

2.0 ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES ELEMENT

Introduction

The Issues and Opportunities Element provides the background information on the town and the overall visions to guide future development and redevelopment of the town over a 20-year planning period. Specifically, the Issues and Opportunities Element includes population, household and employment forecasts and demographic trends, age distributions, education levels, income levels and employment characteristics that exist within the local government unit. This chapter presents the overall vision for the Town of Oshkosh, including a complete assessment of local strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The community characteristics and general background information that form the basis for the Issues & Opportunities Element, is included in Chapter 3 Community Profile.

Visioning Process

To identify community issues and opportunities, a three-step process was utilized, which resulted in the development of individual vision statements for each of the nine required smart growth planning elements. This process included: community SWOT meetings, cognitive mapping and element vision development. What follows is a description of the activities and the major issues and opportunities identified through the issues and opportunities process.

SWOT MEETINGS

What follows is a brief definition of a strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat as used in a SWOT.

Strength *Something that makes a community stand out when compared to other communities. Something that makes you proud to call the community home. A strength can be a physical asset, a program, or an environmental condition (i.e. friendly community atmosphere).*

Weakness *Opposite of a strength. Problem that needs to be addressed.*

Opportunity *Something that could be done to improve the community. A potential.*

Threat *A threat may be internal or external. A threat can be anything that could jeopardize the future success of a community.*

WHAT IS A SWOT?
A SWOT meeting is a planning exercise used to get communities thinking about:

- where they have been;
- where they are;
- where they want to be in the future; and
- how they want to get there.

In April of 2001, the Town of Oshkosh Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee, with the assistance of Mike Koles, UW-Extension Agent for Winnebago County, began the process of identifying broad issues and opportunities facing the Town of Oshkosh. The ideas discussed at this meeting addressed a variety of topics organized around the nine planning elements.

In October 2001, OMNNI Associates categorized the comments documented in April as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The refined list was presented to the Planning Advisory Committee on October 18, 2001. At that meeting, the committee reviewed the SWOT analysis and made adjustments, as needed, to more accurately reflect current community concerns. Some of the initial comments documented as part of the brainstorming session with Mike Koles were eliminated for lack of support or modified to more clearly reflect central community issues. What follows is a summary of the finalized SWOT organized by element as approved by the Planning Advisory Committee.

1. General Issues and Opportunities Element

STRENGTH
The town has a good mix of age groups, income groups and education groups that it can draw upon. Residents share a common sense of community pride, particularly associated with local natural resources (i.e. wetlands, woodlands, lakes).
WEAKNESS
Incompatible land uses have historically been placed next to each other.
OPPORTUNITY
The influx of newer, high-income housing is increasing the demand for more and better services. Several examples include the need for more recreational space and tougher boating laws.
THREAT
Private covenants are not enforced consistently in the town. Annexation by the City of Oshkosh threatens the long-term planning efforts to the Town of Oshkosh.

2. Housing Element

STRENGTH
The town’s housing is consistent in its high level of aesthetic appeal. The town has an abundant supply of desirable low-density housing. The town has a variety of old, middle age, and newer homes.
WEAKNESS
Development of the town is limited by the sewer service area (SSA) limits.
OPPORTUNITY
Newer on-site treatment systems could offer sewage disposal options for the town. The use of conservation subdivision design (i.e. small lots with open space preserved) may provide the means to promote development while protecting the town’s rural character.

THREAT
<p>The town is continually losing land for potential residential development to annexation.</p> <p>The low density housing nature of the town is being threatened by urban development.</p>

3. Transportation Element

STRENGTH
<p>The town’s roads are currently safe and in good shape.</p> <p>Half of the roads in the town are State or County roads, so maintenance costs are lower.</p>
WEAKNESS
<p>In the past, subdivisions have not been developed in a manner that considers the transportation system and vice versa.</p> <p>Most transportation is automobile based. Few opportunities for biking or walking to and from work exist.</p>
OPPORTUNITY
<p>The town should direct stormwater along roadways to be controlled through ditches rather than storm sewer because it is better for water quality.</p> <p>The expansion of STH 110 and its redesignation to USH 45 will increase potential for light industry, strip malls, and apartments which will require planned transportation improvements to support this development.</p>
THREAT
<p>The town’s roads are being increasingly threatened by unmanaged development that causes traffic on roads that were not meant to handle that much.</p>

4. Utilities and Community Facilities Element

STRENGTH
<p>The railroad provides industrial/commercial development opportunities in the Town of Oshkosh.</p>
WEAKNESS
<p>The sewer service areas limit development of the town.</p> <p>Development of the town is limited to the extent water can be provided.</p>
OPPORTUNITY
<p>Additional sewer service without annexation would aid future development.</p> <p>Wastewater treatment systems allowed under COMM 83 will provide more development options in the town.</p> <p>Additional areas of the town could be served by the Butte Des Morts Sanitary District.</p> <p>The Town of Oshkosh would consider a “peaking” natural gas power plant.</p>

THREAT
Response time for ambulance service is less than desirable in portions of the Town of Oshkosh, particularly during the nighttime.

5. Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Element

STRENGTH
The town has many wetlands and water features that provide recreational opportunities and fish spawning habitat.
The town enjoys an abundance of farmland.
Property owners' rights are important in the Town of Oshkosh.
The town is aesthetically pleasing, mostly due to its rural character.
Agriculture provides buffer strips and environmental corridors.
Lake property attracts newcomers.
Farmers in the town practice a high level of environmental stewardship.
Farming contributes to the moral values of the community.
WEAKNESS
Water should be protected from pollution by the agricultural industry.
Residents feel developers who ignore depletion issues have damaged groundwater aquifers.
Lake Winnebago and Butte des Morts are more polluted than desired.
OPPORTUNITY
The town needs to balance development and preservation of farmland.
There is potential for a bike trail to Neenah.
THREAT
Topography, soils, and development make flooding a concern.
Land use value taxation payback penalty may hamper development.
The town has some environmental corridors that are threatened by development.

6. Economic Development Element

STRENGTH
The town has the ability to set up an industrial park.
The town's population base would support industrial growth.
WEAKNESS
The Town of Oshkosh has to compete with neighboring towns and the City of Oshkosh to bring development to the Town of Oshkosh.

OPPORTUNITY
The expansion of STH 110 and its redesignation to USH 45 will increase the potential for commercial and industrial development in the town.
THREAT
The expansion of STH 110 and its redesignation to USH 45 will increase potential for annexation. Industry, if not properly regulated and monitored, may adversely affect the town’s natural environment.

7. Intergovernmental Cooperation Element

STRENGTH
The town is willing to cooperate with the City of Oshkosh.
WEAKNESS
The City of Oshkosh will not extend sanitary sewer without annexation.
OPPORTUNITY
The town is willing to look to partners whom they haven’t looked to in the past (e.g., NRCS, DNR, DOT) in order to achieve their vision of the future.
The Town of Oshkosh could band together with neighboring towns to build water and sewer facilities.
THREAT
Inequitable power in favor of the City of Oshkosh, combined with their unwillingness to cooperate, makes it difficult for the town and city to work together.

8. Land Use Element

STRENGTH
The town has abundant areas of open/green space.
The town enjoys an abundance of agriculture despite development pressures.
The town has a variety of land uses.
WEAKNESS
Farming is a dying industry in the town.
Incompatible land uses have historically been placed next to each other.
OPPORTUNITY
Zoning is not as stringent as it should be and is not enforced properly in the town. This is detrimental to planned growth and should be remedied.
The size of lots in the Town of Oshkosh needs to be closely monitored.

THREAT
The town does not have a comprehensive plan yet.
The town is losing land to the City of Oshkosh from annexation.

9. Implementation Element

STRENGTH
The Town of Oshkosh has a good mix of age groups, income groups, and educational groups that it can draw upon.
WEAKNESS
Incompatible land uses have historically been placed next to each other - needs to be monitored in the future.
OPPORTUNITY
The influx of newer, high-income housing is increasing the demand for more and better services. This creates an opportunity for the town to update its current policies and ordinances to better protect the rural character of the area.
THREAT
The town is losing land to the City of Oshkosh from annexation.

The Advisory Committee agreed that the Town of Oshkosh has three (3) primary *strengths*:

- The town has a good mix of age groups, income groups and education groups that it can draw upon;
- Residents share a common sense of community pride, particularly associated with local natural resources (i.e. wetlands, woodlands, lake); and
- The town enjoys abundant areas of green and open space, including wetlands and water features.

The Advisory Committee collectively agreed upon a critical *weakness* to address:

- Development of the town is limited by the sewer service area (SSA) limits; and

The Advisory Committee agreed there were two (2) *opportunities* the Town of Oshkosh should focus on in the future:

- The expansion of STH 110, and
- Farmland preservation.

The Advisory Committee identified annexation as the most pressing *threat* facing the Town of Oshkosh. Annexation is a major concern of town residents as expressed in the community survey results.

COGNITIVE MAPPING

A cognitive map, or mental map, is a map drawn by a person that geographically locates his or her memories, ideas and thoughts of a particular place. Since cognitive maps are based on

individual's preferences and opinions there are no "right" or "wrong" maps. Cognitive maps are used to delineate geographic areas of a community people like, dislike, frequently visit, feel are important, travel through regularly, etc.

At the workshop on August 15, 2002, the Planning Advisory Committee members were provided 3 maps of the Town of Oshkosh. On the **first map**, the individual committee members outlined portions of the town based on their opinion of aesthetic appeal, special memories or experiences they have had. The most attractive places were colored in one shade and not attractive in another color. Areas with special meaning or memories were circled.

On the **second map**, the individual committee members outlined those areas where they would like to see new commercial/industrial development, new residential subdivision development, new recreation areas, open space and farmland in the Town of Freedom.

Participants then worked in small groups to discuss their second map. Common areas, agreed by all group participants, were illustrated on a collective group map. At the conclusion of the meeting, each group presented these maps to all in attendance.

These maps were used extensively in the development of the *Future Land Use Maps* presented later in this plan. This approach helps to ensure that the *Future Land Use Maps* accurately reflect community concerns and priorities for the future.

COMMUNITY VISION DEVELOPMENT

In October 2001, a vision assignment was distributed to the Planning Advisory Committee. The assignment asked the committee members to individually answer a series of questions about what they would like to see in the Town of Oshkosh in 2020.

At the November 2001 meeting, members of the Planning Advisory Committee worked in small groups to review their individual answers to each of the questions and arrive at a single best answer for each. These answers were then shared with the entire Planning Advisory Committee to arrive at a consensus-based answer to each question. OMNNI then used these collective responses to draft vision statements, which the Planning Advisory Committee reviewed in December 2001. Each of the final vision statements is provided at the end of this chapter.

Visions

Rather than develop a series of policy statements, the Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee participated in an extensive visioning process to establish a framework from which to make future land use decisions in the Town of Oshkosh. The result of this process was a vision statement for each of the nine required plan elements, including an overall vision statement. This process was critical to establish a unified vision for the Town of Oshkosh and provide a direction and focus for the planning effort.

Below are the community vision statements, which represent the broad interests of town residents, elected/appointed officials, business leaders and property owners. These visions establish the planning framework and a direction for subsequent planning efforts and decisions in the town.

Supporting goals, objectives and program initiatives are described in Chapter 12 of this plan.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES (OVERALL VISION)



In 2020, the Town of Oshkosh provides residents with a high quality of life in a rural residential setting by encouraging an optimal mix of farming, undeveloped natural areas and residential development. Residents enjoy the town’s abundant recreational opportunities that are easily accessible. Undeveloped natural areas and niche farming operations are an integral part of the rural landscape – supported by development options designed to preserve and protect these

areas from future development and annexation pressures. The town continues to provide as much as possible, all basic municipal services to its residents. The town continues to develop working relationships with the City of Oshkosh to obtain additional needed services and expansion of the economic base.

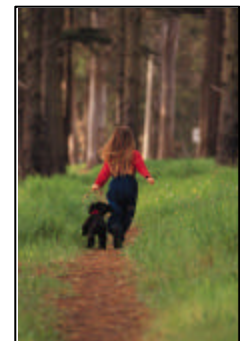
HOUSING VISION

The Town of Oshkosh provides single-family housing opportunities as the primary choice for residential development. The residential development in the town is attractive, well planned and well suited for raising a family. Neighbors support neighbors, especially seniors still living in the community. Residential developments in the Town of Oshkosh are designed to preserve and protect open space and farmland in order to maintain the rural character of the community and enhance the value and appearance of residential areas.



TRANSPORTATION VISION

In 2020, a network of well-maintained streets and highways serves the Town of Oshkosh. The USH 41 corridor is the primary link between the Town of Oshkosh and the greater region. Trails and paths are an integral part of the transportation network in the Town of Oshkosh - providing connections to natural areas and between neighborhoods in the town.



UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES VISION

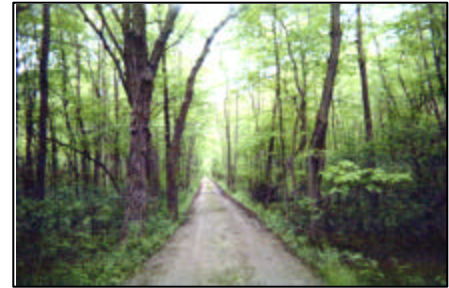
The Town of Oshkosh coordinates with Winnebago County and the City of Oshkosh to ensure that residents of the Town of Oshkosh have easy access to a full-range of services, including: medical care, retail, educational facilities and entertainment choices. The town strives to ensure

that property taxes are minimized without jeopardizing public health and safety by constantly striving to improve efficiencies in service delivery and pursuing shared services with neighboring communities as a means to reduce costs.

The provision of community services and infrastructure are closely coordinated and do not create unreasonable financial burden for residents. Portions of the town are still served by municipal sewer, while all residents rely on private well water.

AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES VISION

Primary agricultural areas, woodlands, wetlands and other natural areas in the Town of Oshkosh are protected from development and are primarily located within conservation subdivisions. Commercial farming operations consist mainly of small, niche farms and rented cropland which are an integral part of the town's open space network and conservation subdivision developments. Farmland and natural areas enhance the rural character of the town by maintaining open vistas and providing buffers between residential areas to maintain the low, rural density of development pattern desired by residents.



As has been the tradition, cultural and entertainment venues are easily accessible in nearby urban centers via USH 41 and USH 45 in the greater Oshkosh/Fox Cities region.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

Non-residential economic activity has been expanded, but is still concentrated primarily along the USH 41 and USH 45 corridors. Secondary commercial development areas are situated along STH 110 and CTH A.

Economic development has been coordinated in harmony with the town's natural environment and its residential areas.

Employment opportunities for town residents can easily be found within 10 miles of their homes.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION VISION

In twenty years, the City and Town of Oshkosh work cooperatively to provide residents with a wide variety of cost-efficient, non-duplicative services for the betterment of both communities. Annexation is planned, based on service demands, and coordinated in a fashion to ensure that both communities have preserved their community identities, while providing a unique blend of desired commercial, industrial and residential development.



School district development is coordinated with the town to ensure that the location, size, and nature of school facilities will not result in additional pressure for annexation, residential development, or the provision of costly services.

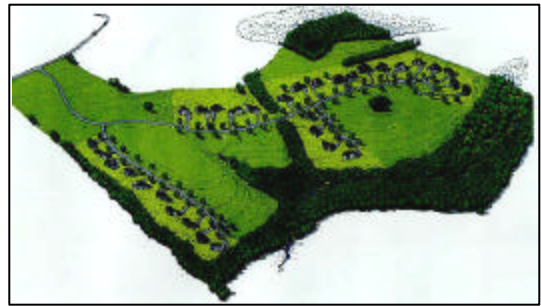
Town leaders keep residents informed on all matters pertinent to town operations and land development issues and pursue opportunities to provide coordinated, cost-effective services with neighboring governments.

LAND USE VISION

Land use within the Town of Oshkosh is centered around conservation subdivisions and other single-family residences that are surrounded by protected open space, natural areas, and farmland.

Commercial and light industrial development is concentrated along the major highway corridors and includes buffers to protect encroachment into residential areas.

Large portions of the town have been preserved for a wide variety of land- and water-based recreational uses and land conservation.



IMPLEMENTATION VISION

By 2020, the Town of Oshkosh has consistently recognized the importance of zoning to prevent incompatible land uses, creative design solutions, such as conservation subdivisions, and planned financing of capital improvements. The town believes in the value of planning and the opinions of its residents and business owners, while also respecting the responsible efforts of landowners to improve their property and community.