

CHAPTER 2

DRAFT 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

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 different 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 October 2010 and updated in March 2014. Using this data, the various land use categories were broken down by acreage. Figure 2-1 compares the 2004 and 2014 land use composition of the Town, and Figure 2-2 identifies the location of the various 2014 land uses within the Town.

Figure 2-1: Town of Rockland 2004 and 2014 Land Use Acreage

Land Use	2004 Total Acres	2004 Percent of Total	2014 Total Acres	2014 Percent of Total
Single-Family	1,607.4	11.4%	1,975.8	14.4%
Two-Family	2.5	<0.1%	0.0	0.0%
Mobile Homes	2.8	<0.1%	0.0	0.0%
Total Residential	1,612.7	11.4%	1,975.8	14.4%
Retail Sales	1.4	< 0.1%	2.7	<0.1%
Retail Services	11.0	0.1%	13.7	0.1%
Total Commercial	12.4	0.1%	16.4	0.1%
Manufacturing	5.7	<0.1%	4.1	<0.1%
Extractive (Sand/Gravel Pits)	42.9	0.3%	44.9	0.3%
Storage	3.9	<0.1%	7.6	0.1%
Total Industrial	52.5	0.3%	56.6	0.4%
Streets and Highways	523.0	3.7%	529.5	3.9%
Truck Terminals	1.8	<0.1%	1.8	<0.1%
Total Transportation	524.8	3.7%	531.3	3.9%

Land Use	2004 Total Acres	2004 Percent of Total	2014 Total Acres	2014 Percent of Total
Generation/Processing of Communication/Utilities	0.2	<0.1%	1.0	<0.1%
Transmission of Communication/Utilities	167.7	1.2%	2.8 ¹	<0.1%
Total Communication/Utilities	167.9	1.2%	3.8	<0.1%
Administrative/Governmental Facilities	2.6	<0.1%	2.5	<0.1%
Total Institutional/Governmental	2.6	<0.1%	2.5	<0.1%
Trails	50.6	0.4%	49.8	0.4%
Archery/Gun/Skeet Ranges	28.9	0.2%	31.2	0.2%
Total Recreational	79.5	0.6%	81.0	0.6%
Cropland/Pasture	8,807.0	62.5%	8,310.8	60.7%
Agricultural Buildings	371.4	2.6%	294.9	2.2%
Total Agricultural	9,178.4	65.1%	8,605.7	62.9%
Water Features	14.7	0.1%	29.0	0.2%
Woodlands	1,559.9	11.1%	1,779.2	13.0%
Other Natural Areas	649.9	4.6%	602.3	4.4%
Total Natural Areas	2,224.5	15.8%	2,410.5	17.6%
Land Under Residential Development	232.4	1.6%	17.5	0.1%
Total Land Under Development	232.4	1.6%	17.5	0.1%
GRAND TOTAL	14,087.7	99.8%²	13,701.1³	100.0%

Residential Land Uses

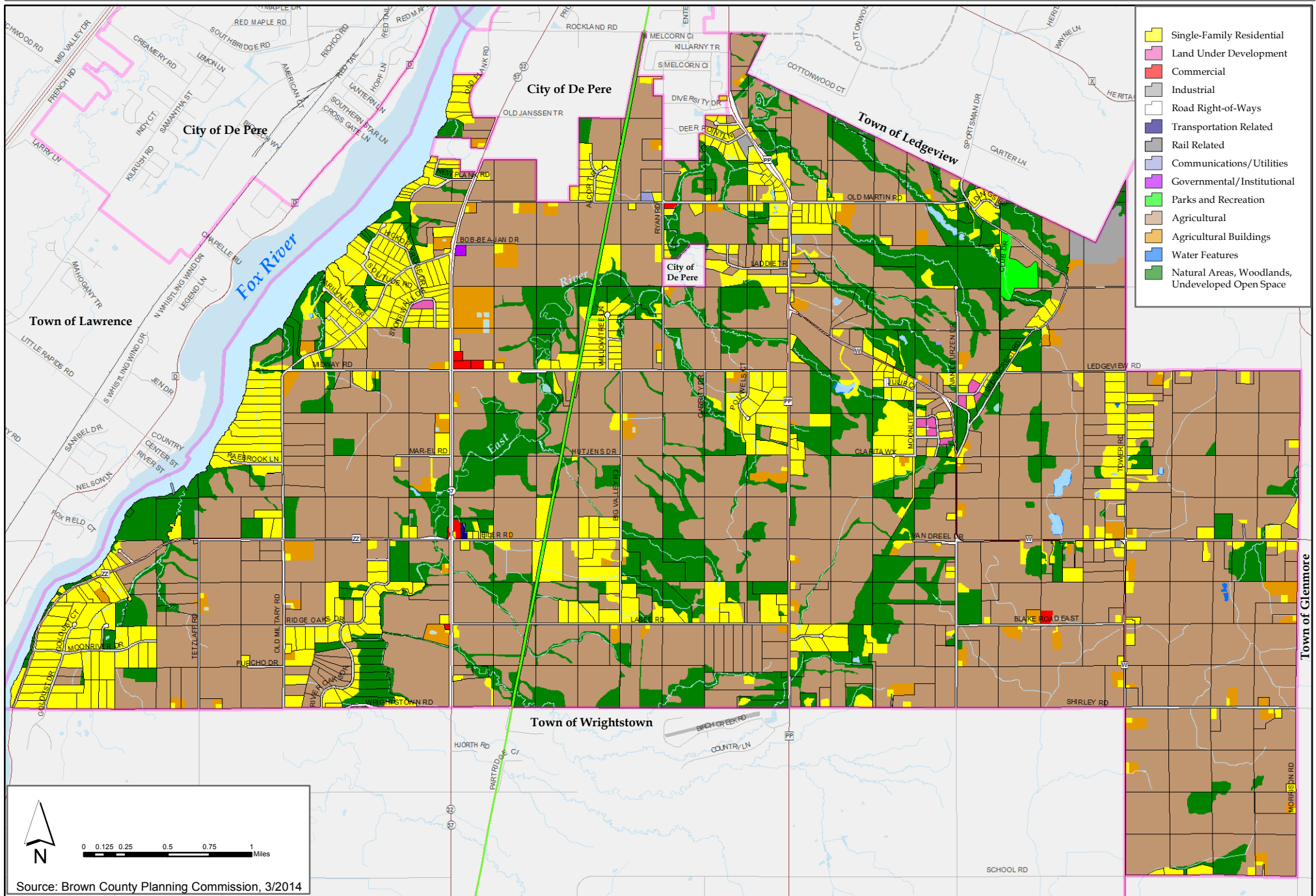
Residential land uses in Rockland account for 1,975.8 acres, or 14.4 percent of the Town. There are an additional 17.5 acres (0.1 percent) of lands that are not farmed and are platted for residential development. All residential development in Rockland has private septic systems and wells, necessitating 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 Moonriver Subdivision in the southwestern part of the Town, residential lots along the Fox River, and the River Oaks Subdivision, also in the southwestern part of the Town. Other smaller platted subdivisions include Wynding Wind Estates and Nickel Ledge Estates in the east-central portion of the Town.

¹ Overhead power lines were not included in the 2014 land use inventory.

² Totals may not add up to 100.0% due to rounding.

³ Total acreage is less than in 2004 due to not including overhead power lines acreage and loss of acreage due to annexations from Rockland to De Pere.

Figure 2-2
2014 Land Use
Town of Rockland, Brown County, Wisconsin



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 16.4 acres of land, or 0.1 percent of the total area of Rockland. The lone concentration of commercial activities in Rockland is located at the intersection of STH 32/57 and Midway Road. There are also a few other individual commercial uses scattered around the Town. Rockland residents typically travel to the neighboring City of De Pere for the majority of their commercial activities.

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, with a total of 44.9 acres. This compares to the total amount of industrial land in Rockland of 56.6 acres, or 0.4 percent of the total land area of the Town. Additional small industrial uses are scattered around Rockland and are also located in the De Pere Industrial Park to the north of the Town.

Communication/Utilities

The only communication/utility uses in Rockland include an electric power substation on Old Martin Road and the Little Rapids Dam structure, which is technically part of Rockland. 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. Both run through the central part of the Town. Total communication/utility land uses account for 3.8 acres of land, or less than 0.1 percent of the total area of Rockland.

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.

Agricultural Land Uses

Agriculture and agricultural-related activities constitute the majority of the land uses in Rockland, accounting for 8,605.7 acres, or 62.9 percent of the total area of the Town. This is a decrease of 572.7 acres, or 6.2 percent, since 2004. 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.

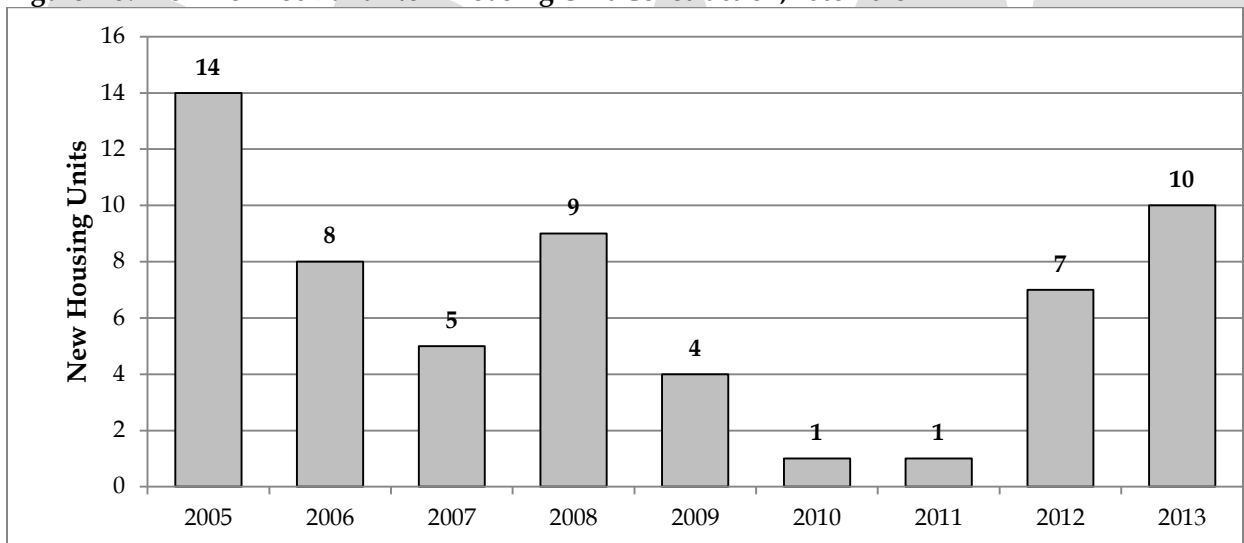
Natural Areas

Natural areas include woodlands, wetlands, stream corridors, and other areas that are not farmed and are largely in a natural state. Approximately 2,410.5 acres, or 17.6 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 17.6 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.

Land Use Trend Analysis

Supply and Demand

Figure 2-3: Town of Rockland New Housing Unit Construction, 2005-2013



Source: Town of Rockland Building Permits, 2005-2013.

According to the Town of Rockland building permit files, between 2005 and 2013, a total of 59 new home building permits were approved with a high of 14 in 2005 and a low of one in 2010 and 2011. All 59 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 2009 - 2011, but has more recently rebounded to seven in 2012 and ten in 2013.

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 2000s as prices for vacant, developable land in Brown County soared during the housing boom and subsequently deflated during the ensuing housing market crisis in the late 2000s and early 2010s. As the housing market continues to recover, so too have the values for vacant, developable land.

A review of real estate websites, including Trulia and Zillow revealed that prices for vacant lots in Rockland varied from a low of \$19,354/acre for a 3.87 acre lot in the Laddie Trail area to a high of

\$38,633/acre for a 3.43 acre lot on Windchime Way. Additionally, Rockland has an extensive area of river frontage, which can demand very high prices. The one parcel of riverfront land listed on the two websites was for a vacant 8.5 acre parcel, which is listed for sale at \$495,000, or \$58,235/acre.

Opportunities for Redevelopment

Within Rockland, over 27 percent of the homes were constructed prior to 1979 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 2005 comprehensive plan, the Town of Rockland has experienced a number of annexations from the Town into the City of De Pere along Rockland Road. 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 (<http://www.uwex.edu/lgc/program/pdf/fact4.pdf>) identifies the five types of annexations in Wisconsin. The types are listed in this section in order of frequency of use.

- Direct Annexation by Unanimous Approval.
- Direct Annexation.
- Annexation by Residents’ 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 developments (if not kept from locating near the quarries) provide adequate buffers and notification to potential homeowners that there are active quarries located nearby.

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 should 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.

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 2004 and 2014 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 substantially (23 percent) over the past decade. Although commercial uses increased 33.3 percent, in terms of acreage, this only accounts for an additional four acres of land, which is the same as 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 2004.

Figure 2-4: Changes in Rockland Land Use, 2004-2014

Land Use	2004 (Total Acres)	2014 (Total Acres)	Difference 2004-2014	Percent Change
Residential	1,607 acres	1,976 acres	+369 acres	+23.0%
Commercial	12 acres	16 acres	+4 acres	+33.3%
Industrial	53 acres	57 acres	+4 acres	+7.5%
Agricultural	9,178 acres	8,606 acres	-572 acres	-6.2%

Source: Brown County Planning Commission, 2004 and 2014.

Based on the results of the visioning session, survey, and input from the citizens advisory committee (CAC), it is evident that maintaining a rural character, but not protecting farmland, is the primary goal of the community. In defining rural character, the Town of Rockland CAC identified it as "space between homes, elbow room, etc."

Future Land Use Projections and Recommendations to be presented following all background chapters.

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