

## CHAPTER 2: INVENTORY, TRENDS, AND FORECASTS

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	2-1
COMMUNITY INVENTORY.....	2-1
Description of Planning Area.....	2-1
Past Planning Efforts.....	2-1
Community Resources .....	2-1
Land Use Inventory.....	2-4
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND FORECASTS .....	2-5
LAND USE TRENDS AND FORECASTS .....	2-6
Existing Land Use Issues and Conflicts.....	2-6
Anticipated Land Use Trends .....	2-6
Development Considerations .....	2-7
LAND USE PROJECTIONS .....	2-7
Five Year Incremental Land Use Projections .....	2-7



## INTRODUCTION

This section of the *Town of Spruce 20-Year Comprehensive Plan* provides a summary of the town's resource elements, which are also inventoried in *Volume II: County Resources*. The town's past trends and potential forecasts for population, housing, economic development, etc. use are also illustrated in this chapter.

Ultimately, the information described in this portion of the town's comprehensive plan provides the foundation for the development of the Town of Spruce 20-Year General Plan Design (Chapter 3 of this document).

## COMMUNITY INVENTORY

### **Description of Planning Area**

The Town of Spruce is located in the central portion of Oconto County encompassing an area of approximately 36 square miles, or 23,000 acres. The town contains a sizeable amount of agricultural land plus many natural resources, with Kelly Lake being the most prominent feature. **Map 2.1** illustrates the general location of the Town of Spruce in Wisconsin, while **Map 2.2** focuses on the Town of Spruce planning area.

### **Past Planning Efforts**

#### **Town of Spruce 20-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan:**

In August of 2008, the Town of Spruce adopted its first comprehensive plan entitled the Town of Spruce 20-Year Comprehensive Plan. This plan was developed with planning assistance from Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission and Oconto County Planning staff as part of a county wide planning project. In 2017, the Town of Spruce began working with Oconto County Planning staff to complete the first major update to the comprehensive plan. This plan update was completed and adopted in 2021.

**Oconto County Farmland Preservation Plan:** In 1985, Oconto County adopted the Oconto County Farmland Preservation Plan prepared by Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission. This plan served as a guide for preserving farmland, woodlands and significant environmental areas within the county and to help maintain and expand the agricultural economy. In 2014, Oconto County amended the Oconto County 20-Year Comprehensive Plan to include all statutorily required components of the Farmland Preservation Plan. The Oconto County Comprehensive Plan includes all requirements of Chapter 91.

### **Community Resources**

#### **Natural Resources**

The following text describes the types and locations of town's many resources and briefly discusses the importance of them when planning for future growth of the Town of Spruce.

Bedrock type, overlying soil composition and depth to bedrock can impact excavation; foundations; location and effectiveness of site wastewater treatment systems; provision of clean and abundant supply of groundwater, and residential development locations.

- The bedrock found in the Town of Spruce is comprised mostly of sandstones, which is covered soils consisting of sand, gravel, silt, and clay. The soils in the area may be less than

five feet thick in some areas and up to 200 feet in depth above the bedrock.

- The town's landscape varies from hilly to rolling terrain, with steep slopes existing along the river and stream corridors.
- Surface waters are abundant in the northern and central portion of Oconto County and play a significant biological and economic role in the everyday life of the Town of Spruce's residents and visitors. **Map 2.3** illustrates the surface water features in the town.
- Johnson Lake, Kelly Lake, Pete Lake, and Porcupine Lake, along with Daley Creek, Kelly Brook, and North Branch Little River, are the surface water features found in the Town of Spruce. Refer to Chapter 5 and Appendix A of *Volume II: County Resources* for more information on water resources.
- The Town of Spruce contains over 9,000 acres of woodlands. Maintaining/improving wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities, restoration of clean water resources, and erosion prevention are just several of the benefits to preserving the town's existing woodlands.

Other areas of environmental significance in the town are referred to as “plan determinants.” Plan determinants consist of the following features which are illustrated on **Map 2.4**:

- wetlands (2 acres or greater);
- 100-year floodplains;
- steep slope (12% or greater); and
- surface waters with a 75-foot building setback.

The individual plan determinants merged together forms a single feature known as “environmental corridors”, which is displayed on the town's General Plan Design map (**Map 3.1**). These corridors serve a vital role in protecting local water quality; serving as buffers between different land uses; controlling, moderating, and storing floodwaters; providing nutrient and sediment filtration; and providing fish and wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

For more information regarding wetlands, floodplains, soils, surface waters, and environmental corridors please see Chapter 5 of *Volume II: County Resources*.

## Agricultural Resources

There are several areas in the Town of Spruce that are designated as having prime agricultural soils (i.e., lands that have the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing agricultural crops, with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, etc) according to the NRCS soil survey. There are approximately 12,050 acres of cropland and pastures located throughout the town. Areas that have been designated as farmland preservation areas within the town are shown on **Map 3.29** found in Chapter 3 of *Volume I: County Plan*.

**Map 2.5** illustrates the location of the prime agricultural soils in the Town of Spruce. More information regarding agricultural resources and farmland preservation in the town and the county can be viewed in Chapter 3 of *Volume I: County Plan* and Chapter 5 of *Volume II: County Resources*.

## Cultural Resources

The Town of Spruce contains a number of sites of historic and culture significance to the town.

- *St. Mark's Lutheran Church and Cemetery* dates back to the 1890's. The *Spruce Elementary*

*School* was built in 1889 and was utilized as a school until 2012 at which time it was converted to a residence. There are also a number of structures within the town that are considered of historic significance dating back to the 1890's and early 1900's.

- Bohemian Day Celebration at Kadlec's Park was also an event of cultural and historic significance to the Town of Spruce.

## Economic Resources

Being a rural community, the town's primary economic components consist of its agricultural land and natural resources including, water features, woodlands, open space lands, and recreational resources that bring in tourism and seasonal population monies.

## Transportation

The Town of Spruce should continue to ensure that its transportation amenities are maintained and improved to allow for safe and efficient movement. Nearly 40 percent of the town's transportation network is county highways.

Table 8.2 found in Chapter 8 of *Volume II: County Resources* lists the mileage of roads under the jurisdiction of the Town of Spruce by function. **Map 8.1** found in Chapter 8 of *Volume II: County Resources* provides the location of the roads by function within the town.

## Utilities and Community Facilities

An assessment of the town's existing utilities and community facilities is made to determine any current or future issues that may cause potential problems in meeting future development needs. The availability, quality, and level of service of the town's existing utilities and community facilities are all contributing factors to the attractiveness of the community. The following are services provided to the Town of Spruce.

- All of the water used by the Town of Spruce and its residents comes from groundwater. There is no municipal water supply in the town; therefore, all water is supplied via private wells.
- The town contains the Kelly Lake Sanitary District (illustrated on **Map 2.6** and **Map 3.1**) for collection and treatment of waste from properties within the district. The remainder of the residential/commercial developments in the town maintain private onsite sewage systems.
- The Oconto County Sheriff's Department provides police services to the town's residents.
- Fire protection for the town is provided by the Lena and Suring Fire Departments, while rescue services are provided by the Oconto Falls Area Ambulance.
- Residents and visitors of the Town of Spruce can seek medical attention at HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital in the City of Oconto Falls or clinics in the Villages of Lena and Suring or City of Oconto Falls.
- The Town of Spruce contains five cemeteries: Spruce Township, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pine Hill, St. Mark, and Kelly Brook.

## Parks and Recreation

- Holt Park provides residents and visitors of the Town of Spruce excellent recreational and camping opportunities. The Town of Spruce also contains five public boat landings serving Kelly Lake and Porcupine Lake. The town's recreational facilities are illustrated on **Map 2.6**.

For more information on the community and public facilities and parks and recreation offered throughout Oconto County please refer to Chapter 9 of *Volume II: County Resources*.

## **Land Use Inventory**

A detailed land use inventory in the Town of Spruce was completed by the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission in 2007. In 2017 as part of the plan update a detailed existing land use inventory was completed by Oconto County Planning. A consistent standard land use classification (Appendix D of *Volume I: Town Plan*) was used to determine existing land uses. Please refer to Chapter 11 of *Volume II: County Resources* for a description of these categories.

A breakdown of the town's land uses and acreages is shown on Table 2.1. **Map 2.7** displays the Town of Spruce existing land use.

Table 2.1: Existing Land Use Inventory

Land Use Type	Total Acres	Percentage Total Land	Percentage Developed Land
<b>DEVELOPED</b>			
<i>Single Family</i>	772.2	3.4	62.9
<i>Mobile Homes</i>	16.8	0.1	1.4
<i>Multi-Family</i>	0.6	0.0	0.0
<i>Vacant Residential</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Residential	789.7	3.5	64.3
Commercial	7.1	0.0	0.6
Industrial	76.6	0.3	6.2
Transportation	171.1	0.7	13.9
Communications/Utilities	13.3	0.1	1.1
Institutional/Governmental	13.4	0.1	1.1
Recreational	15.9	0.1	1.3
Agricultural Structures	140.5	0.6	11.4
<b>Total Developed Acres</b>	<b>1,227.6</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

		Percentage	
			Undeveloped Land
<b>UNDEVELOPED</b>			
Croplands/Pasture	12,051.0	52.8	55.8
Woodlands	8,602.5	37.7	39.8
Other Natural Areas	551.2	2.4	2.6
Water Features	407.3	1.8	1.9
<b>Total Undeveloped Acres</b>	<b>21,612.0</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total Land Area</b>	<b>22,839.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: Oconto County Planning, 2020.

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND FORECASTS

### Population

#### **Historic Population Trends**

Analyzing changes in the trends and characteristics of a community's population and housing is important in understanding the needs of its current and future populations.

The Town of Spruce has experienced an overall population decline since the year 1900. The town's population decreased nearly every decade between 1900 and 1990. The town saw the largest population increase over the last 100 years between 1990 and 2000 and then saw a slight decrease between 2000 and 2010.

For more information on population trends in Oconto County refer to Chapter 6 of *Volume II: County Resources*. For town specific population data refer to Tables 6.14 – 6.18 found in Chapter 6 of *Volume II: County Resources*.

#### **Population Projections**

By analyzing past population trends, it is possible to project future growth. The use of forecasting calculates, or predicts, a future number by using existing figures. By projecting future population growth over this 20 year planning period, it will enable the Town of Spruce to better understand future needs for housing, utilities, transportation, recreation, and a number of other population influenced services.

For this comprehensive plan, the town has utilized Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) projections. Based on WDOA population projections, the Town of Spruce can anticipate continued but limited new resident growth.

More information on county population projections and how the Town of Spruce compares to Oconto County and local municipalities can be found in Chapter 6 of *Volume II: County Resources* with town specific projections shown in Table 6.17.

#### **Seasonal Population Projections**

Given the Town of Spruce's seasonal population, it is important to also monitor seasonal population projections. Based on WDOA seasonal population projections, the Town of Spruce can anticipate continued but limited new seasonal population growth.

More information on county seasonal population projections and how the Town of Spruce compares to Oconto County and local municipalities can be found in Chapter 6 of *Volume II: County Resources* with town specific projections shown in Table 6.18.

### Housing

#### **Housing Trends and Characteristics**

As reported by the U.S. Census, the Town of Spruce's housing units have increased slightly over the years.

#### **Housing Projections**

Utilizing the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) occupied housing unit projections, the town can expect to see a continued limited increase in occupied housing units.

For more housing information for Oconto County and the Town of Spruce refer to Tables 6.19 – 6.22 found in Chapter 6 of *Volume II: County Resources*.

### **Seasonal Housing Projections**

Due to the number of seasonal housing units currently located in the Town of Spruce, it is important to consider the number of additional housing units that may potentially be built for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use in the future. Utilizing the Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) seasonal housing unit projections, the town can expect to see a continued limited increase in seasonal housing units.

For more housing information for Oconto County and the Town of Spruce refer to Tables 6.19 – 6.22 found in Chapter 6 of *Volume II: County Resources*.

### **Economic Development**

The Town of Spruce's economy is influenced by its agricultural land, woodlands, and water resources. The woodlands and water features (e.g., Kelly Lake) promote tourism and attract a number of seasonal residents which further enhances opportunities for local retailers and service providers.

A majority of the town's residents are employed in management, professional and related occupations. For a breakdown of employed persons by occupation for the Town of Spruce refer to Table 7.11. This table along with other county and town economic information can be found in Chapter 7 of *Volume II: County Resources*.

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## **LAND USE TRENDS AND FORECASTS**

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### **Existing Land Use Issues and Conflicts**

- Development pressures on agricultural land and natural features, primarily surface waters and woodlands, along with development infringing on environmental corridors, impacting surface and groundwater quality.
- Difficult to anticipate trends of seasonal population. Housing market could have major impact on future development of seasonal units. Also unknown how many seasonal units will be converted to year-round residences.
- Continued development within the Kelly Lake Sanitary District.
- Conversion of agricultural lands to non-farm uses.
- Incompatibilities between farm and non-agricultural developments.
- Need more cooperation with Oconto County and surrounding towns regarding development patterns at community boundaries.

### **Anticipated Land Use Trends**

- The desire for more lake development, especially secondary tier development and beyond. There could be additional pressure to develop open spaces and woodlands as lakeshore property becomes scarce.
- Preserving the town's agricultural heritage through orderly development patterns versus widely scattered growth.

- The rural character will continue to be maintained in the town, preserving the natural, open space landscape resulting in the protection of wildlife habitats and environment.
- Alternative design techniques should be explored (e.g., conservation subdivisions and clustering) to preserve the rural make-up of the town while allowing development to occur.
- Need for enhanced services such as protective services, storm-water management, etc.
- Fragmentation of large areas of contiguous open space.

## **Development Considerations**

- Although there is a significant amount of land available for future development within the rural Town of Spruce, the town encourages protection of its agricultural lands, open spaces and woodland features which add significantly to the aesthetic appeal of the town. These features also provide important ecological, and environmental functions such as stormwater retention and flood control.
- Need to maximize use of the sanitary district. Guide as much future development within the boundary where service can be provided. However, it is important to remain aware of the district's capacity to ensure it is not exceeded.
- The town should closely monitor all public utility costs and supporting services associated with future development in an effort to best control future property taxes.
- Continue to work cooperatively with the surrounding towns and Oconto County to provide quality, cost-effective road maintenance, protective services, etc. Proposed developments should be reviewed by the fire department, ambulance, etc. to ensure access and proper response times.
- Areas within the town that are beyond repair should be redeveloped in a way that maintains/improves the overall rural character, including scale.
- Current condition of roads. Consider which roads are currently capable of handling increased traffic flows and those that may need to be upgraded to accommodate future growth.
- As development around Kelly Lake becomes increasingly concentrated, the town should consider adopting an Official Road Map delineating future road layouts.
- The town will need to continually monitor and expand when necessary existing telecommunications related infrastructure to ensure the needs of their residents and businesses are met.
- The price of developable lands may vary depending on the surrounding land uses, location, access, services, along with other subjective factors. Land prices in the town will continue to fluctuate as the market continues to change. Land prices will likely continue to increase, particularly around Kelly Lake and in wooded areas.

## **LAND USE PROJECTIONS**

### **Five Year Incremental Land Use Projections**

Wisconsin Statutes require Comprehensive Plans to include projections in five year increments for future residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural land uses in the community over

the 20-year planning period. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) projections were used to determine anticipated future growth with the town.

It is **not** the intent of this comprehensive plan to see an entire area within a land use classification noted on the General Plan Design to be developed. The specified uses should be allowed if consistent with the type, location, and density of existing development. Some of the land within the designated land use classifications is not developable due to natural features, easements, setbacks, existing preferred land uses, or availability of supporting infrastructure. Within developing areas, these additional considerations and land uses generally account for approximately 25 percent of the gross land area. Given these considerations, the gross land use needs for residential, commercial, and industrial development for the Town of Spruce by 2040 is 319.32 acres. The net acreage total for each of the illustrated land uses in Table 2.2 is 239.49 acres.

Table 2.2: Five-Year Incremental Land Use Projections, 2020-2040

Year	Residential		Commercial		Industrial	
	Acres	Total	Acres	Total	Acres	Total
2020	85.0		0.8		8.3	
2025	63.0	148.0	0.6	1.3	6.1	14.4
2030	52.5	200.5	0.5	1.8	5.1	19.5
2035	16.0	216.5	0.1	2.0	1.6	21.0
2040	-	216.5	-	2.0	-	21.0

Source: Oconto County Planning, 2020.

## Residential Projections

The town's future residential land use acreage was projected utilizing the following methodology:

- The future housing needs were based on the WDOA projections,
- A per residential lot average of 2 acres per dwelling unit,
- A multiplication factor ranging from 1.25 to 2.25 to allow for market flexibility.

Using this projection model, the Town of Spruce can anticipate the construction of 74 new homes by 2040. The land needed for these new homes equates to 216.5 net acres and 288.67 gross acres.

Table 2.3: Five-Year Incremental Housing Land Use Projections, 2020-2040

Year	New Housing Units	Acres/DU	Market Value	Acres Needed
2020	34	2	1.25	85.0
2025	21	2	1.5	63.0
2030	15	2	1.75	52.5
2035	4	2	2	16.0
2040	0	2	2.25	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>			<b>216.50</b>

Source: Oconto County Planning, 2020.

Note: The new housing units shown for 2020 would be the increase from the number of housing

units determined in the 2010 census and the projected number of housing units in 2020. From 2010 thru 2020 it is projected the town will see 34 new housing units. From 2020 thru 2025 it is projected the town will see 21 new housing units.

## Commercial Projections

To calculate commercial land use projections, the current ratio of residential acreage to commercial land use acreage is compared by parcel in the town based on the 2017 land use inventory. That ratio was 110 acres of residential land to every one acre of commercial land for a 110:1 ratio. Based on this ratio, the town can anticipate allocating some 2.0 net commercial acres and 2.62 gross acres during this planning period.

Table 2.4: Five-Year Incremental Commercial Land Use Projections, 2020-2040

Year	Res. Acreage	Ratio	Acres Needed
2020	85.0	110.0	0.8
2025	63.0	110.0	0.6
2030	52.5	110.0	0.5
2035	16.0	110.0	0.1
2040	0.0	110.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>			<b>2.0</b>

Source: Oconto County Planning, 2020.

## Industrial Projections

The ratio between residential acreage and industrial land use acreage is also determined based on the 2017 land use inventory. The ratio was 10.3 acres of residential land to every one acre of industrial land for a 10.3:1 ratio. The industrial land use category for the Town of Spruce consists of one primary non-metallic mining site. Based on the projection needed for future industrial needs, Spruce would need to allocate 21.0 net acres and 28.03 gross acres during the next 20-years.

Table 2.5: Five-Year Incremental Industrial Land Use Projections, 2020-2040

Year	Res. Acreage	Ratio	Acres Needed
2020	85.0	10.3	8.3
2025	63.0	10.3	6.1
2030	52.5	10.3	5.1
2035	16.0	10.3	1.6
2040	0.0	10.3	0.0
<b>Total</b>			<b>21.0</b>

Source: Oconto County Planning, 2020.

## Agricultural Projections

With over 12,000 acres of agricultural lands within the town, it is the intention to preserve as much of these farmlands as possible over the next 20 years. As development pressures continue, developments in these farmlands should be directed to areas not considered productive agricultural land or to areas where services are more readily available. The consumption of agricultural lands may be influenced by the strategies of local comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.



Map 2.1: Location Map



Map 2.2: Planning Area



Map 2.3: Surface Waters



Map 2.4: Plan Determinants



Map 2.5: Prime Agricultural Soils



Map 2.6: Public and Community Facilities



Map 2.7: Existing Land Use

