

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Location

The Town of Oshkosh is located in east-central Winnebago County, Wisconsin, immediately adjacent to the City of Oshkosh. USH 41, CTY A and USH 45 traverse the town and provide easy access for residents to nearby employment centers in Oshkosh and the Fox Cities.

The primary areas of commercial and industrial development in the Town of Oshkosh are located along USH 41, Green Valley Road (USH 41 frontage road) and CTH A (extending between CTH Y and the town's northern boundary). Many of the properties in these areas are undeveloped. In addition to providing the town with long-term planning guidance, this plan will be an important tool to influence the development of these areas.

The Town of Oshkosh enjoys significant areas of shoreline along Lake Winnebago and Lake Butte Des Morts. Both of these lakes are valuable assets to the town from a recreational and economic standpoint.

Background

The *Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Oshkosh* was developed primarily to manage future growth. The Town of Oshkosh has seen a fair amount of development in its sanitary districts and near USH 41 in recent years. However, the town has also experienced extensive annexation pressure from the City of Oshkosh, which has resulted in the loss of several hundred acres of land.

Developing this plan sends a clear message that the Town of Oshkosh wishes to act proactively – to set its own ground rules for the types of development that will benefit the town, maintain a rural atmosphere and still provide flexibility for landowners.

To prepare residents for comprehensive planning, town leaders sought assistance from Mike Koles, UW-Extension Agent for Winnebago County. Mr. Koles facilitated an extensive program, which included the formation of the Planning Advisory Committee, education about the Smart Growth Law, and important land use issues facing the Town of Oshkosh. Moreover, the education program also included the preliminary development of a draft vision statement and identification of strengths and opportunities to address in the plan. During this initial education phase of the planning program, the Town of Oshkosh developed a successful application for a Wisconsin Department of Administration Comprehensive Planning Grant.

Purpose and Scope of This Document

This 20-year *Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Oshkosh*, includes four major components:

- *A profile of the demographic, economic and housing characteristics of the town;*
- *An inventory and assessment of the environment, community facilities, and natural resources;*
- *Visions, goals, objectives and implementation strategies; and*
- *A land use map that depicts the future land use patterns in the town.*

This plan was developed under the authority of 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" Law. The law requires that a 20-year comprehensive plan be developed and adopted by all units of government that wish to have a role in land use issues. The law authorizes municipalities to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans to serve as guides for the development of their communities. The law also authorizes multi-jurisdictional planning efforts.

The Smart Growth Law defines, for the first time, what is meant by a "comprehensive plan" in Wisconsin. It includes nine (9) required elements. These are:

- 1) Issues and Opportunities
- 2) Housing
- 3) Transportation
- 4) Utilities and Community Facilities
- 5) Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- 6) Economic Development
- 7) Intergovernmental Cooperation
- 8) Land Use
- 9) Implementation



In addition, the state requires that these elements be developed in concert with Wisconsin's 14 goals for local planning, which are:

- 1) Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures.
- 2) Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
- 3) Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.
- 4) Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.
- 5) Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.

- 6) Preservation of cultural, historic and archeological sites.
- 7) Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
- 8) Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
- 9) Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
- 10) Providing adequate infrastructure, public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- 11) Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional and local levels.
- 12) Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
- 13) Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban or rural communities.
- 14) Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, and safety that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

Public Involvement

The *Town of Oshkosh Comprehensive Plan* was developed in an environment rich with public input. To gain citizen understanding and support throughout the planning program, the public was provided with meaningful opportunities to become involved in the process. Public input was facilitated through several meetings and activities, including a community survey. Results of the survey, copies of meeting agendas and attendance sheets as well as the *Public Participation Plan and Adoption Procedures* are provided in the appendices of this document.

What follows is a description of some of the primary opportunities for public education and input in the planning program.

KICK-OFF MEETING

The Town of Oshkosh “kick-off” meeting was held at 7:00 pm on September 19, 2001 at the Oshkosh Town Hall. At that meeting, OMNNI Associates (the town’s planning consultant) presented an overview of the planning process and provided each member of the Planning Advisory Committee with a binder to store planning materials. Discussion was held about methods to keep the public informed about the comprehensive planning

process and an *Existing Land Use Map* was presented for the committee to update and review prior to their next meeting.

MONTHLY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Planning Advisory Committee met each month to review draft text, maps, establish goals and establish priorities for plan implementation.

INFORMATIONAL MEETING

At the mid-point of the planning process, the Planning Advisory Committee hosted an informational meeting to share with the public the progress of the planning program and what was yet to be done. At the meeting, OMNNI gave a presentation to provide an overview of progress on the planning program, share the vision statements developed by the Planning Advisory Committee and invite the public to participate in the process to provide additional input.

VISION WORKSHOP

At the Community Visioning Workshop the completed *Existing Land Use Map* was presented to the public. Using this map as a foundation, participants were asked to participate in a cognitive mapping exercise. This exercise asked participants to delineate geographic areas of the town people like, dislike, frequently visit, feel are important, travel through regularly, would encourage development, etc. These maps were then used by OMNNI Associates to develop the *Future Land Use Maps* for the *Town of Oshkosh Comprehensive Plan*. This innovative approach allowed for direct public input related to future development, preservation, and conservation in the Town of Oshkosh.

OPEN HOUSE

The purpose of the plan “open house” was to display the plan maps and text in an informal setting. At the “open house,” there were no formal presentations, minutes, or voting. Rather, the maps and plan text were on display for interested residents to review at their own pace. The atmosphere was as casual as possible with refreshments being served. Members of the Planning Advisory Committee and OMNNI staff were available to answer questions as needed. This meeting was a success in that it allowed the participants to share their ideas in a setting that was much less formal than the public hearing. As a result, more people were able to react to the plan than would have otherwise done so if there had only been a formal public hearing.

INTERNET WEB PAGE

The planning program was profiled on an interactive web page hosted by the OMNNI Associates Web Site. The page included meeting schedules, summaries of past meetings, draft maps and plan chapters, and general education materials about the Smart Growth law. The site was updated on a monthly basis to ensure that the information was current and served to effectively inform the public.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

As part of the education program facilitated by the UW-Extension, the town decided to use a community survey to determine citizen opinions regarding comprehensive planning and related issues. UW-River Falls assisted an ad hoc survey committee of town residents and leaders in developing and administering the survey in the fall of 2000 to every household in the town. Of the 1,172 surveys distributed, 488, or 42% were completed and returned.

Results of the survey highlight:

- Almost three-quarters of respondents want six (6) or fewer homes built per year.
- Almost 85% of respondents want to see 16 or fewer acres of farmland converted to non-agricultural use annually.
- Eighty-seven percent of respondents feel growth needs to be better managed and 86% feel a comprehensive plan is one tool that should be used.
- Conservation subdivision is a land use tool that respondents feel is important. Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents favored use of this tool, while another 10% were willing to consider it.

A summary report of the survey methodology, instrument, and results are provided in Appendix C.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS

As part of the planning program, the Planning Advisory Committee facilitated two (2) intergovernmental meetings. At the first meeting, the Planning Advisory Committee met with representatives from neighboring units of government, school districts, Winnebago County, the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, WDNR and WisDOT to discuss the existing plans of these neighboring jurisdictions and agencies to identify potential conflicts that may exist with the proposed *Town of Oshkosh Comprehensive Plan*.

At the meeting, participants from the neighboring units of government, county, state agencies, regional planning and school districts were given the opportunity for mutual exchange of ideas and recommendations to address any conflicts. Based on the conversations and suggestions received at this meeting, the *Town of Oshkosh Comprehensive Plan* includes recommendations to continue to resolve intergovernmental planning issues and conflicts over the 20-year planning period.

Town Values

During the course of one of the meetings facilitated by Mike Koles as part of the education phase of the planning program, the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee identified the values that influence residents to remain, take pride in, and become actively involved in the community. The complete list of those values is provided below. These value statements provided a clear direction for the development and implementation of the *Town of Oshkosh Comprehensive Plan*. Moreover, these values clearly indicate that residents of the Town of Oshkosh share a strong sense of community identity and pride closely associated with the rural character and natural areas that make the Town of Oshkosh a desirable place to live.

- *We Value The Preservation of the "Rural Character"*
- *We Value The Continuation of Small But Efficient Town Government*
- *We Value Shoreland Preservation*
- *We Value The Conservation of Our Natural Resources (Clean Water, Lakes, Wetlands)*
- *We Value Our Recreational Opportunities (WIOUWASH Trail, Lakes)*
- *We Value The Conservation and Enhancement of Green Space*
- *We Value Existing Agricultural Lands*
- *We Value A Balance of Individual and Community Rights*
- *We Value A Well Planned, Compatible, Managed Land Use*
- *We Value The Friendly Atmosphere of Our Town*
- *We Value Low Density Housing In Our Town*
- *We Value Reasonable Property Taxes*
- *We Value A Good Return On Property Investment*
- *We Value Minimum Governmental Intervention*
- *We Value Basic Town Services (Volunteer Fire Dept., Road Maintenance, Refuse Pickup)*
- *We Value Our Low Crime Rate*
- *We Value The Need For Cooperative Intergovernmental Efforts*