewers, the Town of Rockland should continue to be actively involved in order to demonstrate interest and ensure that Rockland's views regarding publicly-sewered development is taken into account.

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Prior to the creation of a sanitary (or utility) district, Rockland will need to address financing, engineering, and planning of the sanitary district area. It is ~~important~~ that the Town plan long-term by ensuring that privately sewer development today does not impede the logical, contiguous growth of public sanitary sewer lines in the future. Therefore, prior to embarking down the path of developing small lots that require public sewer, the Town of Rockland should commission a facilities study to determine the location, size, and projected expenses and revenues associated with creating and providing services to a new sanitary/utility district.

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A detailed Master Development Plan for any area served by public sewer should be developed in order for the Town to work with residents and property owners to properly identify areas best suited for potential conservation by design subdivisions, address future sanitary sewerage collection and treatment needs, and lay out an efficient and orderly vehicle and pedestrian network to serve the future residents of this area. The plan should accommodate a range of housing and transportation choices for residents, as well as include a mix of commercial, institutional, and recreational land uses.

Subdivision and Street Connectivity

A connected street pattern between and within developments helps to disburse vehicle traffic and creates better routes for pedestrians and bicyclists as a more efficient way to provide public services (snowplowing, bus routing, etc.). Therefore, Rockland should continue to require a well-connected street pattern as discussed in the Transportation chapter. Where there are environmental or developmental constraints to connecting streets, cul-de-sacs may be used, but their use should be limited to the aforementioned situations.

When development is again allowed in Rockland, it is imperative that the Town not review each proposed certified survey map or subdivision plat as a separate development. Rather, the Town should look at the surrounding parcels of land and envision how internal streets could be developed in the future to maximize the amount of connectivity between the proposed subdivision and future developments. Requiring developers to work with the surrounding property owners to create an Area Development Plan for future street connections is critical to ensure future connections among different subdivisions. This does not mean that the surrounding property owners have to develop or even have any intention of developing. However, in the event that they do decide to bring a proposal forward, there is a plan in place for internal street connections to the existing subdivision, thereby minimizing the pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicle impacts on the existing town roads.

South Bridge Connector

The Brown County is currently building the South Bridge Connector and though the delays have been many, it is at the time of this plan expected to open to traffic in 2030. Federal agencies, state agencies, local agencies and communities have all come together to find funding and begin the approval and building processes.

As a result of annexations of property from Rockland to De Pere, the direct impacts of the future southern bridge will be more limited than anticipated in the past. However, indirect impacts will likely include additional traffic on STH 32/57 and CTH PP from vehicles either traveling to or from the Southern Bridge Connector. As traffic on these facilities increase, there will potentially be increased interest in these areas for new development.

In order to maintain the rural character of the Town that Rockland wants to protect and avoid potential negative traffic and bike/pedestrian impacts, commercial development along STH 32/57 leading to the Southern Bridge Connector should be focused in long strips, keeping commercial distanced from residential properties where possible. Specific locations where commercial development may be appropriate include the intersections of STH 32/57 with Bob-Bea-Jan Road, Midway Road, Eiler Road, and Lasee Road.

Parks and Open Spaces

The only public lands Rockland contains are those associated with the Fox River State Trail. A small off road parking lot was built by Brown County Parks at the Midway Road crossing of the Fox River State Trail. The parking lot and trailhead have been very well received by the public. A second location is already owned by BC Parks at the Lasee Road crossing of the Fox River State Trail. Rockland should coordinate with the Brown County Parks Management and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to develop a small off-street parking lot and trailhead at Lasee Road as identified in the Transportation Chapter. Coordination with the Village of Greenleaf could help to develop another at, the right-of-way of Wrightstown Road that runs parallel to the west side of the trail.

The Niagara Escarpment is a critical natural resource and habitat area, as identified in the Natural, Cultural, and Agricultural Resources chapter of this comprehensive plan, and it is under increasing pressures for development, but also provides the Town with part of its identity. The Town of Rockland currently owns a 2.73 acre sliver of land along CTH W

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~~Bypass and~~

~~Planning Commission~~

~~is currently working with f~~

~~, and the public to complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Interstate Access Justification Report (IAJR) for this project. The EIS process is currently in the alternatives analysis phase, and the draft EIS document that recommends a location for a new southern bridge connector and~~

~~connecting arterial streets is expected to be completed soon.~~

~~s~~

~~bridge~~

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~~nodes at major intersections, rather than in~~

~~Through discussions with the Rockland CAC, it was noted that many people who utilize the trail currently park on the road shoulders near where the trail crosses various town roads. This has proven to be hazardous for trail users whose vision is blocked by the parked cars and cannot see oncoming traffic...~~

~~Therefore,~~

~~a minimum at one of the locations~~

~~, including the intersection of Midway Road and the Fox River Trail, intersection of Lasee Road and the Fox River Trail, or coordinate with the Town of Wrightstown to develop one...along along~~

~~along~~

between Old Ledge Road and Ledgecrest Road which includes a small part of the Niagara escarpment ledge face. This section of the Niagara escarpment is relatively isolated because it is bound on all sides by roads and therefore has experienced minimal disturbance. Should the Town have an opportunity to purchase or otherwise obtain ownership of the adjacent 7.6 acre parcel of land; it would create an ideal conservancy area that would preserve a portion of the Niagara Escarpment for future generations. The Town of Rockland should work with the local property owners, nonprofit groups, residents and public agencies to pursue purchase of this property to pair it with the current Town property and create a conservancy area.

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Additionally, since the nearest local active park facilities (playground, ballfield, etc.) are in the Village of Wrightstown, City of De Pere, and Town of Ledgeview, Rockland **could** consider the development of a small active park adjacent to the Rockland **Town Hall**. As discussed in the Utilities and Community Facilities Chapter, there is currently very little public access to the Fox River in the Town of Rockland. The only public access point at this time is a 60' extension of the Wrightstown Road right-of-way to the Fox River. At a minimum, this public access point should be identified with signage and an informal chip/bark path to the shoreline **should** be developed.



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There are a number of grant programs available through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources that provide matching grants to local communities to purchase land or develop parks through the Stewardship program. If the Town utilizes volunteers and fund raisers to raise funds for development of a park or purchase of a conservancy area, the volunteers' labor and funds may be used to cover the local match to a Stewardship grant. The Implementation chapter describes the programs in detail.

Commercial and Industrial Development

As discussed in the South Bridge Connector section, commercial development along STH 32/57 leading to the Southern Bridge Connector should be focused on a long strip along STH 32/57. Developing a commercial corridor along STH 32/57, would protect the rural character of the Town in all other areas. New industrial and commercial development should also be designed in a manner that creates a pleasing visual appearance, is approachable by bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles, and does not detract from the rural character of Rockland. This may include requiring new businesses to have monument-style signage, parking lot landscaping, downward directed lighting, and architecture consistent with a rural community. Specific locations where commercial development may be appropriate include the intersections of STH 32/57 with Bob-Bea-Jan Road, Midway Road, Eiler Road, and Lasee Road.

Northeast Asphalt owns three parcels in Rockland, totaling approximately 79 acres of land. Approximately 69 acres is currently being actively quarried. It can be reasonably expected

that the remaining 10 acres of land will be quarried during the 20-year period of this comprehensive plan.

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The Future Land Use Map identifies the entirety of these parcels for future quarrying activity. This area is identified in order to provide notice to existing and future residents in this part of the Town of Rockland that quarrying can be expected to continue and will likely expand into these areas. Therefore, it is important that future residents understand that quarrying and the associated blasting, vibrations, dust, and truck traffic may impact them should they decide to live next to a quarry. It is also important for quarry operators to continue to operate the quarry in as neighborly and environmentally-sound means as possible, consistent with best practices, state laws and regulations and the Non-Metallic Mining Ordinance (Chapter 21) of the Town of Rockland Code of Ordinances.

Community Design Characteristics

Businesses, public facilities, homes, and industries need to be designed in a way that is sensitive to the rural character of Rockland. This would include unobtrusive signage, landscaped parking lots, and ensuring that new homes are located with adequate space between them to minimize their visual impact on the rural landscape that typifies the Town.

It is important for Rockland to incorporate those natural features of the Town into new developments in a way that does not preclude their preservation. This may include designing subdivisions in a manner that mitigates the impact new homes or businesses could have on the Town’s rural character.

Infill and Redevelopment Opportunities

Since the Town is so rural in nature, there are currently no areas of the Town that are developed at dense enough levels to qualify the nearby areas for “infill” development.

Natural Areas

Natural resource features provide Rockland with a large part of its identity as a community. The Fox River, East River, Niagara Escarpment, and numerous streams and wetlands all contribute to the Town’s rural feel and should be protected as much as possible. Features of the Town that are identified as environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs), such as wetlands, floodways, and steep slopes, should not be developed and should be identified on subdivision plats or certified survey maps and included as part of the greenspace requirements of conservation subdivisions. These features should be



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included in the design of developments as integral amenities and maintained in common ownership, and they may be utilized in the design of stormwater management facilities.

The Niagara Escarpment is home to many endangered or threatened plants and animals along its length from northern Illinois through Brown County, Upper Michigan, Ontario, and the Niagara Falls. Therefore, whenever there is an opportunity to preserve a part of this very unique feature, Rockland should actively pursue it. There are a number of public and nonprofit agencies that could assist the Town in identifying funding resources and development design techniques that could help in preserving pieces of the escarpment.

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There are a number of small tributaries to the Fox and East Rivers that have their headwaters in the Town of Rockland. Protecting the springs and wetlands that provide base flows to these headwaters is critically important in keeping the streams and the larger rivers they flow to healthy for fish populations. As these areas develop, using quality erosion control measures to keep construction site erosion from entering into these streams should be a priority for the Town. Therefore, Rockland should ensure that all new developments prior to construction have an erosion control plan and stormwater control measures in place.

Since vegetative buffers as narrow as 30 feet between row crops and a stream can remove up to 90 percent of the potential sediments that would otherwise run into the stream, Rockland should continue to support the Brown County Land and Water Conservation Department's efforts in implementing the Brown County Agriculture Shoreland Management Ordinance, which requires buffers on all 1,200 miles of intermittent and perennial streams in the County. The ordinance, adopted in 1991, requires the establishment of a vegetative buffer or equally effective erosion control practice within 35 feet of any perennial or intermittent stream identified on a USGS quadrangle map. Landowners are eligible for a grant to assist with installation and a cost-share for lands taken out of production, as funds are available. Once in place, the buffer is perpetual and is attached to the land deed. With the implementation of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Fox River, additional funding may be on the horizon to implement best practices within these waterways to reduce the levels of phosphorus entering the Fox River and Lower Green Bay. The Town of Rockland and its agricultural producers should continue to stay aware of developments that may create opportunities for the implementation and cost share for vegetative buffers. The Conservative Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a good resource for financial support in constructing and maintaining buffers. The East River Collaborative is another excellent resource for residents looking for information on ways to protect our waterways.

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Agriculture

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Agriculture will continue to be a component of the Town of Rockland over the 20-year timeline of this plan. There are a number of large and small active farms located within the Town. The Town should continue to work with these landowners to ensure that the Town's development policies do not interfere with the continuing operation of the farms. To this end, development activities should be limited within the identified farmland preservation areas of the Town to the activities and recommendations detailed in this plan and the Town's zoning ordinance.



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The Town has adopted a map depicting the lands that are eligible to participate in the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative, otherwise known as Farmland Preservation, which provides a state income tax credit to qualified landowners. The Town undertook a comprehensive effort to work with its property owners to identify those areas of the Town that will likely remain in agricultural production over the next 15-20 years based on such factors as soil productivity, its comprehensive plan at the time, environmentally sensitive areas, and input from Town residents. The Town-identified areas were then incorporated into the Brown County Farmland Preservation Plan. Under state rules, if there are any conflicts between the Future Land Use Map and the Intensive Agricultural Areas Map, the Intensive Agricultural Areas Map supersedes all other future land use classifications. The Farmland Preservation areas are depicted in Figure 2-7.

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Specific requirements to participate in the program include:

- The subject properties are identified in the Brown County Farmland Preservation Plan and zoned for agriculture within a State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) certified agricultural zoning district.
- The person farming the properties earns at least \$6,000 a year or \$18,000 over a rolling three-year period in gross farm receipts (lease/rent payments may not be counted). However, if at least 35 acres were enrolled in CRP, the gross farm profit requirement does not need to be met.
- The properties are in compliance with state soil and water conservation standards as certified by the Brown County Land and Water Conservation Department.
- All property taxes owed from previous years are paid.

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In order to rezone lands from the certified agricultural zone (farmland preservation zoning district) to a non-certified zone, under Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin State Statutes, a

"findings of fact" must first be made by the Town Board. The findings of fact must be made in writing, after the public hearing, as part of the official record and find in the affirmative the following requirements:

- The rezoned land is better suited for a use not allowed in the farmland preservation zoning district.
- The rezoning is consistent with the comprehensive plan adopted by the Town, which is in effect at the time of the rezoning.
- The rezoning is substantially consistent with the certified Brown County Farmland Preservation Plan in effect at the time.
- The rezoning will not substantially impair or limit current or future agricultural use of other protected farmland.
- Additionally, the Town must report all rezones out of a farmland preservation zoning district to DATCP by March 1 of the following year. Rezoning out of the identified intensive agricultural areas should only be done when the aforementioned bullet points are met, is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Rockland, or is part of a comprehensive rezoning of the Town.

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As discussed in the Economic Development chapter, entrepreneurial agriculture provides opportunities for diversification within the agricultural market and growth in the tourism market. Smaller farms in the Town may be able to get involved in this niche market. Current trends indicate a strong interest from residents and tourists alike in local, sustainable foods and direct farm to grocery market or restaurant sales. Capitalizing on the Town's location within the Wisconsin Ledge American Viticultural Area (AVA), and partnering with local wineries and local food production operations could enhance agricultural and tourism-related revenues in the Town. The Town should strongly encourage small farms to undertake entrepreneurial agriculture and niche businesses to market and sell these products by reviewing its zoning ordinance to ensure it does not present barriers to these activities, but also that adequate community safeguards are in place for traffic, parking, lighting, signage, and hours of operation.

Summary of Recommendations

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New Development

- When individual new homes are located within or adjacent to active agricultural operations, they should be situated in such a way that allows for easy access for emergency vehicles and minimizes impacts on agricultural lands.
- Discourage as much as possible new residential development near active quarrying operations.
- Rockland should continue to be involved in discussions with NEW Water regarding interceptor sewer planning and the potential for growth in the Town.
- Should public sewer and water become available to Rockland, the Town should immediately begin a Master Development Plan and review its land use ordinances to ensure they continue to adequately address Town needs.
- Ensure that new commercial and/or industrial activities are located in a corridor along STH 32/57 to keep business areas away from residences.
- The Town of Rockland should work to acquire additional land around the Town Hall to accommodate future Town facilities.
- New businesses should be designed in such a way that does not detract from the rural character of Rockland. This may include the use of monument-style signage, parking lot landscaping, downward directed lighting, and rural architecture typologies.
- Streets should follow the contours of the land, which may produce a more curvilinear internal street pattern. However, they should be well-connected to existing and future streets in order to maintain accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles.

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- Ensure new developments have future street connections identified to neighboring properties through the development of Area Development Plans to maximize internal street connectivity unless there are environmental or developmental constraints.

Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation

- Work with the WDNR and Brown County Parks Management to improve access and parking along the Fox River Trail. Potential trailheads and parking areas include where the trail crosses Lasee Road, and on the Town's southern boundary where the trail crosses Wrightstown Road.
- Ensure that existing and future public access points to the Fox River and any other navigable waterways are maintained and signed appropriately so that Town residents may access them.
- Consider development of a small active park adjacent to the Rockland Town Hall through grant funding and volunteer labor and fund raising.
- Incorporate the natural features of the Town as amenities within new developments to maintain Rockland's rural character.
- Incorporate headwater springs or wetlands into the green space requirements of conservation subdivisions such as watergardens, etc. if/when development occurs.
- Limit residential development in proximity to the De Pere Sportsman's Club.

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Deleted: <#>Work with private property owners, WDNR, and other public and nonprofit organizations to develop a conservancy area in the area bound by CTH W, Ledgecrest Road, and Old Ledge Road to preserve a segment of the Niagara Escarpment and pass on a legacy for future generations.¶

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Agricultural Land Uses

- Ensure that new residents recognize that there are active farms in Rockland, as well as the sights, sounds, and smells that are associated with them.
- Continue to work with Brown County and local property owners to ensure the Town's certified agricultural zone ordinance and map are substantially consistent with the Brown County Farmland Preservation Plan for purposes of the State of Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program.
- Encourage entrepreneurial agriculture efforts in the Town as a means for small-scale farms to diversify their operations and continue in Rockland.
- Promote Rockland as an agricultural tourism destination for wine, dairy products, vegetables, fruit, and other direct farm to market products.



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